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Maine Women's Lobby News Letter (1993 - March) No. 2

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Maine Women's Lobby

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Maine Women's Lobby

P.O. Box 15 • Hallowell, Maine 04347
Telephone 622-0851

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March 1993

NEWSLETTER

Number 2

From the Chair

Why We Must Become "Economics Literate"

by LINDA WILCOX
MWL Chair

Like math, economics is a subject that intimidates many of us. It has its own language and, yes, it uses all those numbers. Yet public policy decisions that affect our lives are often justified using economic arguments. For example, in the current debate in Augusta over the budget deficit, we are told that raising taxes is nonnegotiable, because Maine is such a heavily taxed state. We are told that welfare programs are bankrupting the state. And slashing programs serving poor people is defended because "we all must bare the burden in hard economic times." We cannot challenge these assertions if we do not

understand the fundamentals of economics and tax policy.

To help Lobby members better understand economics and how economic analysis affects political decision-making, the *Newsletter* is reprinting a series of articles that first appeared in *Equal Means: A Journal for Women Organizing Economic Solutions*. The articles are written in everyday English for women. The author is Ellen Teninty, training coordinator for the Center for Ethics and Economic Policy in Berkeley, California. Please let me know if you find them informative. I would also welcome other materials that we can reprint for our readers.

To give you examples of misleading

economic statements, let's return to the three subjects mentioned earlier — Maine's tax status, the reason for the budget deficit, and the need for sacrifice.

Governor McKernan claimed in his budget address that Maine has the fourth highest tax burden in the nation and, therefore, we should not raise taxes to balance the budget. Yet according to John Lefaver, the state tax assessor, we rank 22nd out of 50 states — or close to the middle in the severity of state tax burdens. The *Maine Times* in reporting on the subject explained the difference by looking at who is being counted.

see **ECONOMICS** on page 2

Great Escapes drawing - - A great success!

Thanks to the support of MWL members and friends—including the six donors of prizes--the Great Escapes drawing brought in much-needed contributions to fund our work at the Legislature. The names of the winners were drawn at the Breakfast of Champions:

1. *The Worst Years of our Lives* by Barbara Ehrenreich, donated by the Iron House Bookstore in Waterville: Nick Hamez, Portland

2. *Bug Baffler shirt*: Mary Lyons, Portland

3. *One night for two at Maine Back Roads Bed and Breakfast in Wells*: Alice Conkey, Brunswick

4. *Two tickets to a Boston Celtics game*: Deena Weinstein, Garland

5. *Two nights for two at The Pointed Fir Bed and Breakfast in Tenants Har-*

see **DRAWING** on page 10

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Reach One" — Page 6

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Lobby plans regional membership meetings

The Maine Women's Lobby is planning a series of regional meetings for members. The meetings will create an opportunity for board, staff, and members to get better acquainted. They will also provide a forum for updating you on the status of legislative issues that affect women and children in Maine, and an avenue to gather information from you about which issues you would like to see the Lobby address.

Announcements of regional meetings will appear in the newsletter and members within the targeted regions will receive individual notice of the meetings. Please attend and bring other people who might like to find out more about the Lobby. You are welcome to come to a meeting that is held in another area.

If you are interested in having a membership meeting in your region, please contact Marty McIntyre at the Lobby office.

ECONOMICS

(continued)

counted. The governor's statement is true but only for a family earning \$75,000 a year. And only 15% of families in Maine make this kind of money. Lefaver's statistic is based on a family with an annual salary of \$25,000 living in Portland. He argues it is more appropriate because Maine's median family income is \$28,793. The truth is that Maine's income tax is progressive. (See the article, "In Whose Interest?: Understanding Tax Policy," on page eight for the definition of a progressive tax.)

Quibbling over numbers like these would not be important if they were not being used to make critically important political decisions. So far the governor has severely limited the options available to solve the state's budget crisis by using his tax burden argument. His position — and one the legislature has accepted in dealing with the six month budget shortfall — is that the budget can only be balanced by cutting spending, not by continuing last year's temporary taxes or eliminating tax exemptions.

Which brings me to the second assertion. We have been told repeatedly that the current budget crisis is due to the runaway cost of social programs and school aid. However, Josephine LaPlante has analyzed the causes of the

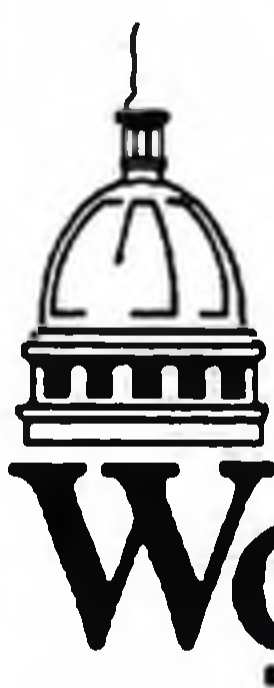
state's economic woes and has concluded (also reported in the *Maine Times*) that the percentage of state funds for Aid to Families with Dependent Children actually fell between 1985 and 1990 — from 3.8 percent to 1.8 percent. And aid to schools fell from 35 percent to 30.8 percent between 1980 and 1990. One tragic result of this misinformation is that it pits working poor against non-working poor and retirees against families with school-age children.



