

PRIORITIES

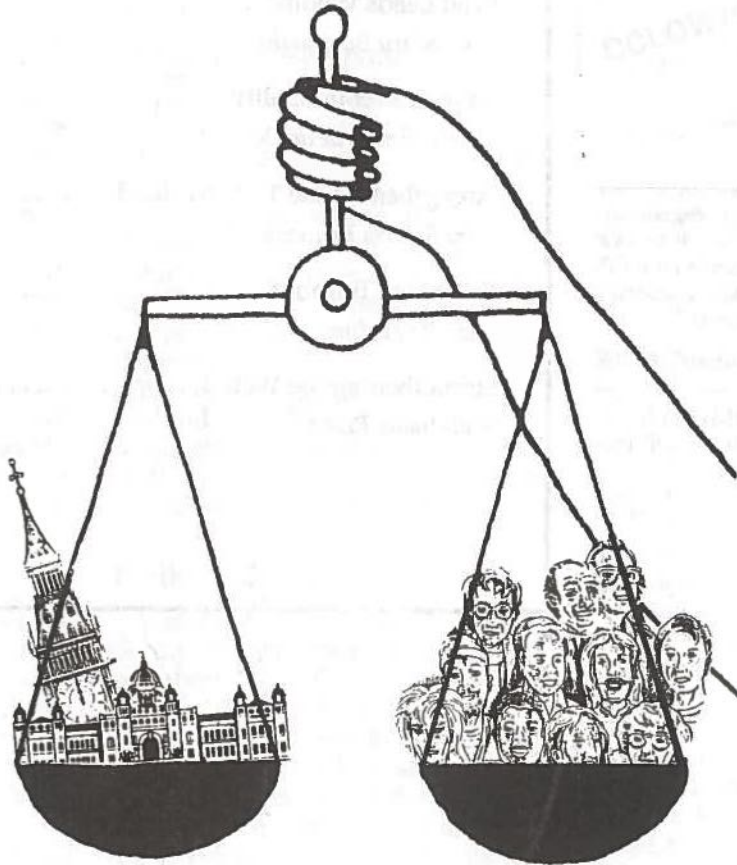
the feminist ♀ voice in a socialist movement

VOL. XVII NO. 3

PRICE: \$1.50

FALL 1989

Accountability: Are We Maintaining the Balance?



Also in this issue

- *Burnout—masking the pain of personal experience*
- *The Japanese women's movement*

PRIORITIES is published by the Standing Committee on Women's Rights of the British Columbia New Democratic Party.

SUBSCRIPTION RATES:

Individual: \$10.00 per year
Institution: \$15.00 per year

ISSN 0700-6543

PRIORITIES welcomes letters and articles from its readers. All submissions must be signed, although publication of names may be withheld on request. The Editorial Committee reserves the right to edit all copy received in the interest of brevity, clarity and taste. Submissions should be typed, 35 characters to a line, triple-spaced if possible.

Submissions and subscriptions should be mailed to:

PRIORITIES
250-3665 Kingsway
Vancouver, B.C.
V5R 5W2

"The issues and demands raised by the Women's Liberation Movement are integral to the development of a democratic socialist society. The NDP actively encourages and provides support for women organizing around the demands of the Women's Liberation Movement and commits an NDP government to creating the legislation necessary to realize these demands."

—NDP Policy on Women's Rights

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Camera work:

Baseline Type and Graphics Cooperative
Vancouver, B.C.

Printed in a union shop:

College Printers
Vancouver, B.C.

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Chair's Report

by Ann Frost

Choice

It has been a traumatic summer for women in Canada and the United States as a woman's right to choose to terminate her pregnancy was challenged in the Supreme Court of Canada, and seriously eroded by the Supreme Court of the United States.

Thousands of words have been written about the American Supreme Court decision, and thousands more about Barbara Dodd, Chantal Daigle and the variety of court decisions which made both of them public figures in Canada.

The message is clear. If we are to preserve the right to choice for the women of Canada, we must not only continue our struggle, we must intensify it. The Conservatives plan to introduce legislation this fall. We must make it politically impossible for the federal government to put abortion back in the Criminal Code, or otherwise restrict Canadian women's rights.

October 14, 1989, has been declared a Day of Action on Abortion. CARAL and the Quebec Coalition for Free and Accessible Abortion will be sponsoring "Don't Lose the Right to Choose" actions right across the country. If nothing is planned for your community, organize an action yourself.

If you need help or information, contact Judy Rebick (416-654-8130) or Miriam Jones (416-533-2673), or write to them care of the National Action Committee on the Status of Women, 344 Bloor Street West, Suite 505, Toronto, Ontario M5S 3A7 or contact your local pro-choice organization.

In the meantime, write, phone or visit your local MP, write to Prime

Minister Mulroney and Justice Minister Doug Lewis and write letters to your local newspaper. (Remember that there is no postage required for a letter to an MP.) Those Canadians who would deny women their right to reproductive choice are highly organized. But the majority of Canadians support a woman's right to choose. Please, get involved in this critical fight in every way that you can.

Leadership Campaign

By the time you read this report, the "Roadshow" taking the NDP federal leadership candidates across the country will be in full swing. The WRC has invited all the candidates to an informal breakfast Saturday, September 9, so that they can be asked to respond directly to issues of importance to women in the party.

We have also invited all of them to respond in writing to a series of questions on similar issues, and their responses will be published in upcoming issues of the *Democrat*.

Platform Development

Darlene Marzari, Vicki Robinson, Susan Moger (our women's researcher) and I met with John Walsh, the head of the Platform Committee, to begin to focus on the women's issues which should form part of our election platform. In that meeting, we were able to draw on the information we'd gained through the development of our "white paper," and its discussion at the three regional conferences held last spring.

As the major issues affecting women are identified, John will be asking for position papers to be developed around those issues, and the position papers will then be used to develop the actual platform.

Representatives from the WRC will be sitting on the Platform Committee.

Redistribution

Founding meetings for the new provincial constituencies will be held throughout the province during the fall. Be sure you know when yours is, and that you attend. Once the founding meeting has been held, constituencies have been given the go-ahead to nominate candidates for the next election.

Are you interested in being a candidate? Is there a woman in your constituency who is interested? Now is the time to be out organizing support, and I strongly encourage you to invest in a copy of the handbook *Winning Nominations*, available through Provincial Office.

Dorothy Gretchen Steeves Fund

The Dorothy Gretchen Steeves fund is modelled after the federal fund named in honour of Agnes McPhail. The Steeves fund provides financial support for women who are candidates for provincial office. The amount of support for each candidate depends on the number of candidates, and the amount of the fund.

