

# ACTION NOW

A Monthly Newsletter from the National Action Committee on the Status of Women

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September 1991

## THE 52% SOLUTION

NAC is back from summer vacation. The year ahead poses tremendous challenges for women across the country -- the struggle against the continuing erosion of social programs through cuts in federal transfer payments; an increasing wage gap between women and men; a constitutional debate in which women have not yet won a voice; a pending free trade agreement with Mexico that could have an even worse impact on job loss than the one with the U.S.; growing public awareness but still little action in the fight to end violence against women; a rise in racism and right wing forces.

NAC recognizes that women are hardest hit by the conservative agenda. That is why we have decided to launch a wide-ranging campaign to develop a feminist alternative. NAC will publish a draft discussion paper and kit that will outline our proposals for alternative economic, social and constitutional proposals based on adopted NAC policy. This kit will be available by the end of September to NAC member groups and other women's organizations as a basis for discussion and elaboration.

### Women's Circles

We suggest that women in different communities form discussion circles to review the ideas in the discussion paper and contribute to its further elaboration. By January we hope to have a final draft based on input from women across the country. Details on how to get a copy of the draft 52% Solution kit will be available in the next issue of *Action Now*. Campaign committees for the 52% Solution will be set up across the country. Contact your NAC regional representative or the NAC office.

### Women and the Constitution

The NAC AGM adopted a new approach to the Constitution which we will be introducing into the national debate. The Clark Constitution committee is scheduled to report to Parliament in mid-September. Public hearings could start as early as October. A brief explanation of the NAC position on the Constitution is available from the NAC office. If you are interested in being a member of the NAC Constitution Committee, please contact the NAC office.

### One, Two, Three, Many Mulroneys

NAC was a major participant in the coalition of groups sponsoring the protests outside the Tory Convention in Toronto in August. Thousands of people demonstrated their anger and disgust at Tory economic and social policy. The most effective protest was Mulroneysville, set up by poor people in Toronto. Mulroneysville became a symbol of the terrible poverty and misery caused by federal government policies and has helped set the stage for an effective fight back by disadvantaged groups.

The Action Canada Network (formerly the Pro-Canada Network) has called for a cross-country Day of Action against Tory policies on October 26. The theme of the day is "Enough is Enough". Action Canada Coalitions and Labour Councils in every major town and city will be organizing actions to protest Tory policies.

One suggestion is to set up Mulroneysvilles in cities across the country. By putting up a few tents you can set up a community that will be symbolic of your concerns about Tory policies. A Mulroneysville



could contain a community health clinic to protest cuts to medicare; it could have a place where battering men are taken so that women and children can stay safely in their own homes and so on. Contact your provincial coalition or NAC rep for further information:

Vancouver, BC: Jean Swanson (604) 879-1209  
Edmonton, AB: Lucien Royer (403) 483-3021  
Regina, SK: Barb Byers (306) 525-0197  
Winnipeg, MB: Sue Spratt (204) 755-8585  
Toronto, ON: Evelyn Napier (416) 441-3663  
Montreal, PQ: Madeleine Parent (514) 768-3256  
Charlottetown, PE: Mary Boyd (902) 892-1251  
Sydney, NS: Marion Mathieson (902) 562-5233  
St. John's, NF: Theresa Walsh (709) 753-0220

## Gun Control

NAC has submitted a brief to the Legislative Committee studying Bill C-17 on Gun Control. We support the legislation as a minimal first step but call for it to be strengthened. Our view is that owning a gun is not a right, but rather a privilege that should be strictly regulated. In particular, we call for a community check, as well as a check of criminal records, so that any man with a history of violence against women can be denied a gun permit. Write the Clerk of the Committee to support strengthening the bill and insist that women's groups be heard in the public hearings. In the last round of public hearings the committee heard from only one women's group. Write: **Robert Normand, Clerk of Legislative Ctte. on Bill C-17, House of Commons, Ottawa, Ontario K1A 0A6.**

## Citizen's Inquiry

In our last issue, *Action Now* outlined the tour of the Citizen's Inquiry into Peace and Security which begins at the end of September in Vancouver and winds up in Ottawa at the end of October.

Make your presentation on what will make women feel secure in Canada. Canada's defense budget has increased 42% in the period 1980 to 1990, while the budget for social programs has been steadily cut. Imagine what could be done with the almost \$13 billion in defense spending. Please contact your local peace group to find out when the Inquiry will be in your town or call NAC VP Marion Mathieson (902) 562-5233.

## Support Public Sector Workers

CUPW and PSAC may both be on strike when you receive this issue of *Action Now*. NAC strongly supports both unions in their struggle for a fair contract. Right now the focus of the Tory attack is against public sector workers, most of whom are women in low paying jobs. If the government is permitted to impose wage controls in the public sector, our hopes of achieving pay equity will be dashed. Job security is also a key issue for women and minorities who are always last hired and first fired. Contact your CUPW or PSAC local to see how you can help. Write or call your MP or write a letter to the editor to tell them you support public sector workers.

## Federal Budget Implementation: Bill C-20

On August 15 the Supreme Court came down with a unanimous decision affirming the cap on transfer payments to B.C., Alberta and Ontario which was part of the 1990 fiscal restraint measures.

This spring Bill C-20 (1991 budget implementation) was introduced. The main thrust of Bill C-20 would be to extend and accelerate freezes in federal transfer payments for health care and post-secondary education. NAC is joining with the Canadian Health Coalition in demanding cross-country hearings on this very important bill, the implications of which may be more far-reaching than any similar piece of legislation to date.

Letters supporting this demand should be sent before September 9 to: **Bill Farrell, Clerk, Legislative Committee F, Public Bills Office, Room 655, House of Commons, Ottawa, Ontario K1A 0A6 or fax to: (613) 996-1962.**

The Canadian Health Coalition is preparing a comprehensive kit on the bill. For more information contact Pam Fitzgerald at (613) 521-3400.

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**The National Action Committee on the Status of Women has moved.**

Our new address, effective 1st August 1991:

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