Finally, the governor has justified cutting programs for poor people by asserting that we all have to sacrifice. But are we? I suggest that if we are not poor,

unemployed, or a state employee, we have sacrificed very little. I do not wish to imply that the recession has not hurt Maine families — some of them severely. My point is that we have not sacrificed equally. If there are 23,000 families on AFDC, there are 308,000 families in Maine who have not had income for the most basic necessities reduced. If there are 47,000 Mainers looking for work, there are 608,000 of us fortunate to have jobs. And if there are 13,000 state employees who have had their work week reduced, there are 595,000 of us who have not been expected to provide the same service for less money.

There are two income-earners in my family. We scarcely felt the one percent increase in the sales tax, the three cent increase in the gas tax or the income tax surcharge. We have experienced nothing like the 30 percent cut in an already meager income the governor is proposing for some AFDC families. I know many Maine families are not as fortunate as we are. But I suspect we are not alone. As members of the Maine community, I believe we all have a responsibility to share equally in solving the budget deficit. I hope the legislature agrees with me.



**Maine
Women's
Lobby**

P.O. Box 15, Hallowell Maine 04347

The Maine Women's Lobby Newsletter is the official publication of the Maine Women's Lobby.

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Ms. Foundation for Women sponsors "Take Our Daughters To Work" on April 28

(Reprinted with permission from Nov/Dec *Ms.* magazine, "Action Agenda" department.)

Marlo Thomas is doing it. Gloria Steinem is doing it. Joyce Dinkins, First Lady of New York City, is doing it. Even Jessye Norman is doing it. On April 28, 1993, they will all be participating in the first annual *Take Our Daughters To Work Day*.

Sponsored by the Ms. Foundation for Women, *Take Our Daughters To Work* is the focus of a national public education campaign designed to make girls visible, valued, and heard.

To participate you don't have to have a daughter; it can be a friend's daughter. And it doesn't have to be your work place. Marlo Thomas will take girls through a television studio, and show them how a show is put together. Carpenters will show girls how to build buildings; lawyers will instruct them in the fine art of torts; bakers, in tortes. All this to help girls, age nine to 15, imagine the day when they will be working in the boardrooms, banks, union halls, design studios, and radio stations.

Why girls, you ask? They have be-

come the forgotten majority. New research shows that in adolescence, girls learn to depress their ambitions and stop trusting their experiences. Girls are more likely than boys to experience discrimination, emotional distress, poverty, eating disorders, violence, and abuse.

Take Our Daughters To Work will set up an environment in which the

*"Why girls, you ask?
They have become the
forgotten majority."*

public, the media, employers, teachers, and parents can acknowledge the girls' intelligence and desire for information - not just their good behavior and appearance. And girls will see the realities of the workplace for women.

"We've spent 20 years trying to break down the barriers that keep girls and women from having a full membership in society," says Marlo Thomas, who's a cochair of the campaign.

"Many barriers have fallen, but one that remains — seeded deep in our society and in the psyches of young girls — is fear and ignorance about the workplace: how you get there, and what you do when you're inside."

It cuts both ways: employers have little knowledge about girls - who will become the bulk of their work force by the year 2000. In April, girls will be telling employers what they need to do to attract women as workers.

And, just in case you're wondering, boys aren't going to be left out in the cold. They'll get their own special curriculum in school on that day.

Interested? Participation is easy. Anybody — mothers, daughters, teachers, workers, and fathers — can organize the day at your workplace or school yard. If you'd like some help, the Ms. Foundation is happy to provide information: a basic packet of instructions for girls, teachers, parents, and employers. The address is *Our Daughters*, Ms. Foundation for Women, 141 Fifth Ave., 6s, New York, NY 10010.

So, take your daughter to work on April 28 — and learn what a difference a day can make.

COME TO OUR ANNUAL RECEPTION!

The Maine Women's Lobby will hold its annual Augusta reception

Wednesday, April 14 • 5 p.m. to 7 p.m.