Sandra Bruneau, Sheilah Thompson and Vicki Robinson have formed a small working committee and are looking at some innovative ways to raise money. The more we raise, the more help we can offer, so please, give as generously as you can. Contributions to the fund have the same tax benefits as any other contribution to the party.

Steering Committee Meetings

At the WRC's September Steering Committee Meeting, Vicki Robinson will give a presentation on targeting

women voters, and we will have a very special guest, Petit Perido, who is the General Secretary of Gabriela, the largest women's organization in the Philippines. In November, Ray

Edney will share with us what she learned when she attended a two day workshop on "burnout" last spring. [Look for Ray Edney's article on page 9. Ed.]



Accountability is a Two-Way Street

by Elizabeth Cull

Elizabeth's views on political accountability have been shaped by five years as chairperson of the Victoria New Democrats' Community Affairs Committee and two years as a school trustee in Greater Victoria School District No. 61. In this article, she talks about political accountability at the civic level.

ACCOUNTABLE *adj* 1: subject to giving an account : ANSWERABLE 2: capable of being accounted for : EXPLAINABLE.

That's how my Webster's New Collegiate Dictionary defines "accountable": *answerable* and *explainable*. By extension, accountable politicians must be those whose actions are *answerable*, presumably to those who elected them, and *explainable*, particularly if those actions appear contrary to the wishes of those who elected them. But is that all social democrats mean when they talk about accountability?

Political accountability is fundamental to being a social democrat. New Democrats, as social democrats, expect our elected politicians to be responsible to those who elected them. We expect our politicians at all levels to abide by party policy and to live up to electoral promises. We take as a given that our politicians will consult with us before taking actions contrary to policy, or before moving very far into areas where there is no party policy. Simply said, we care as much about the process of governing as we do about substance of governing.

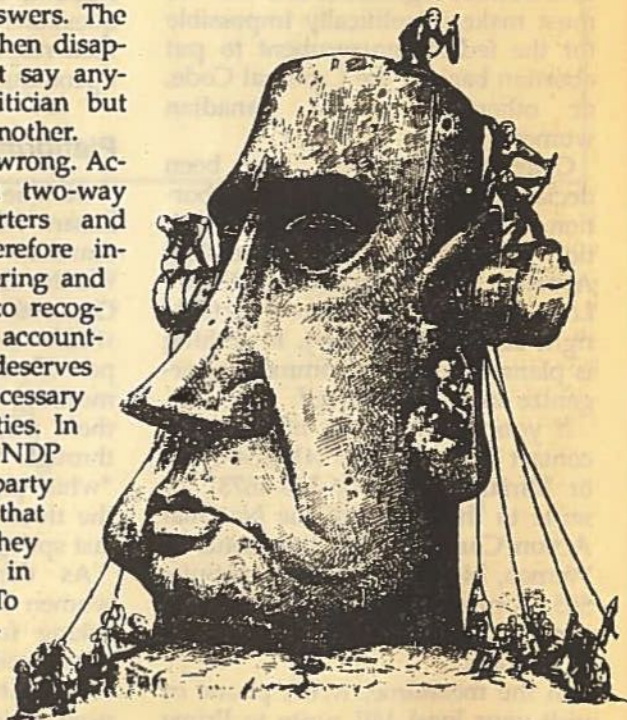
Unfortunately, accountability is

easier to talk about than to practise, and I think this is especially true at the civic level where there is usually no constituted local party, little formally agreed upon policy, no candidate nominations by party members and no party caucus once elected. In addition, political accountability at the local level doesn't get much attention from NDP members until there's a problem. Political accountability most frequently comes up as an issue when an elected person does something her supporters think is contrary to party policy, her election platform, or some basic social democratic principle. Accountability in this context usually results in angry supporters confronting a defensive elected person over a particular issue demanding explanations and answers. The worst situation occurs when disappointed supporters don't say anything at all to the politician but simply complain to one another.

To my mind, this is all wrong. Accountability must be a two-way street between supporters and elected people and therefore involves more than answering and explaining. Our failure to recognize that and to give accountability the importance it deserves has, I believe, led to unnecessary strife in many communities. In some cases, long-time NDP members have left the party altogether, disillusioned that the New Democrats they supported didn't believe in the same things they do. To be effective, accountability must be seen as a mutual responsibility between elected people

and their supporters. New Democrats who run for civic office must be willing to abide by party policy where it exists and be guided by social democratic principles where policy doesn't exist. More importantly, they must commit themselves to remaining in touch with their supporters—in short, to consult and listen as well as to answer and explain. Supporters, on the other hand, must continue to support candidates once elected, by meeting with them on a regular basis and discussing with them their concerns and ideas about civic matters. Supporters shouldn't wait until there is a disagreement over an issue before doing this, but should work with elected people to develop a mechanism for regular contact and communication.

New Democrats interested in civic matters have a responsibility to get involved in their communities: join the parent association at your local school, attend school board or council meetings, work with community associations. We have a responsibility to ensure the people we work so hard to elect listen to advisory groups, or where such groups do not exist, we have to encourage and sometimes push our



elected people to have them established. In the Greater Victoria School District, parent and employee representatives sit at the Board table with voice, but no vote. Parents and employees participate as full voting members on principal selection committees. These are two examples of processes that have been set up to ensure elected people remain in constant touch with those they have been elected to serve.

These mechanisms are important because, once someone gets elected, they tend to spend much more time with other board or council members than they do with their supporters. It's too easy to lose touch. Without ongoing communication, misunderstandings arise and grow

until they become real accountability issues.

How to encourage two-way accountability is something each community must determine for itself. In some cases, civic parties are the answer, providing direct control over candidate nominations and a forum for local policy development. In the Victoria Constituency, we have adopted a policy for candidate endorsement and support which incorporates the notion of accountability. Accountability sessions are organized by the Constituency Community Affairs Committee annually. Unfortunately attendance at accountability meetings has been low unless there was a controversial issue, and resulting dissatisfaction

with the process on the part of both elected people and party members has led some Victoria New Democrats to press for a more formal civic elections organization.

Empowering citizens to take control over matters which affect their lives is a basic tenet of social democracy. Without accountability, there is no empowerment. For this reason, it is important that we expand our thinking about accountability from simply insisting politicians answer and explain. Instead, we should consider accountability to be a concept whereby the elected and the electors work together to achieve a shared vision.



Who Leads Whom?

by Mary Burroughs

Members of Parliament are accorded respect, honour and a dignity above and beyond that of their constituents. These three are not given to them because they are exceptional human beings, nor because they have gone to the trouble of pressing flesh, knocking on doors, talking and listening to people, and lasting through the strenuous process of being elected.

