

My Body My Choice My Right

by Catherine Sasman

Storm clouds are gathering over the question of abortion as conservative and religious groups once again spin the issue right out of the orbit of women's control - seemingly heavenward.

The NBC has provided anti-abortionists with a broad-based platform from which to promote the rights of the foetus over those of women. And the no-choice groups use the most appalling methods by instilling fear of persecution through religious blackmailing and by appealing to the woman's "inbred" maternal morality.

The present moral climate makes it virtually impossible to start a reasonable and logic discussion on abortion.

And silence reigns in the women's movement. This silence can be a sign of solidarity with the anti-abortionists, or it can be a silence engendered by resignation and acceptance of the woman's lot.

Over the ages of oppression and abuse on all fronts, women have learnt to accept



most things affecting them directly as given, as a fact of life. Women have internalised their role as inferior beings, as determined by the dominant male structures. And while abortion is condemned from the pulpits and over the airwaves, women continue to hide behind the pretence of being "good little women."

The discussion on abortion therefore invariably stops short at "life-begins-at-conception" or "abortion-is-a-sin-against-God."

Furthermore, the abortion law in Namibia largely regards it as a criminal and diabolical act. This goes unchallenged and it reinforces the notion that women wishing to terminate unwanted pregnancies are either sexually loose or they are unnatural creatures, lacking basic motherly instincts.

The law thus transfers the ultimate control to the state. And issues concerning the control of women's bodies and their fertility remain within the male dominant domain of the state and church.