The Senator Inn

Western Avenue, Augusta

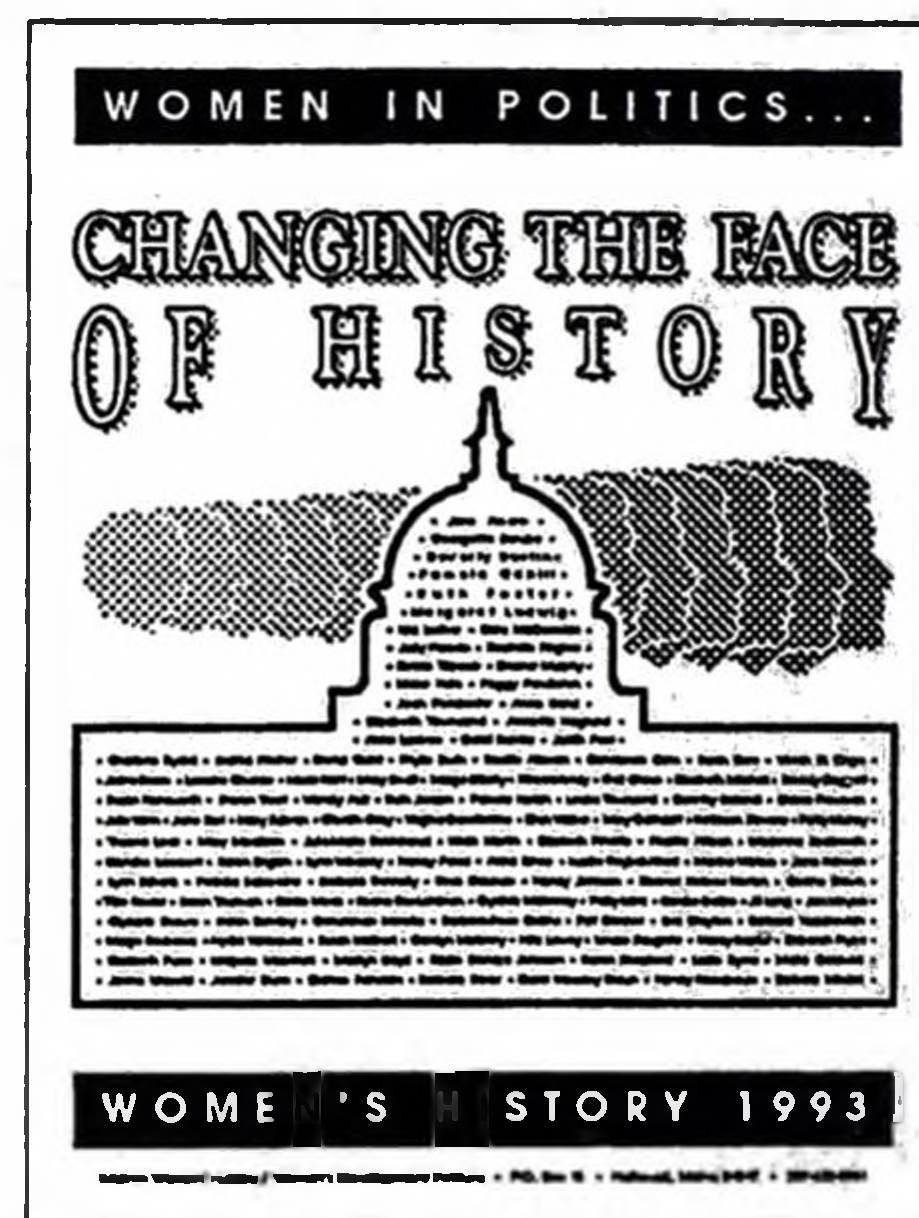
\$15 per person

State lawmakers, officials, representatives from other organizations, and Augusta area residents all join Lobby members for hors d'oeuvres and a festive reception, so mark the date now and plan to come.

1993 Women's History Poster

Each March the Maine Women's Lobby celebrates Women's History by producing a poster promoting women in history. This year the lobby celebrates the victories of women who were elected to the Maine Legislature and the United States Congress in November, 1992.

Striking 17.5" x 23.5", three color poster celebrates the tremendous electoral victories this past November. All 116 women who were elected to the United States Congress and the Maine Legislature are listed on the poster.



Celebrate with us! Buy one for your office and one or more to donate to your local school and library. The more you buy, the cheaper they are!

\$12.50 for 1, 3 for \$25. Each additional poster, \$5.00 (Shipping included)

Celebrate Women Making History!