They are specially honoured for two reasons. First, they are responsible for the making of the laws and policies by which Canadian citizens enjoy a happy, prosperous and peaceful life in this country. They have been charged by their constituents and enabled by the lawful procedure of government to oversee the workings of the highest level of government in this country, to ensure that this country is governed according to the wishes of its citizens, and to ensure that they each leave a legacy of thoughtful and concerned work as a foundation and an example for their successors.

Second, they speak with the voice of their constituents. They speak with our voices, and we have given them the right to do so, having

chosen them to represent us and having entrusted them with the task of speaking for us with honesty and integrity, and with the full reflection of our thoughts and wishes.

The election process may seem to be a long and tedious one, with innumerable meetings throughout the riding; talking, talking, talking endlessly—but it is made so for a very important reason. It is long and full of talk simply because it is the only real opportunity for a constituent to listen to the thoughts and feelings of the candidates, and to question them extensively to see which candidate best reflects the constituent's personal views. It is the *only* basis which a constituent can use when choosing to vote for that one person who is closest to her heart.

When a candidate is elected, it may generally be presumed that that person most closely reflects the feelings of the majority of the constituents in that riding. There are always such factors as charisma overriding policy, apathy in the electorate, the choice of the best of a bad lot, etc., all or any of which may skew the results...but, most often, the elected person, and the elected person's stated policies, reflect the electorate's wishes.

It greatly behooves this elected official, therefore, to go on reflecting the policies which elected her, or she may very quickly find herself to be an ex-MP.

There may be exceptions to this general rule. Cataclysms require cataclysmic action—should the United States decide that Canada would make an excellent addition to its nation, constituents expect that their MP would not return for an election process before taking the appropriate action.

Apart from cataclysms, constituents have the right to be amazed, shocked, taken aback, angered, or otherwise upset when their MP suddenly turns her coat and begins to speak with a voice which isn't theirs.

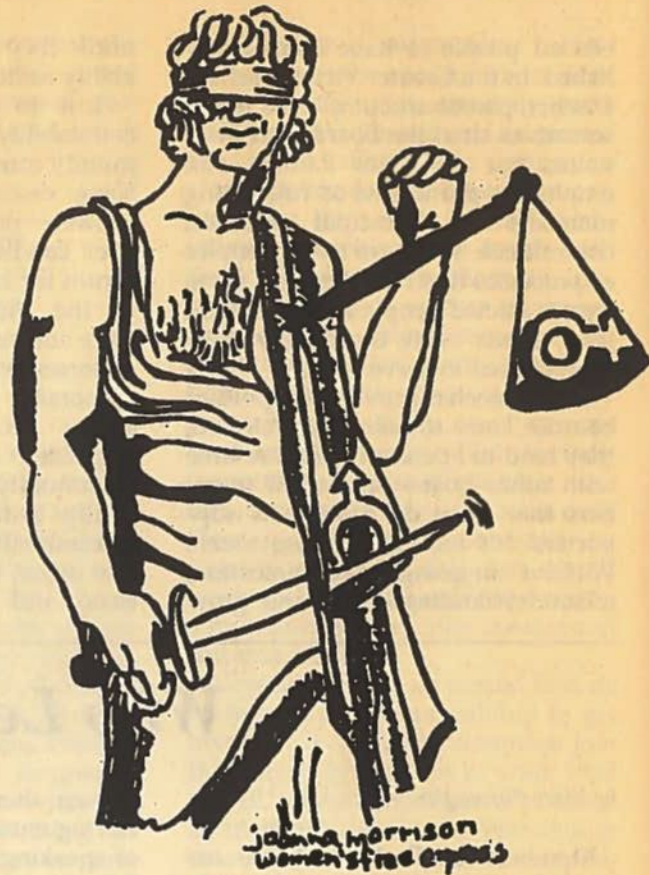
What now of the MP's role as a leader of the people? Shouldn't an MP have the chutzpah to speak out for and against issues which may arise during her term of office? Shouldn't she display the type of leadership which shapes a nation into greatness, albeit in her own image? Shouldn't she lead, and persuade the people to follow?

This remnant from the days of male-dominated politics is an example of male-powered thought

and male-powered vision. Women work in a cooperative and consultative manner; they do not envisage themselves as leading the world by the nose of their own wishes, but as being the leader elected by the people to speak on and carry out the people's wishes. As for cataclysms and sundry other issues arising during a term of office, an MP should organize her already extensive consultative processes and find out her constituents' wishes in very short order.

A government which truly reflects the people's wishes would thus be composed of a majority of women

MPs, who would, through their cooperative and consultative leadership, assist Canadians in governing Canada in the way Canadians want Canada to be governed, and by their example, demonstrate to those politicians who retain the old mindset, that leadership by the people is leadership indeed. ♀



Caucus Accountability

by Milnor Alexander (with thanks to Jane Brett for her suggestions)

In April 1988 at the Provincial Convention, the following resolution (A-88-2) from the Women's Rights Committee was approved:

WHEREAS policy is made by the members of the New Democratic Party in Convention, and

WHEREAS members of the New Democratic Party are bound to abide by Party policy, and

WHEREAS New Democratic Party members elected to public office as New Democratic Party candidates have an obligation as members to abide by Party policy, and a further obligation as representatives and spokespersons to uphold Party policy and its underlying principles.

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that members who seek nomination to public office as New Democratic Party candidates be accountable to Party policy, and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that accountability be defined as follows:

- that New Democratic Party candidates elected to office accept in principle their obligation to implement Party policy, and that

- where in the view of a member holding public office there are cogent reasons to modify or set aside Party policy, no public position be adopted until full consultation has taken place with the governing bodies of the Party, including those at the constituency level.

After receiving no satisfactory reply to letters sent to Provincial Executive following the Meech Lake vote taken in the Legislature, the Oak Bay-Gordon Head (OBGH) constituency Executive attempted to clarify the issue of caucus accountability by submitting the following notice of motion to the Provincial Council in September 1988:

WHEREAS the B.C. Provincial Convention in April voted overwhelmingly *against* the Meech Lake agreement, and

WHEREAS the NDP has always prided itself on being different from the other parties by having *members* make policy in conventions, and

WHEREAS most of the NDP MLAs subsequently voted *for* the Meech Lake agreement;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that this Provincial Council set up

procedures so that elected members are accountable to Party policy as required by Resolution A-88-2 which was passed at the last convention.

Because the federal election delayed the September Council meeting, the OBGH motion was not dealt with until the December 1988 meeting, at which time we supported a motion to refer it to the Constitution, Party and Municipal Affairs Committee, chaired by Ian Aikenhead. At the same time, our constituency volunteered to assist the CPMAC and so in January 1989 we circulated a questionnaire to all constituency delegates asking if they were aware of the changes to the Constitution which were made at the 1988 convention (and which had still not been circulated). We also suggested that Caucus could use "direct mail" (as Provincial Office does so successfully in fundraising appeals) to determine individual members' views on a given proposal, especially when a change of policy is contemplated by Caucus (as in Meech Lake, or withdrawal

from NATO). We did not receive sufficient replies prior to the CPMAC's meeting to include a summary in their report.

