

January 1978

## An Open Letter to Anita Bryant

Wages Due Lesbians, Toronto

Wages Due Lesbians was a feminist collective formed in Toronto in October 1974, with ties to the Wages for Housework group in the United States.

Dear Anita Bryant,

We are speaking out tonight as lesbian women because we want you and the rest of society to know who you are attacking. Though we number in the millions, we are forced to be invisible, and crusades like yours only fill us with more anguish and fury. We are not criminals, we are not depraved. We are women, like you.

Though you may think that lesbians are all single and childless, the truth is that many of us are mothers. When our children are taken away from us we fight back, just as you would.

We are school teachers, child care workers, nurses and social service workers. We give of ourselves to nurture society's children, but in return we risk losing our jobs if anyone discovers we are gay.

We are women on welfare struggling daily to feed and clothe our families on incomes far below official poverty levels.

We are immigrant women from the Third World. We work here scrubbing floors and cleaning toilets, thousands of miles from our children. For years we scrimp and save to bring them here, never knowing when we'll lose it all through arbitrary deportations.

We are prostitutes because it pays us enough to provide for our children, and live with whom we wish. When we are thrown in jail, we have to leave them behind, sometimes forever.

We are full-time housewives caring for our families' needs, with little time left for ourselves.

As mothers, we want our children to have better lives than we have had, with more freedom and less prejudice. And we are fighting harder than anyone else to protect them from the sexual coercion that we ourselves have

suffered, as women. We stand with our children against all sexual assault by their fathers, uncles, friends, teachers or strangers, whether straight or gay. We want our children to be able to decide for themselves in everything that matters to them.

Because you also oppose abortion, we want you to know that many of us have been forced to abort because we can't afford to give our children the life we think they deserve. Until we can, we defend the right of all women to free, safe and legal abortions.

Our invisibility and isolation are coming to an end, because we are determined to lead our lives as we choose. Many straight women and a lot of men stand with us against your crusade, because they too want sexual choices, and a better future for all the children, whose fight begins with our moments of triumph.