YES! I want to celebrate! Please send ____ posters to:

Name _____

Address _____

Apt. # _____

Town _____

State / Zip _____

Daytime Phone _____

Please make checks payable to:

**Maine Women's Lobby
P.O. Box 1529
Hallowell, Me. 04347**

*The Maine Women's Lobby is a grass roots membership organization
working to expand the rights of women in Maine.*



Legislative Update

The Lobby will be following a wide range of issues in this legislative session: welfare reform, reproductive choice, anti-discrimination, changes to sexual assault statutes, legislation which affects victims of domestic violence, AIDS, funding for child abuse and neglect councils, and funding for the Maine Human Rights Commission.

The following is a synopsis of some of the bills which are currently in front of the Legislature.

LD 246: An Act to Prevent Discrimination. Presented by Senator Conley of Cumberland and co-sponsored by Senator Amero of Cumberland, Representative Farnsworth of Hallowell, et al.

The purpose of this bill is to extend to all citizens, regardless of their sexual orientation, the same civil rights protections now guaranteed to citizens on the basis of race, color, religion, sex, age, national origin, and physical or mental handicap. Discrimination in the areas of employment, housing, public

accommodations and credit would be prohibited.

LD 260: An Act to Require the Use of Standardized Evidence Kits for cases of Gross Sexual Assault. Presented by Representative Plowman of Hampden.

This bill requires hospitals to use a standardized kit for the evidence which is collected following an alleged sexual assault. Current practice allows a great deal of variability in the way evidence

"To a great extent, the Legislators rely on the opinions and resources provided by constituents."

is gathered. The purpose of this bill is to ensure that victims of sexual assault will have the benefit of having the appropriate evidence collected at any hospital in Maine.

LD 292: An Act to Provide a Deterrent to Child Sexual Abuse. Presented by Representative Faircloth of Bangor.

This bill increases the penalty for sexual abuse of a minor from a misdemeanor (Class D) to a felony (Class C) in the following circumstances:

- if the victim is age 14 or 15 and the actor is at least 10 years older;
- if the actor is a parent, step-parent, foster-parent or guardian and the victim is under the age of 18; or
- if the actor knows that the victim is related within the second degree of consanguinity.

LD 318 An Act to Protect Reproductive Privacy in Maine. Presented by Senator Cahill of Sagadahoc (Governor's Bill) and co-sponsored by Senator Conley of Cumberland, Representative Farnsworth of Hallowell, et. al.

The intent of this bill is to ensure that, in Maine, the State will not restrict a women's private decision to terminate a pregnancy prior to viability. This bill will codify into Maine law the reproductive rights given to women in Roe v. Wade, thus protecting these rights from any future court decisions. A public hearing on this bill is tentatively scheduled for 1 p.m. on March 8 at the Augusta Civic Center.

The Maine Legislature is unusually accessible by its citizens. To a great extent, the Legislators rely on the opinions and resources provided by constituents. Your personal knowledge and advice can directly shape public policy. If you would like to have an impact on issues which are before the Legislature, you can:

- Call or write your own legislature or one of the sponsors of the bill. Contact any Senator by calling 1-800-423-6900 and any Representative at 1-800-423-2900.
- Contact the members of the committee which will be conducting hearings on the bill.
- Testify at the public hearings.
- Write letters to the editor expressing your views.

For more information about specific bills or about ways in which you can take action, call the Lobby office at 622-0851.

The First MWL Phone Tree run a great success

Thank you all for calling your legislators to ask them to restore the AFDC cuts. As we go to press, the House of Representatives has rejected two of the governor's cuts and has reduced the third cut by half. The Senate is expected to follow suit.

Good work!

— Each One Reach One —

Share your concerns about women's issues — win a T-shirt

If you read the newspapers and watch television, you know that proposed state budget cuts could seriously undermine much of the legislative progress made during the past decade on issues affecting the lives of women and children.

Just a few of the proposals now being considered include:

- reduced funding for Family Planning services, and for Rape Crisis and Domestic Violence Centers;
- elimination of state funding for the General Assistance Program;
- significant cuts in the AFDC and Medicaid Programs.

THIS TIME WE'RE NOT ASKING FOR MONEY. . . WE ARE ASKING FOR MORE VOICES.

We know that times are tough, and that you've already made a monetary

commitment through your own membership in the Maine Women's Lobby. That's why we're not asking you for more money. We are asking for something even more important — more voices.

You must have a friend who shares your concern about women's issues, but who isn't yet a member of the Maine Women's Lobby. Ask her (or him) to become a member—today! If each one of you could take time to reach out to one potential new member, we could double the impact of our message.

As an added incentive, any member who recruits three or more new members by April 14th will receive a free MWL T-shirt. We hope to give away lots of T-shirts!

Lobby board members are already

busy bringing in new supporters; each board member has a goal of recruiting 15 new members this year. Catherine Charette, who joined the board last July, has recruited a phenomenal twenty new members.