Ian Aikenhead, chair of CPMAC had intended the report to be circulated to every constituency prior to the February Council; however, due to "clerical error" only OBGH received it! (Our notice of motion to that meeting was in response to the CPMAC report which we thought everyone else would have already seen.) The Committee outlined the background of the issue of accountability, described the present process (Article XV of the Constitution) and recommended the following:

1. Caucus will report to every Provincial Council.

2. Meetings between caucus executive and the party executive or table officers will continue.

3. Continue to involve caucus in all party bodies including policy committees and Provincial Council.

4. Encourage policy review committees to communicate with and inform caucus and its staff so that caucus is aware of party policy and party resource people are on an up-to-date basis.

5. Maximum involvement by caucus members in the upcoming regional conferences.

6. Encourage all constituencies to use caucus members as much as possible for events and other political and organizational purposes.

7. Advance the "buddy riding" plan to allow our caucus members to meet with as many members as possible in constituencies that we do not hold.

8. Reports from caucus be made to all party members on a regular basis.

9. Use the *Democrat* to report on party policy and how caucus is advancing it.

10. Create a policy manual which clearly defines our policy as determined by previous provincial conventions and the current provincial council, after consultation with all bodies of the party.

11. In creating the policy manual, draft it with a view to out-

lining our policy on the basis of general principles upon which may be developed specific policy initiatives as conditions arise. Delete or rewrite outmoded, contradictory, irrelevant and confusing policy statements. Obviously, provincial council and convention would need to approve such a policy manual, but such a manual has already been requested by many conventions.

The Committee's conclusion was:

Any process which is implemented would have to be reviewed to see how well it is working. The responsibility for ensuring that the constituency level is consulted would depend on the provincial council delegates. If regular reports were going from the caucus to all members, this task of provincial council delegates would be much easier. Our delegates would also be made more accountable through this process.

The final decision on all disputes would rest with provincial convention, as clearly set out in our constitution.

If this process works, such disputes would normally be resolved without major involvement by provincial council. Many disputes would be resolved through informed debate between party activists and caucus members.

The OBGH motion in response to the CPMAC report noted that

1. if this was an accountability process then we needed a monitoring group from the constituencies to see if it was working, and,

2. we still needed a "quick response" mechanism!

Due to lack of quorum, our February notice of motion was deferred until the June Council meeting at which time it, as well as a Skeena motion on accountability, failed to pass.

Contrary to feeling defeated after a year's work, our constituency Executive feels that accountability issues

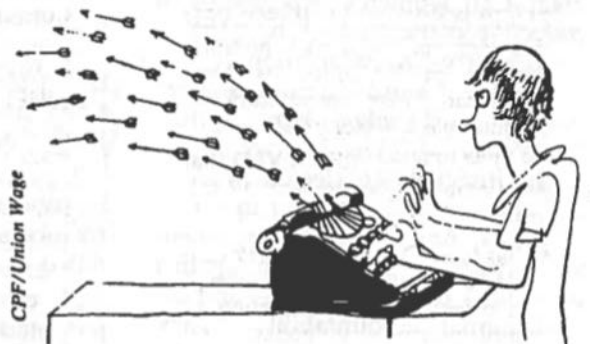
did receive recognition and support at the June meeting in these ways:

1. Council entrusted members' views on environmental issues to a democratically formed group, the Standing Committee on the Environment created (on the model of the Women's Rights Committee) to include all concerned members.

2. Caucus did report to Council in June, as they had in February. However, this time delegates gave approval to a Caucus statement (on the Carmanah) only after amending it (to include as many groups as possible on the Crisis Roundtable).

3. The following day, after some thought, Council reiterated its commitment to grassroots democracy by passing a resolution from the Vancouver-Richmond regional conference which (in its final form) called for the preservation of the entire Carmanah watershed "until the Standing Committee on the Environment, in consultation with the Crisis Roundtable on the Carmanah Valley presents its recommendations to Provincial Council and Provincial Council has made a decision on the matter."

Finally, the new party policy manual which the CPMAC had suggested would resolve differences, will be presented for approval at the September 9-10 Council meeting. How "general" these policies are will define how much "leeway" is given to Caucus. If you agree that we must never give Caucus the right to ignore or reverse either provincial convention or Council policies without consulting constituencies, let your provincial and federal council delegates know what you think. 



Strengthening the Ties that Bind

Reflections on accountability within the NDP

by Sandra Bruneau,
Vancouver Point Grey

Since 1933, "accountability" has produced one of the NDP's most caustic, continuing debates. Like the concept "democratic socialism," accountability is a contested concept. It is both complex and fundamental. To maintain the discussion and to keep it healthy, we all need occasionally to recognize the complexity, and to extend the debate.

One might think that the matter of caucus members' accountability to the Party was settled with the passage of the so-called "Accountability Resolution" at the 1987 Convention. Not so. Tension remains, and occasionally divides the membership. These divisions sap our energies, and have the effect of chasing members away from the Party or discouraging active involvement in it.

How far are issues of control and power crucial in the NDP? Can we reach a common understanding of accountability that puts the emphasis on our responsibilities to each other, and on features of Party organization that could increase public interest in the NDP?

For feminists (both women and men), there may be another, parallel set of questions to explore. Do women find it *easier* to be accountable? Can women's experiences of collective consciousness be used to model Party-Caucus relations?

The very word "accountability" has a hard edge—harder than "responsibility." This is especially so if one imagines an elected MLA or MP chained and shackled to tomes of policy. And that's the argument some Party members use against those who press for Caucus and organizational accountability. "They (the elected members) should not be

dictated to by the Party on matters of policy (or procedure). They should have maximum freedom to decide things at the moment, in the light of new facts; their sense of judgment should be trusted."

Those who advocate maximum liberty for elected members think that

1. to press for accountability means to dictate to elected members;

2. the elected member should have decision-making options that take into account new facts about a situation or issue, facts to which an NDP member should not necessarily have access;

3. accountability as a principle implies a want of trust (or a lessening of trust) in the judgment of the elected member.

Each of these propositions is false. Each ignores the intentions behind the principle of accountability. More than that, each is false in suggesting that democratic socialism can breathe, live and grow in an atmosphere of anything-goes policy, and devil-may-care internal party relations. It cannot.

