

Church denies space to Saskatoon women

SASKATOON—The International Women's Day Committee in Saskatoon had its booking for a celebration dance cancelled by the parish council of St. Joseph's Catholic Church after a local Alliance for Life (an anti-choice group) representative charged the "dance was known to be for lesbians." The parish council originally stated they were cancelling the booking because they did not normally allow women-only events, and later claimed the pro-choice orientation of the coalition was partly responsible for the cancellation.

In spite of the lateness of the cancellation, the dance went ahead as planned at a different location with approximately 250 women in attendance. A spokeswoman for the coalition said, "We were afraid

women would stay away from the dance because of the viciousness of the attack, but it appears women came out anyway, with a real spirit of defiance against these right wing tactics."

The objectives of the International Women's Day Committee in Saskatoon are to provide an opportunity for women to recognize and celebrate their achievements, and to educate themselves on other issues of concern to women locally, nationally, and internationally. The coalition is made up of 31 groups and organizations in the city who are involved in a variety of ways, from simply endorsing the event and advertising the services and support they offer to women, to the more active involvement of participating on the committee which

plans and organizes the events for the day. Some lesbians are involved on the committee, and issues of interest to lesbians are included as part of the program. Specific workshops for lesbians are not funded by any outside agency, and must have funding raised by the committee itself, whereas all other workshops are partially funded through government support.

The educational aspects of IWD went beyond the formal workshops and film series: "Working on the committee this year was educational for all concerned. We got a small taste of the bigotry and intolerance and discrimination that every lesbian and gay man must feel every day of their lives in this country. It reinforced for us the importance of including sexual orientation protec-

tion under the Charter of Rights. It was okay to attack us and discriminate against us, using the title of 'lesbian' as an excuse."

The committee is determined not to allow the right wing intimidation to work. "They are attacking us as lesbians, as pro-choice, and as women, but these aren't the real issues. They use all three labels as equivalent to evil. They want to divide us, and to intimidate women from undertaking any political activity designed to improve our position in society. We simply won't allow them to get away with this." The committee is investigating a variety of options to combat the right wing attack. "We want to be pro-active, not re-active, so we haven't rushed into anything. We have even refused to allow the

media to push us into making statements before we have had the chance to debate and figure things out for ourselves as a committee."

The coalition's tactic of emphasizing human rights issues in a reasonable and principled way, rather than relying on sensationalism like the right wing, appears to be working. Local support appears to be growing for the coalition. For example, the local newspaper published an editorial supporting the right of the coalition to be angry and outraged by the actions of the Church, and by certain individuals, and supported the inclusion of sexual orientation in the Charter of Rights and the Provincial Human Rights Code.

Lesbian sex art held at border

TORONTO—Canada Customs has struck again. The Queer Culture festival in Toronto in April felt the heavy hand of Canada Customs' tariff regulations.

Hard on the heels of seizing the international bestseller *The Satanic Verses*, customs officials seized a shipment of 15 photographs for tariff determination. The photographs, part of a show called Lesbian Sex Art, were to be displayed in Toronto for 15 days and then returned to England. Customs regulations say that art can enter the country duty free, but they also say that photographs are not necessarily art. It is up to customs officials to decide in any particular case if photographs are art or not. In this particular case, the curator of the show, Ruthann Tucker, was reluctant to have customs officials open her parcels to make such a ruling. Previous rulings by border officials on obscenity have given importers very good reasons to be concerned about such things. (See previous stories in *Rites* about harassment of Glad Day bookshop and other gay



Picture from lesbian sex art show

and lesbian bookstores in Canada.) In the end, Tucker was forced to pay almost \$600.00 in duty to ensure that the photographs were here for the show. She said, "The arbitrary nature of Canada Customs is appalling in how they interpret the various classifications. Having to pay almost \$600.00 in duty for an art show that will be sent back after three weeks—that's obscene."

Patrick Barnholden

EGALE Regina formed

REGINA—EGALE (Equality for Gays and Lesbians Everywhere) Regina hosted a public gathering on March 2, 1989 which commemorated the third anniversary of John Crosbie's promise to "take whatever measures necessary to prohibit discrimination on the grounds of sexual orientation." It also highlighted the need for human rights protection in the Saskatchewan human rights code, as of yet the provincial government has refused to consider this. This event coincided with the rally held in Ottawa mentioned in the last issue (see *Rites* v5 No. 9).

The event was a great success as

100 people attended, as well as many from the media. The media still asked some fairly ignorant but common questions such as "Why do you need special protection?" which shows their ingrained homophobia.

Many people spoke in favour of sexual orientation protection. Doreen Hamilton of Regina City Council, Dan Danforth of the Saskatchewan Association for Human Rights, and the Saskatchewan Action Committee on the Status of Women. Letters of support came from the Anglican Church of Canada, Canadian Council on Social Development, the United

Canada Customs' actions in this case will only serve to increase the fear that Canadian artists and book-sellers have when they try and bring new art and books into this country. The efforts of customs officials continue to deny Canadians access to many new and old works from outside the country.

Patrick Barnholden

Church, Saskatchewan Federation of Labour, and the Saskatchewan Human Rights Commission. A member of the Liberal party attended and a member from the provincial NDP. This showed the wide range of support which came about by coalition building by the Lesbian and Gay movement in the last decade.

The most powerful point came from the speech of the Saskatchewan Association for Human Rights by quoting the number of gays and lesbians there are and comparing this to what would happen if any other minority of this size was discriminated against. They

AANI organizes Teach-In

TORONTO—AIDS ACTION NOW!, Toronto's grassroots AIDS activist organization, is planning to hold a teach-in on AIDS activism, designed to empower and mobilize People Living With AIDS and all people interested in combating the murderous inefficiency of the AIDS bureaucracy, and its effects on our lives and our communities. The teach-in will be co-sponsored by COMBAT and other community AIDS organizations.

The teach-in, which will take place on May 7, 1989, at Toronto City Hall, will consist of workshops on the political and social dimensions of both medical and non-medical AIDS issues, with a focus on the practical—valuable information on drug treatments and the AIDS bureaucracy, and viable strategies for AIDS activism.

The teach-in will include a WOMEN ONLY workshop on women's experience of AIDS, including a discussion of social, epidemiological, and treatment issues which are specific to women. This workshop will occur early in the day, and it is the intention of the organizers that an awareness of women's AIDS issues will pervade the subsequent workshops. There will be an important forum entitled "AIDS activism within diverse

said "Anti-gay discrimination is built on who a person chooses to build a relationship with. This relationship is between two consenting adults. If a government can use this argument they could use a similar argument on race, common-law marriage, or even divorce. There would be not one area of life that this same reason could not be used to allow discrimination. In the years since Crosbie's promise, intolerance of lesbians and gays has increased instead of declined. State-ments by some right-wing political leaders and groups have only fanned the flames of discrimination and intolerance. Rather than

educating the populace against intolerance, many people in positions of authority have furthered the cause of hatred. It is time to give equal rights to lesbians and gays: what is being asked for is not special rights, but the same rights as everyone else."

This speech brings across a good way to encourage others to join the fight. This fairly new group, by continued building, can hopefully not only get human rights protection, but also build a stronger and more open lesbian and gay community in Regina.

Brent Southin