Please help the Lobby. Your efforts — and your friends' memberships — will add more voices to the growing chorus of those who refuse to let the state's budget be balanced on the backs of women and children.

If you would like MWL brochures, please contact the office and let us know how many to send. MWL, PO Box 15, Hallowell, ME 04347; 622-0851.

Health care coalition launches "Learn To Lobby" training sessions

The Maine Women's Lobby is a member of the Consumers for Affordable Health Care Coalition (CAHC). In an effort to provide information about universal health care, CAHC will hold training sessions which are open to anyone interested in this important issue.

The trainings, scheduled for the end of March, will be held at three different sites in Maine (dates and locations to be announced.) By attending the training, you will be better prepared to speak to the public and legislators about the crucial need for health care reform.

A discussion of Senator McCormick and Representative Rydell's proposed Universal Health Care legislation will be included in the training. If you would like more information or would like to register for the training, please contact the Lobby office at 622-0851.



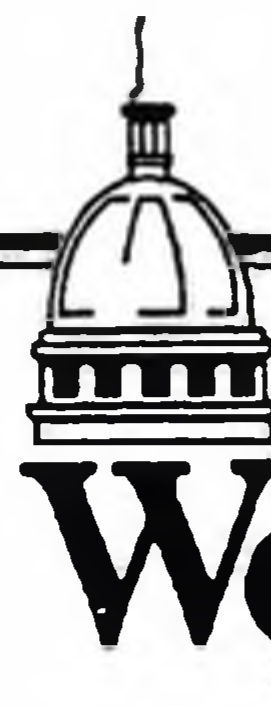
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**Maine
Women's
Lobby**

EACH ONE REACH ONE

MEMBERSHIP CAMPAIGN

I have recruited the following new Maine Women's Lobby member(s):
(Enclosed is a check or money order, made payable to the Maine Women's Lobby, from each new member.)

1. ☐ \$500 Life ☐ \$50 Supporting
 ☐ \$250 Sustaining ☐ \$500 Life
 ☐ \$100 Sponsoring ☐ \$1-24 Other

Name _____ Phone _____ Business _____

Address _____ Town _____ Zip _____

2. ☐ \$500 Life ☐ \$50 Supporting
 ☐ \$250 Sustaining ☐ \$500 Life
 ☐ \$100 Sponsoring ☐ \$1-24 Other

Name _____ Phone _____ Business _____

Address _____ Town _____ Zip _____

3. ☐ \$500 Life ☐ \$50 Supporting
 ☐ \$250 Sustaining ☐ \$500 Life
 ☐ \$100 Sponsoring ☐ \$1-24 Other

Name _____ Phone _____ Business _____

Address _____ Town _____ Zip _____

 YES! I have recruited three or more members at the \$25 membership level or higher.
Please send me my free Maine Women's Lobby "Women Help Women" T-shirt. Size: M, L, XL.

Mail my free T-shirt to: _____

— Thank you for helping the Maine Women's Lobby! —

In Whose Interest?

Understanding Tax Policy

by ELLEN TENINTY

We all have ideas about how the government should spend money. But since most public budgets are in deficit, we are trapped in a debate about what to cut, not where to spend. The choice you are given is to cut funding for homeless services or for state college education. That is not only the result of poor economic planning, it's way off the point.

The reasons for today's huge federal debt are not homeless services, education, welfare or any of the other so-called "budget busting" programs conservative lawmakers love to target. In 1981, Ronald Reagan led Congress to lower taxes on rich people and profitable corporations, bringing in less revenue to the public treasury. Then, with less money available, they doubled spending on the military.

When you spend more than you take in, you run a deficit for that year, which you have to finance by borrowing money. But then you owe interest on the money you borrowed, and have to add debt payments onto next year's expenses. Over the last decade, 40% of all personal income tax receipts have gone to pay the interest on the debt we incurred from these tax cuts and the military build-up.

This budget crisis became a convenient excuse to cut the role of government, eliminating those programs that

help people. And in the name of "local control," federal responsibilities such as mental health services and childcare for women in job training programs were passed down to states and cities (*realigned*), but with no funding to do the job. So now, local budgets are also broke.

"If we don't understand tax policy, we can be manipulated into supporting anything that says 'tax cut,' without asking, 'tax cut for whom?'"

What Taxes Can Achieve

Much of the solution to our fiscal crises lies in "realigning" tax policy. Tax policy is a multi-purpose power tool for influencing the economy. Tax policy always:

1. Redistributes wealth up or down the income scale.
2. Creates incentives that direct private investments.
3. Raises money for public investments.