Now at times, the objectives of those who press for accountability are not clearly stated. If clearly stated, they are sometimes misconstrued. Still, those who press for accountability *intend* a Party whose:

1. major policy directions are democratically adopted by Conventions (and laboriously prepared by Party Committees);

2. members have a special relationship with elected Party members (a theory of democratic representation, if you will);

3. elected members have internal ties and external responsibilities that provide a basis for

our social, economic and legal struggles.

If a Party member, elected or not, sees herself as somehow apart from or independent of the rest of us, then that member may resist decisions reached by the many (and may also tend to ignore the feelings of others about issues). Is such a member saying that intentions 1, 2, and 3 don't bind her?

If a Party member, elected or not, sees herself as but one voice among many (an equal), values certain goals and certain means, and realizes the strength of the collective—then that member will likely turn out to be committed to the principle of accountability. This means she will try hard to act in accordance with the principle, will press for recognition of its importance in all decisions and actions, and will seek to explain and defend the principle when it is under threat.

A few of our elected representatives publicly support accountability, but in the privacy of their boudoirs or within the walls of Caucus, act to distance themselves from such policy. This is unfortunately typical of political party behaviour in representative democracies, both in British and other traditions. But we democratic socialists really *do* want it all! We'd rather not be limited by typical behaviours and patterns. We want consistent and persistent commitment to social and economic justice on the outside, *and we want thorough accountability inside the Party.*

It is not just the administrative *distance* elected members paint that offends other members; it is the *manner* of the distancing. Those who argue against recent steps toward accountability generally fall into one

or more traps of fallacious reasoning.

1. *Ad Hominem Argument*. So-named because it is directed against the person pressing for accountability of the elected member. An argument might go like this:

There is no way I will publicly affirm Convention's stand on Meech Lake because I do not like the people on the other side of the debate. (i.e. We're in a power struggle and I am determined to win against these others, no matter what their reasons.)

2. *Slippery Slope Argument*. So-named because it warns against giving in to the opposition, even a little, for fear of a repeat or a landslide to come. An argument by those not wishing to be accountable to the Party on a particular issue might go something like this:

Give those Party activists an inch, and they'll take a mile. Let this Committee (or Convention, or Council) decide such important matters, and they'll want total control. Therefore I must take my own course of action, even if my decision is against what the Party wants.

3. *Red Herring Argument*. Lists premises not necessarily related to the conclusion:

The Party cannot be dictated to by environmentalists. The Carmanah is an untouched wilderness area, one of a few left in B.C., but it needs a tree-management plan, therefore I am in favour of at least partial logging.

If you are an environmentalist, you will want the Carmanah to be wholly preserved; but if so you want unemployment in the region to be preserved as well.

4. *Begging the Question*. An answer to the question which so resembles the question itself that premises and concepts key to the debate are assumed to be true (and a particular definition, not examined, is adopted). The classic example: Prosecution lawyer to accused B&E artist during questioning meant only to display the facts, "So when did you stop breaking and entering?"

I'm not going to bother answering charges about my not being accountable to the Party on this issue because I have been accountable. I helped to

initiate debate on this many years ago... (definition of "debate" includes notion of openness and accountability, thus assuming that which was to be proved; this particular argument is also an example of a Red Herring).

5. *Fallacy of Common Practice*. Arguers use the notion that since a practice has been carried out in the past it is right that such a practice continue. Persons unprepared to examine others' understanding of "accountability" might argue as follows:

Caucus, as a decision-making body within the Party, has always had free rein to decide what Party policies are appropriate to current situations, and how they are to be interpreted. For the Party to tell Caucus what to do through its Committees, Executive, Council or Convention is to go against that tradition.

6. *Truth or Falsity by Association*. This is the tendency to declare a proposition as T or F, or to assert that a particular stand on an issue is the correct one, by pointing out that the proposition or position is asserted or held by other influential persons or groups.

Whether or not the B.C. Convention

takes a different position, we must support the Meech Lake Agreement, because the Federal Party does.

So has B. Mulroney. #5 and #6 are not obviously fallacies of reasoning when applied to the issue of accountability, but they can be shown to be so. Let's call them *weak reasoning positions*.

To be sure, no one person or group within the NDP is exempt from weak or fallacious reasoning. We have all been unclear from time to time, uttered untruths, left assumptions unexamined, and even muttered unkind words. All the more reason, then, for elected members wishing to distance themselves from Party policy to think again, and for unelected members committed to the principle of accountability to ensure:

- that mechanisms are in place within the Party and Committee structures to explain the meaning and intent of adopted policy;
- that gaps in Party policies are acknowledged, so that all members might see where flexibility in decision-making is likely to occur;
- that in serious cases of public deviation from policy, Party members, elected or not, are brought to task. They might be challenged for a nomination, or, in really serious matters of deviation from policy, such censure may result in cancellation of memberships.

In a democratic socialist party composed of brothers and sisters, are such means and mechanisms sufficient? (That they are necessary seems to me to be quite sure, but the position needs to be argued.)

The real questions, I think, are these: Why does accountability continue to be an issue at all? What is the most persuasive and humane method of dealing with the accountability of elected members to Party structures and policies?

In the examples given above, notice how often the notion of *control* and *power* pervades. There is a



"them vs. us" mentality—on both sides of the accountability debate. What is the psychology behind this? Informal discussion of this issue among Party members suggests the following explanations:

1. *The Purity of Power Thesis*: that since elected members appear to have more power on social and public issues, they believe themselves more powerful than a collection of "ordinary" members. (One corollary of this is that members often appear to undergo personality change when they become elected—a belief that keeps many a good NDP member from seeking a provincial riding nomination.)

2. *The Restricted-Information Thesis*: that the elected member has access to more facts, more analyses and more people who will be affected by an issue—to which the ordinary NDP member will not likely have access.

3. *The Male Protuberance Theory*: that caucus members assume the stances they do because they are mostly men moved by a peculiar sense of power: who has it, who should have it, and how it is to be expressed.

4. *The Socialist-Under-Every-Bed Posture*: that decisions put forward, argued and won at Convention (or at Council between Conventions) often originate from the left of the NDP. In the morning-after reconsideration, caucus cannot possibly act on these positions, or even expose them publicly, for fear of alienating a segment of the (uncommitted) voting population, and hence risk losing the next election. (Sound familiar?)

Elected members often allude to this last set of reasons, although they may be influenced by others from the list. Some caucus members believe that many of the Party's collective policy decisions *should* be hidden from view because they are wrong, or because the public will not understand and accept them. At any rate, these bits of reasoning are about power, and thus, questions of power have kept accountability on the front burner in the NDP.

Despite the case we could advance for Party "control" it is well-nigh impossible for the Party to *impose* some kinds of discipline on elected members. Nor is it likely that elected members will easily *submit* to all Party decisions.

Is there then any chance both elected members and rank-and-filers *can* adopt a workable understanding of accountability, and function with a clear sense of direction—happily, even?

