

**MATERNITY IN THE LABORATORY:  
AN INTERNATIONAL FORUM ON THE NEW  
REPRODUCTIVE TECHNOLOGIES**  
**Organized by the Conseil du Statut de la Femme, Montreal,  
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In October 1987 the office of the Status of Women for the Government of Quebec held an International Forum on Motherhood in the Laboratory. It funded a range of international speakers, including feminists, to attend. International FINRRAGE was represented by Rita Arditti, Renate Klein, Robyn Rowland, Francoise Laborie, Louise Vandelac, Janice Raymond, Gena Corea, and Jalna Hanmer. Over 500 people had to be turned away. It was an extremely well-organized conference and was noted for the care and consideration given by the organizers to both speakers and participants.

The conference was opened by the Minister for Health and Social Services in Quebec, Therese Lavoie-Roux who expressed concern, as did the President of the Council, Francine McKenzie, over the rapid development of the new reproductive technologies and the need for governments to consider the ethical questions and develop legislation.

Two panel sessions were held to open and close the conference with workshop sessions through the days that focused intensely on a number of specific issues. The first panel session included as speakers Gena Corea (United States), Jacques Dufresne (Canada), Catherine Labrusse-Riou (France), and Jacques Testart (France). They basically addressed the question whether the new reproductive technologies would give women more control over reproduction. While Corea expressed the view that the technology represented a loss of control, and backed

this up with evidence particularly from the surrogate industry in the United States, Dufresne and Labrusse-Riou concentrated on the processes of development of legislation and how this could be used to control the technologies. Jacques Testart was particularly interesting to hear. He is a leading French in-vitro fertilization (IVF) scientist who had supposedly rejected embryo experimentation. It became clear in the discussion after his panel talk that he is actually continuing the work with animals that will lead to the development of the maturing of immature eggs. His work, therefore, continues to feed into IVF, reproductive technology, and genetic engineering.

The closing panel again debated the issue of control. Speakers here included Jalna Hanmer, Mary Sue Henifin, Martine Chaponnière, Janice Raymond, Francoise Laborie, and Louise Vandelac. Issues that were raised included the failure of laws to date to attend to the welfare of women and a suspicion that laws on reproductive technology would likewise fail to be women centered. Janice Raymond also pointed out the connections between the new reproductive technologies and the international traffic in women. A number of speakers addressed the issue of the collective power of women in resisting the imposition of the new reproductive technologies.

A number of workshops dealt in detail with some of the difficult issues arising in the area of the new technologies. "Crumbling Motherhood" addressed the

maternal role of women and Robyn Rowland analyzed the development of procreative alienation which reproductive technology is passing from men to women. "The Supervised Mother" dealt with the medicalization of childbirth, pregnancy, and conception and Renate Klein highlighted the experimentation being conducted on women on IVF programs and the ill health that results from that experimentation.

A workshop on the "Rights of the Fetus" looked at the increasing number of cases in which an embryo or fetus is given rights in conflict with the mother. A number of court cases that have occurred in Canada and the United States where women have been forced to undergo Caesarean sections were considered.

The role of science itself was questioned in one of the workshops sessions and Rita Arditti gave a paper on the masculine science of reproductive

technology. The issue of a society without handicapped people was also raised and searching questions asked as to the use of prenatal diagnosis and attempts to control the "quality" of the fetus. Marsha Saxton analyzed the discriminatory attitudes towards disabled people inherent in prenatal screening.

This is a brief overview of issues that were raised in some detail. The organizers allowed workshop sessions to run for three hours and they were repeated so that as many participants as possible could be involved. Debate and discussion was fruitful and exhausting. For further information, or to obtain a copy of the excellent book produced that contains all of the papers, some in French and some in English, interested people should write to the Conseil du Statut de la Femme, Therese Mailloux, 8 Rue Cook, Bureau 300, Quebec, Canada, G1R 5J7. The book is available for Can\$ 10.00.