There are many kinds of taxes: Personal and corporate, income and payroll, several varieties of sales taxes, user-fees for public properties like roads and parks, and personal property taxes. Any tax, proposed or existing, can be evaluated by asking three questions: Who will bear the burden of the tax? Will it affect private investment patterns in ways that advance your economic development goals? How much money will it raise?

A Look at Three Families

When you are evaluating a tax proposal, remember that all tax policies are based on opinions of how people should contribute to society's goals. Don't be confused by code words in the tax debate like "progressive," "flat," and "regressive." They are fairly easy to understand if you begin by imagining three different families.

- Family #1 has one adult, who works in a hotel, and a child. They live on \$9,000 a year.
- Family #2 has two wage earners, a teacher and a secretary. Together, they make \$50,000 per year and have two children.
- Family #3 has two wage earners, a real estate developer and a lawyer. They have three children. Together, they make a \$350,000 salary, and have capital investments that bring in another \$50,000 per year.

If you wanted to make these three families' incomes closer after they pay the tax than they were before, you would apply a progressive tax policy. Family #3 would pay a *larger percentage of their income*, not just a larger dollar figure. For example, a progressive income tax might have Family #3 pay a 50% rate on their \$400,000 income. Family #2 would pay a 20% rate of their \$50,000, and Family #1 would pay 0% on their \$9,000.

The economic argument for progressive taxes is captured by the populist Texan politician Jim Hightower: "Money is like manure. It doesn't do any good unless you spread it around." Redistributing resources from the top to the bottom with progressive tax policies means more people will have money to buy things that benefit the entire economy, like homes, washing machines, and education. This assumes

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Ellen Teninty is Training Coordinator for the Center for Ethics and Economic Policy in Berkeley, California

that the stimulus for the economy comes from having lots of people with cash to purchase products and services. Those who consider "need" as the criterion for deciding "fairness" favor progressive taxes, because these taxes lighten the tax burden on the bottom. And (relating back to our federal deficit) a progressive tax structure raises the most revenue, because you're directing tax collection to where the money is.

A flat (or proportional) tax is when everyone *pays the same percentage of their income*. With a flat tax, all three families would be taxed at 15% (or some other percentage). The *three families will be the same distance apart* after paying a flat tax as they were before, but it will have different impacts on them. Family #3 will pay more in dollars, but will not suffer the same consequences as Family #1, who may no longer have the money for basic necessities, like housing or health insurance—creating an *unequal burden*.

Jerry Brown's run for the presidency made the term "flat tax" a household word, and in so doing, revealed the popularity of a flat tax with middle and low income people. Since many have heard how multi-millionaire George Bush avoids paying taxes, they believe that wealthy people's accountants find shelters so that rich people pay less in taxes than the rest of us. The idea of a flat tax, or everyone paying 15%, is appealing because, at least, Family #3 would finally have to pay something, and it would be a greater dollar amount than Families #2 and #1. But it would be a major step backward from what we now have. The real issue here is the need to *close tax loopholes*.

A regressive tax leaves the three families further apart after they pay the tax than before. With this tax, Family #1, #2, and #3 all pay the *same dollar amount* (say \$2,000) which for Family #1 would amount to 22% of their income and for Family #3 would amount to 0.5% of theirs. This is so unfair on the surface that no one would propose a regressive tax. Or would they? Sales

Bankrupt Treasury Trickles Down

- *In the 1970s, about 25% of state and local budgets were paid for through our federal taxes.*
- *Today, Washington has given more responsibility to local governments to provide service to the public, but has cut the money to do it with by 36%.*
- *Now, just 17% of state and local budgets come from federal grants.*

taxes, which have increased dramatically over the last decade, are our most common example of regressive taxes.

Increased Sales Taxes

Voters often perceive sales taxes as a tax on things, not on people, and as voluntary, because you choose to buy the product. Others argue that the sales taxes can discourage costly behavior, like smoking and drinking. But there is little evidence that raising "sin taxes" gets people to kick an addiction, especially when the tobacco and liquor industries receive government subsidies to advertise their products. Environmentalists say increased sales taxes on gasoline will help air quality by discouraging driving, but if that is our goal, why do we subsidize oil exploration instead of alternative energy development?

You can try to direct the burden of sales taxes by carefully selecting what you tax. Some states tax essentials, like food and medicine. Others aim at wealthier people by taxing luxuries like yachts and the services of accountants and lawyers. While sales taxes have traditionally been a source of state and local revenue, there is now bipartisan talk about raising federal money by instituting a national sales tax, called a Value Added Tax. (We will definitely need to ask our three questions about who that will affect.)