Do feminist collectivities provide a model for the NDP?

I have found it puzzling that elected members would argue (and work) against Party policy positions and initiatives. I had at first assumed everyone believed roughly the same thing about accountability and its fundamental importance in a party claiming to be both democratic and socialist. Recent events, however, have made me realize that I and many other women see accountability as a *strengthening* concept. Those who fight accountability see it as a *controlling* concept. How different these concepts are! The struggle between them tells us a good deal about the Party and the potential role of women in it.

1. The perversity of elected members speaking out against Party wishes results in:

- the demoralization of party members who used to work on behalf of elected members;
- fractious debate that detracts from overall Party efforts to articulate policies and win over the population;
- an adherence to positions without thorough examinations of reasons for those positions (e.g. on the Meech Lake issue, many of the arguments centred on the protection of the rights of vulnerable groups within our society, but these got lost in the rhetoric about Quebec).

2. The predominance of a competition/conflict ethic, rather than a cooperative/collectivist one. One is power-collecting, the other is power-sharing.



3. The gender gap/male-female split on issues of accountability. I have noticed that women continually press for accountability because they know it is not only essential to the Party's health, but essential in changing the conditions of women's lives. This is not to say NDP men have not taken a leadership role in pressing for accountability of caucus members. Feminist men have.

Conclusion

Women caucus members say they have no problem with accountability. They work well with Party committees, they report regularly to their constituents, they are committed to enacting Party policy. They consult with women of the Party, and with the people of their communities, and they reach decisions collectively. Women know that in order to achieve any gains, they must be in solidarity with all who struggle for equal power. Accountability strengthens. This is surely one feminist lesson worth modelling.

For women, accountability is no bogeyperson waiting in ambush around the next political corner. If accountability means keeping lines of communication open between governors and governed after election; if accountability means taking other Party members as full equal partners, partners who ought not to be manipulated or side-tracked; if accountability is a matter of cooperation and caring, rather than competition and confrontation; if accountability is from and to *feeling* beings, not just calculating political agents—then feminists have a model of politics, of power relations, and of accountability that they can offer the rest of the New Democratic Party.



Balance or Burnout

Women's Commitment in the Political World

by Ray Edney

This two-day workshop led by Sandra Butler could have been titled "the personal is political." In effect what Sandra did was show how our personal stories motivate us and determine the kind of political work we carry out. In this particular workshop the participants were mostly women who do counselling work with other women—or as Sandra put it, women who work on the front lines. But the underlying themes can be readily applied to women who do "large P" political work.

Sandra Butler states that those of us who work with and for women are working in a war zone. It is impossible to be a feminist and to be unaware or without grief. The personal experiences of grief are the private losses that we have all encountered. Activism is the public possibility that those losses may lead to. However, we have to be aware of our private losses and the effects they have on us in order to be able to carry out our public work without burning out.

Thus the workshop began with exercises designed to access our earliest experiences with loss of innocence, and the ways in which we have learned to cope with our grief. For many women this experience came through the body or as a result of physical or sexual assault, and most of us have been taught to cope with grief through silencing and numbing.

A lifetime of denying pain and grief can be exhausting and tends to alienate us from ourselves, because we disallow ourselves from experiencing and expressing our true feelings. We also become alienated from others, and thus lose the validation and power generated by shared and common experiences.

Sandra talks about the *privatization* of illness and healing, wherein we

take the blame for our illness and thereby the responsibility for our cure. It is important to distinguish between what is within our control and what is shared or social responsibility. The effects of this change of focus can be seen in the changing awareness and attitudes towards sexual abuse. As more and more women and children are able to share their stories, we have gained more control (not enough yet) over the methods of intervention and the cure for the problem. As changes in attitude and intervention into sexual abuse occur at the societal level, individuals are freed to do the personal work required to deal with their private experiences.

Privatization of healing leads to *escalation*. Denying our own grief and despair, we work frantically to change the external conditions that affect other women in the same ways they affected us. This is the political work that we do, that gets out of hand. In an illuminating exercise Sandra had us examine the ways in which we prioritize external and personal needs. Here are some examples: Which messages do you respond to first on your answering machine? Do you respond to all calls? Which friends (personal or political) do you give time to? Which invitations do you respond to, and which do you not have time for—social, political, cultural, family, religious, intellectual? Which meetings take precedence and which are sacrificed? Do you read magazines or books? Which journals do you subscribe to? How many newspapers do you read a day? Do you listen to music or news on the radio? How do you use a free evening—to catch up on unfinished work, or go to a movie? What kind of movie?

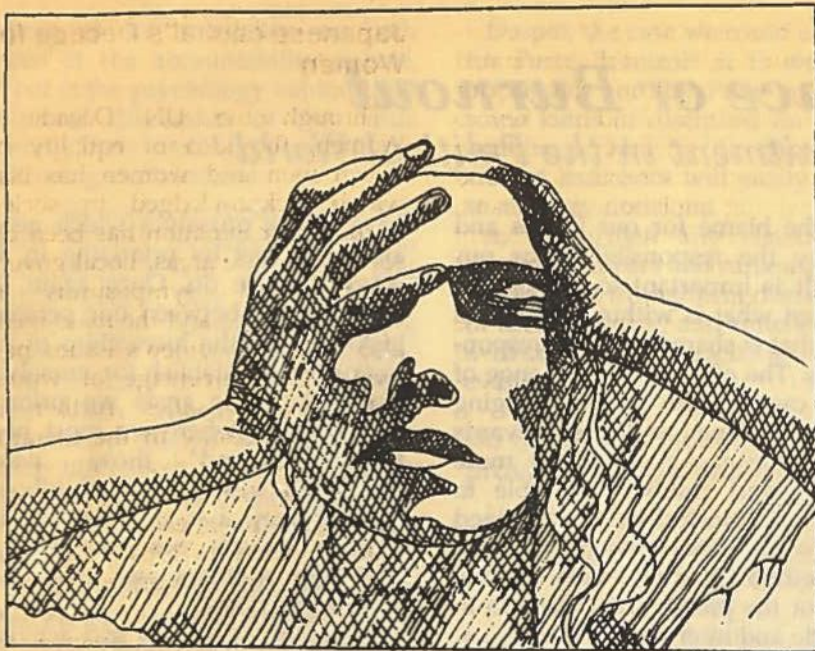
The results are clear: most of us sacrifice the personal time we need in favour of the political work we feel needs to be done—and then we

have to ask ourselves which needs are being met by prioritizing in the ways that we do. Once again the link is made between our personal histories and the hierarchies of importance we establish for ourselves. Generally those areas we prioritize are the ones where we most need approval, and those needs developed way back in childhood. Sandra says that our work with women reflects our relationships with our mothers and other unfinished business.

Escalation of activity and activism masks the individual pain and despair, and it is the individualism that keeps us separate. Thus we become exhausted at two levels, privately by denying and controlling our own loss and grief, and externally because no matter how hard we work it is never enough, and it will never solve our private problems. Unblocking the private desolation and despair can result in extraordinary energy, and the possibility of solidarity and community action.

One of the strategies to prevent burnout is an obvious one. We were directed to list ideal yet realistic boundaries for our personal and professional lives. These might cover working conditions and hours, limiting volunteer activities and of course the ever evasive ability and right to say "no." The boundaries we have greatest difficulty in maintaining are those we have unfinished issues around, so that disapproval and failure to come through plays a greater role than the right to take care of ourselves. Sandra suggested we type up our list of boundaries, post them and work towards them.

A final exercise involved visualising a real or imaginary place on the planet that we identified strongly with. We described this place and the threats or dangers to the place and its defences. Then we looked at



how we are similar to these places. These places, their threats and defences, reflect our themes of balance and burnout. The psychological environment is a reflection of the external environment. Thus the escalation of nuclear weapons is parallel to the escalation of self-defensive activism that each of us indulge in. While it is important to be realistic about the dangers of the world that women survive in, it is possible to become over-defended,

and thus to lose contact with our inner selves and our feelings as well as to lose the ability to engage with and relate honestly to others. Sandra suggested that we consider the work of our lives in terms of an ecosystem. Individual women cannot be safe until all women are safe. In order to achieve balance, we need to work at both levels. We cannot change the world alone, but we will burn out if we do not take care of our individual needs and issues as

well.

In the "large P" political environment we work at several levels. We work to change the structures of governments and party committees, as well as the underlying policies which reflect the attitudes of justice and equality of women. We also work at a more individual level, in supporting and encouraging individuals in their everyday struggles to achieve and succeed. Many of us work in specific areas or topics which seem to have particular resonance for us, be it education, the environment, violence against women, etc. And some of us work to promote and advance other women in a way that we do not feel personally able or inclined to do. It seems almost too obvious to remark that personal issues and unfinished business have a lot to do with these choices that we make. However, to understand how we are motivated and why we chose to work in one way over another is to gain some control, and it aids in preventing escalation. The work that we do is important, but should not take precedence over personal needs and concerns. Both inner and outer healing must occur in order for balance to be achieved.



Strengthening the Web

15 years of Japanese women's activism

by Inoue Reiko

Reprinted from *AMPO Japan-Asia Quarterly Review*, Vol.18 No. 2-3

Part 2. (Part 1 was published in the last issue of *Priorities*)

Women on the labour front

The number of full-time housewives, which had been continually

increasing, began to decrease in 1975 and the rate of labour force participation of women began to increase. That year was also a turning point in the reorganization of the labour force; the increasing employment of women consisted mainly of poorly paid part-time workers who can be easily laid off when it is necessary for capital to do so. This was part of the "rationalization" of industry following the oil crisis.

Women entering the shopfloor were confronted with stubborn sexual discrimination, and the struggle against sexual discrimination on the shopfloor and in employment became a major theme of the women's movement.

With more than 10% of women going on to university in 1975, and with women graduates facing increasing difficulties finding a job, groups opposing discrimination in

employment were launched.

In 1978 the "Group for Making Our Own Equal Employment Law" was formed under the initiative of the Action Group. But when the government, in response to the demands of capital, proposed the Equal Employment Law accompanying the revision of the Labour Standards Law—deletion of prescribed protection of women workers—the women's movement fell into a contrived trap: they were forced to choose between protection and equality. Disagreement and confusion were triggered within the movement, and though many different groups of women opposed revision of the Labour Standards Law despite internal disagreements, the Equal Employment Opportunity Law was enacted in May 1985, and the protection clauses prescribed in the Labour Standards Law deleted. It all went completely contrary to the spirit of the UN convention, and only served to provide more cheap labour for capital. One of the main reasons for this defeat was the fact that the major male-dominated labour union federations did not really tackle the problem.

In 1986 the Labour Dispatch Law passed in the Diet, strengthening the dual structure of the labour market in Japan—on one hand the employees of major companies were guaranteed high wages and lifelong employment, and on the other, workers in small enterprises and part-time workers laboured under very unstable conditions. The new law enlarges this second sector, the external labour market, and serves to widen and reinforce the gap between the two. In turn it will destroy the base of company-oriented labour unions, the mainstream of Japanese labour unions. Labour unions can no longer exist unless they change their values and principles vis-a-vis the labour movement. The male-dominated labour unions have lost their own base of power because they ignored discrimination against women and did not protect their rights.

It is women workers, marginal-

ized as the main force of the external labour market and discriminated against even within the labour unions, who may hold the key to the unity of workers: fighting division and discrimination, and thus reviving the labour movement. This must be based on different principles from the conventional one, which gave priority to wage increases and were captured by the corporate doctrines of increased productivity. Signs of this happening are not yet in sight though.

New phase in government strategy

Since the end of the 1970s, after the second oil crisis, the right-wing reorganization of Japanese society has proceeded hand in hand with industrial reorganization. "Perfecting the Foundation of the Family," the policy on women announced by the government in 1979, shows the ideological framework of this reorganization.

In March 1982, when the Central Committee for Examining the Eugenic Protection Law revived the issue to strengthen control over abortion, meetings and actions were organized all over Japan, and in August 1982, the '82 Committee Against Revision of the Eugenic Protection Act was formed as a nationwide network. This movement wanted to revive the perspectives of the 1972 movement, and the participants were again young women. The slogan adopted this time, however, ran, It is a woman's decision whether to give birth or not! This slogan marked a change from the stand of the initial liberation movement; the assertion that women's bodies belong to themselves is common, but by emphasizing the interests of women to fight the government's moves to control women, they seemed to have retreated from their stand of changing the whole society. This characterized the general trend of the 1970s and 1980s when groups tended to focus on single issues and to emphasize social aspects, in lieu of political aspects, of change.

Japanese capital's Decade for Women

Through the UN Decade of Women, the idea of equality between men and women has been widely acknowledged in society. Sexual discrimination has been dissolved in some areas. Local governments held symposiums on women's issues and the mass media also took up women's issues positively. The percentage of women entering universities further increased, especially in the literature departments of private universities where the number of female students has now exceeded that of male students. In 1984, housewives who had jobs comprised 50.3% of the total number of housewives (30.42 million). The divorce rate reached 0.15% in 1983, the highest level ever, and in most cases divorces were demanded by the wives. This diverse and wider independence of women and participation in society, however, has so far not necessarily meant a basic change in the social structure itself.