Supply-Side Tax Cuts

Our tax system has historically been progressive. The tax you pay on money

earned through work, the income tax, used to be very graduated, with fifteen different brackets. As you earned more money, you paid a higher rate. In the 1950s, people paid 91% of every dollar they made over the top income bracket. In 1980, the top rate was 70%, but it was lowered to 50% by Reagan in 1981. Today, we have only three brackets, with a top rate of only 31%. The progressive system has been flattened so that a multi-millionaire is taxed at the same rate as a person earning \$52,000.

Reduced Capital Gains Taxes

Some people earn income from investments, like real estate and stock transactions, and this is called capital gains. Two-thirds of capital gains go to the less than 1% of Americans who earn above \$200,000 a year. In the 1950s, the tax rate on capital gains was 50%, but it was slashed by Reagan to a mere 20%. The 1986 tax reform raised the rate back up to 28%, but George Bush made lowering the capital gains tax rate to 15% his central economic policy demand. He argued that we should use tax policy to push the supply of money to those at the top who need it the least.

Solution: New Tax Policy

The loss of our progressive tax code has resulted in bankrupt public budgets and a lowered quality of life for four-fifths of Americans. While our services deteriorate, 80% of us are paying more in taxes out of tight family budgets than we did 15 years ago because regressive taxes have increased. If we don't understand tax policy, we can be manipulated into supporting anything that says "tax cut," without asking, "Tax cut for whom?"

People have swallowed the idea that the budget problem has come from spending too much on social goals, and that government just wastes our money. But a progressive tax structure, coupled with a thoughtful public investment strategy, would be a win-win situation for the majority of people in this country and for our economy.

Breakfast of Champions

1993 brings cause for celebration; cause for concern

*(Excerpts of remarks made by
MWL Board Member
KAREN HECK at the Lobby's
1993 "Breakfast of Champions"
on January 22 in Portland.)*

Finally! A Breakfast of Champions celebration with something to celebrate!

For the first time in 12 years, we have a president who is willing to stand up to the self righteous, misogynist minority of people who have made it their business to destroy the reproductive rights of women in this country and the world.

Millions of dollars have been wasted in the past 12 years controlling access to abortion rather than to expanding the means of preventing it. That's about to change.

Wednesday (Inauguration Day) began a new chapter in the ongoing struggle for reproductive rights. While we celebrate that victory, we still have a long road ahead of us to assure that a change in presidents never again results in the wholesale destruction of our right to control our own fertility.

Today, President Clinton is sched-

uled to rescind the executive order known as the Gag Rule. After two and a half years of battling that assault on the rights of poor women, we can concentrate on securing and improving the reproductive health of all women, both in this country and around the world.

Changes we need to see happen include:

- more money for contraception and research;
- abortion as a part of all low income reproductive health-care programs;
- hospitals serving women in the military and on Indian reservations performing abortions;
- Medicaid funding of abortion;
- the testing of RU 486 in this country;
- reversal of the Mexico City policy and restoration of funding for the United Nations Population Activities Fund; and
- last, but not least passage of the Freedom of Choice Act nationally and the Reproductive Privacy Act here in Maine.

These changes can't be taken for granted. Every one of them is going to take concentrated effort to accomplish.

For example, one of the questions floating around the legislature these days is "Why does the Reproductive Privacy Act need to be passed now?"

Now, who do you think is asking that question? Is it the female legislators who understand that control of their fertility is essential if equality is ever to be achieved?

Or is it the male legislators who don't understand — who just don't get it? Don't get me wrong. They're probably all good guys. But they are, nonetheless, men. Men who have never had to worry that an unplanned pregnancy might change their lives in un-

imaginable and unacceptable ways.

They look at the election of Bill Clinton and the fact that the Court did not technically overturn Roe and wonder what all of the fuss is about. They are people who have never had their rights hanging by a thread. They are men who just can't imagine being in the position of depending on others for something so basic as a right to control their own bodies.

"The governor will veto any anti-choice legislation," they say. That's probably true enough. However, the governor's commitment to women's reproductive freedom extends only to the politically popular question of who decides if middle class women can have an abortion.

He's not worried about access to services for all women. He's not proposing Medicaid funding for poor women's abortions or increased funding for family planning services to low income women. On the contrary, he is proposing slashing funding for family planning and he is shamelessly pandering to the popular belief that poor women are so irresponsible about pregnancy they need financial penalties to keep them from having more children.

His proposal to deny funding for additional children born while a woman is on AFDC will save, according to his own administration's estimate, a mere \$146,000 — quite a contribution to the budget gap which is over \$1 billion.

Leaders who are committed to reproductive freedom for all women and who understand the importance of long-term cost savings know that every dollar spent in family planning saves more than four in the first year alone, and Medicaid abortions cost about \$300 compared to an average of \$3,000 for the birth alone.

I applaud the governor's pledge that

GREAT ESCAPE

(continued)

bor: Katherine Perry, Auburn

6. Two nights for two in luxury suite at The Inn on South Street in Kennebunkport: Vivian Holmes, Buckfield

Special thanks to Charlie Hartman at the Iron Horse Bookstore; Phyllis Biron at Bug Baffler; Alice Schleiderer and Joe Hardy of Maine Back Roads B&B; Eleanor Goldberg for the Celtics tickets; Janet Shea of Pointed Fir B&B; and Eva Downs at The Inn on South Street.

he will veto anti-choice legislation. But I respectfully request that he broaden his agenda to include the reproductive rights of all women.

In case any of you have doubts about the need to pass the Freedom of Choice Act and the Reproductive Privacy Act, let me read you the thoughts of just a few of the people involved in the anti-choice movement. People who think like this aren't going to give up. And the Supreme Court just handed them a victory to spur them on.

— The first one is from Don Grudemann, a young chiropractor participating in Operation Rescue's National Day of Rescue. After his girlfriend had had an abortion without asking him he says "What I think is, the woman didn't want a child like me." Abortion is women's way of getting even. "In a subliminal way, it's revenge against men. Men have treated women shabbily and now the women's movement

"Millions of dollars have been wasted in the past 12 years controlling access to abortion rather than to expanding the means of preventing it."

has struck back in overkill."

— John Wilke, president of the National Right to Life Committee — Pro choice women "do violence to marriage," because they "remove the right of a husband to protect the life of the child he has fathered in his wife's womb."

— If these "feminist-infected" women have their way, men won't be allowed to decide about abortion, according to Father Michael Carey, the keynote speaker at an Operation Rescue rally in San Jose.

A little closer to home, we have the famous, kinder and gentler Jack Wyman defending the Supreme Court's decision to allow violent, anti-choice protestors to block clinic entrances. "...a

judgement in favor of free expression and the right to protest... needs to be protected regardless of what is being protested."

Contrast that with his quote the day the Court ruled that the Gag Rule was constitutional. "This undoubtedly is a limitation of free speech. But it makes sense. A poor woman is better off not getting abortion counseling."

This is one of the people who will be leading the fight to defeat the Reproductive Privacy Act. The Maine Right to Life Committee will be right there with him. Chris Coughlin, their executive director has already sent a letter to every legislator full of distortions and misrepresentations about the bill, offering to help "contribute a thoughtful, reasonable and compassionate but firm voice to the upcoming debate."

We need to make sure that our voices are heard in the upcoming debate. We represent the majority of people in Maine on this issue and we must make sure legislators understand that.

The Reproductive Privacy Act needs to be passed without amendments and swiftly. We have too much other work to do protecting women and children from bearing the brunt of the budget deficit to waste time debating this issue. There is no debate. Our bodies are our own.

If you're thinking we might not have the power to get what we want, listen to what Father Norman Weslin thinks about us. He says he was a paratrooper and "commander in charge of nuclear weapons" in the US Army for 20 years, but "that was bush league" compared to the feminist foes he face now.

One last quote, this one from Eric Conn from Indiana.

Explaining why he sued his wife on behalf of the fetus after she sued him for divorce, he said, "I just didn't like being threatened and told what to do." Well, Eric, neither do we. And this year, to make sure it never happens to us again, we intend to do something about it.

Sexual harassment claims derail judiciary nomination

The recent controversy over the nomination of Portland attorney Peter Murray to the Superior Court of the State of Maine has once again focused attention on the issue of sexual harassment. Murray's nomination was rejected by the Judiciary committee of the Legislature when five women provided testimony that Murray had sexually harassed them during the 1980s.

In its 7-5 defeat of the nomination, the Judiciary Committee was clear that they took sexual harassment to be a serious violation of the law and of the rights of individuals. This decision reinforces the stand against sexual harassment made by the legislature in 1991 when they passed a first-in-the-nation law requiring employers to provide information and training to their employees about sexual harassment. That legislation was drafted and supported by the Maine Women's Lobby.

The Lobby appreciates the courage of the five women who provided testimony in the nomination hearings. Speaking up about sexual harassment can be painful and can evoke feelings of vulnerability. The Lobby applauds the tremendous effort of these women in coming forward.

Anyone who would like to offer personal thanks or support to the women can send a note to them via Virgil Bozeman, Senate Majority Office, State House Station 3, Augusta, ME. 04333.

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Maine women and their families!**

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The Maine Women's Lobby is committed to representing women of all economic means. Any contribution you are able to make will entitle you to membership. Please make your check payable to: Maine Women's Lobby and return it with this card

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