Japanese capitalism has skimmed the cream from the bitter struggle of women to abolish sexual discrimination, and put it to its own use. They have adopted positions and advocated reforms which in terms of form are superficially responding to women's demands, but in content are depoliticized and run against those demands.

When the women's movement had made it easier for women to work outside the home, enterprises began to "rationalize" management by herding women in as cheap part-time labour to replace full-time workers. On the other hand, success stories of talented women in industrial society have been propagated in an attempt to divide women and entrap them in industrial society's ideological web of competitiveness.

With arranged marriages joining two families decreasing and love marriages based on "free will" (though it is still uncertain exactly what it is they are free from) becoming more the norm, "marriage

centers" utilizing computers have become a prosperous and growing business.

Sexual liberation was supplanted by something else. On the one hand, among youth today conservative views on marriage and the family are prevalent, on the other hand, prostitution among young people as a means of getting money for leisure has contributed to the burgeoning of the Japanese sex industry.

Thus capitalist society has warped and twisted Japanese women's demands for sexual equality and sexual freedom, allowing them to be expressed only in a debased or commercialized form.

But still through this decade, the idea of equality between men and women gained influence and social acknowledgement step by step even if it may be diluted in content. And now after this decade Japanese women are facing the task of stepping up their struggle to change the whole society on the strength of what they have gained.

International solidarity

The movement aiming at developing solidarity with Asian women has grown gradually stronger since the mid-70s, inheriting and further developing the viewpoint originally conceived by the women's movement of the 1970s, that women should start from their own pain and simultaneously recognize their role as oppressors of Asian people, thus using their pain to relate to the pain of others. This movement started in 1983 when Japanese women opposed the Kisaeng tours as sexual aggression: Japanese men trample down Korean women with money, as they did with weapons during World War II.

The Asian Women's Association was founded in 1977 and continued steady activities up to today. They are exposing the Japanese economic invasion into Asian countries, publicizing the miserable working conditions of Asian women workers and breaches of human rights in these countries, opposing the sex tours, and recently wrestling with the problem of *Japayuki-san* from the

viewpoint of women's international solidarity.

The Action Group dispatched their representatives to the International Congress of Women held in Nairobi in the summer of 1985. As many as 800 women attended this congress, and some criticized this as a part of the arrogance of rich countries. These women, however, who attended as representatives of grass-roots movements like this Action Group, also hope to get acquainted with the reality of the situation of women in Third World countries. In 1986, after the UN Decade for Women was over, they reorganized themselves into the Action Group of Women and formed an international solidarity section within the organization.

Women and social change

In the 1980s, when global militarization accelerated with the birth of the Reagan Administration, and the military build-up in Japan also began to proceed rapidly, anti-war and anti-nuclear movements gained influence and popularity, and women were for the most part the main force behind these movements.

The Japanese Women's Caucus Against War was organized in 1980 and has built a solid base in some local communities. This is a loose association composed of regional groups, some of them very active.

In 1982, when the U.S. Army in Japan proposed to build barracks on the site of a former U.S. ammunition depot in Zushi City, a middle class residential area near Tokyo, local residents organized the "Association to Protect Nature and Children and to Oppose the Construction of U.S. Army Barracks." A representative of the group ran for Mayor and won. The main force of this movement are housewives of middle-class families holding houses of their own in this area. Most of their husbands are salaried men of big companies and are not as active as their wives. The women actively involved in this movement, though initially interested solely in protecting their rather affluent


living standards, gradually became political, some even to the point of opposing the U.S.-Japan Security Treaty. Men working in big companies tend to be integrated into corporate society, even ideologically, lose their ability to think independently and identify their interests with those of the company. Their wives, however, comparatively free from the integrative pressures of corporate ideology, are more able to take a critical view of Japanese capitalist society. Zushi is a very good example of this tendency.

The consumers' cooperative movement, the movement against synthetic detergents and other movements focusing on issues affecting daily life have gradually gained strength since the latter half of the 1970s, and now have begun to tie in with the anti-war and anti-nuclear movements. These groups are sometimes able to elect representatives to local government bodies. These movements are mostly based in local areas, are closely tied to daily life, and are mainly composed of women.

These movements, though not feminist movements, can be considered movements of women, and now form the mainstream of the people's movement in Japan. Most women supporting these movements at the grass-root level in local communities are housewives in their thirties or forties who had experienced the women's liberation movement and the students' movement when they were young. Their male counterparts have been indoctrinated in corporate ideology, whereas women never had the chance to get good jobs. Though a marginalized segment of the labour force, women are now becoming the main force in the movement for change in Japanese society—a society based on materialism and commercialism, placing priority on money. With the decline of the conventional leftist movement, including both the old and the new left, which were mainly organized by men, women's power has now become prominent.

Today is said to be the age of

women. This means, as described above, that working women have increased in number and the mobilization of women by enterprise has proceeded, with capital making use of them to the maximum extent possible by dividing them into a selected elite destined for "success" on the one hand and poorly paid masses on the other. At the same time though, the women's movement has become relatively strong, and the position of women within the other movements has become dominant.

Now it is necessary that women establish a strategy to change the whole of society, politically, socially and economically based on new principles, not just limiting themselves to changing their own lives; that women within the movement forge links with the majority of women workers, creating a new solidarity of women both nationally and internationally. For this purpose women's movements must develop a broader vision, to see beyond single issues. 

HOT from the B.C. Federation of Labour

Royal Canadian Legion #26 - Kelowna

Hotel & Restaurant Employees' and Bartenders' Union Local 40

Calwood Industries, Surrey

Carpenters Union Local 1928

Company manufactures and installs millwork and interior fixtures for large projects primarily in the Lower Mainland

Hyundai-Kerkhoff

B.C. & Yukon Territory Building & Construction Trades Council

BOYCOTTS

Nestle & American Home Products (AHP)

Continental Airlines & Eastern Airlines

International Association of Machinists

Super-Valu (Tsawwassen store) - United Food & Commercial Workers Union Local 2000

Pharmasave (Newton Town Centre) - UFCW Local 1518

California table grapes - United Farmworkers of America

Zeidler Forest Products - CLC/IWA-Canada

Non-union postal outlets - CLC/CUPW

Shell Canada (Royal Dutch/Shell) - CLC - all goods & services, due to involvement in South Africa

Hyundai products - B.C. & Yukon Territory Building & Construction Trades Council

Chilean goods - B.C. Federation of Labour - look for the label on grapes, peaches, plums, pears, raisins, nectarines, lobster, wine, onions

Louisiana Pacific Corporation (forest products) - Carpenters/IWA-Canada - construction material, Waferwood construction panels, Pabco Xonolite insulation, Weatherseal windows and doors

Victoria Plywood - any items identified by the logo "Vicply"

South Africa - any goods originating in South Africa

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