


PRIORITIES

the feminist  voice in a socialist movement

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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

In this issue...

- *Meet our women candidates*
- *Guns & Women?*
- *Tribute to Grace MacInnis*
- *A Retrospective...*

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NOTE: I would like to extend a warm welcome to Diane Dupuis who will be editing PRIORITIES beginning with the next issue. Joining Diane on the editorial committee will be Gillian Smith and Merrilee Robson. The best of luck, and have fun!

A letter from the (outgoing) editor...

It is with mixed emotions that I announce my retirement as Editor of PRIORITIES.

Chasing people for articles and constantly harrassing women about deadlines is not an aspect I will miss. Many times I wondered if women really did read this stuff, and what in the hell was I wasting my time for?

However, in the past few years I have had a unique opportunity to learn and grow, and to teach as well. I have been literally bombarded by incoming reading material from the most diverse sources imaginable, most of which I simply put in the pile beside my bed (currently 3 and one half feet high) and read in turn. I have read and subsequently subscribed to more than a dozen magazines from around the world. (Ever hear of the Welfare Warriors?) This exposure has helped me understand different women's cultures, their needs as well as how they feel about each other. I have tried to pass some of those articles on to you.

One of the most exciting things I have learned is just how much I enjoy writing. I wrote as a child, but as a young adult became involved in the predominately male writer's sub-culture of the 70's and became disillusioned. As a woman in their midst I found I was most appreciated for my ability to shore up their ever-failing egos. Those men didn't know shit.

Only recently I have begun reading women's poetry again, with joy, something which I haven't been able to do since those aforementioned 70's.

While my business (graphic design and printing) keeps me more than occupied, I, of late, have been devoting more and more time towards women in my community, and will therefore be less and less visible to those of you who attend regular meetings in the lower mainland. While life is difficult for women everywhere in this beautiful province, nowhere are the ravages of poverty so clearly manifested as in the community I call home, Surrey. Nowhere have our provincial and municipal governments so systemically paid such little attention to their constituents needs. Our women are paying with their families, their blood, their lives. And, while I am encouraged by the support that the men of our party seem to have for the plight of women in B.C., experience with past governments (theirs *and* ours) leaves me less than optimistic that the real problems facing women are going to go away.

Making sexual assault and violence against women and children punishable by greater fines and longer jail sentences will not stop these heinous acts. When sexual assault and violence become so socially unacceptable as to be unthinkable, then they will stop. As women, we know that that place is a long way off.

So, for now, I have retreated, but not in cowardice or shame. I see my sisters, and their daily needs. I see that, for now, my contribution must be a more tangible one. So I give money to the clinic, because I know that women will be directly affected by my contribution. So I work with a local women's group to establish a sexual assault centre to treat the wounds of women that have been brutalized in this way. My contribution to the election effort will be the personal support of the families of the candidate and her campaign manager. I know these things will directly benefit a woman. That has become my criteria.

So, my dear friends and sisters, I wish us luck. For ourselves, and for all women.

Kathy Hill

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OUR WOMEN



Shirley Cooke
Abbotsford

C A N D I D A T E S

This summer, while anxiously awaiting an election call, we decided to check in with the women that have been nominated to run for the New Democrats in B.C.

We asked them the following four questions, and what appears on the following pages are some of their comments, edited for brevity where necessary.

What is the current economic situation of women in your community?

What is it currently like for a woman in your community who is in search of an abortion or alternate health services?

What pet project(s) would you like to see the provincial government undertake?

How do you see things changing for women in B.C. if (when) the NDP forms government?

There are a lot of women at home, many families living on one income, and a lot of single mothers on welfare. Working women in this area are paid less than other areas because the area is anti-union.

Abortion is not available at the local hospital, which is male dominated. The Socred (Victor Dick) doesn't believe that this issue is of much importance. I would like to see an elected hospital board.

Better hospitals and schools top my list of pet projects, however, there are many other projects which I would like to see undertaken by the provincial government. I would like to see psychiatric care and subsidized housing available to the disabled. It would be nice to have bicycle paths in the community as a safe alternate way of transportation and recreation.

When the NDP form the next government the minimum wage will be increased. It is important that young mothers with children have the opportunity to stay at home. It is also important for mothers who work to have access to good childcare facilities. A facility for abused women is another necessity that the NDP would remedy in this community.



Jackie Pement
Bulkley Valley-Stikine

The economic situation of women in Bulkley Valley-Stikine is not good. Women in the area earn an average annual wage of \$11,000, compared with \$23,000 for men. If women are employed it is usually in an entry-level job, often only part-time work. The forest industry is the major employer in the area, along with other resource-based industry.

Access to adequate health care is a major problem for women in the area. There are no clinics directed to women's health, and, while abortion referral can be available through a woman's doctor, it usually involves a trip south.

The medical situation for northern residents is one issue I would like to see the provincial government address. There is a lack of alcohol and drug counselling, which affects women in family violence situations. We need initiatives that will bring skilled medical practitioners into the area and encourage them to stay. Native land claims are also of importance to area residents, and I would like to see an early start to negotiations.

I hope that the election of an NDP government will bring more women's programs to the north, in particular the creation of transition homes and employment programs that will enable women to take more skilled, higher paid jobs.



Joan Sawicki
Burnaby-Willingdon

In Burnaby-Willingdon we're in a more favourable position than women in the inner city who face higher housing costs, for example. A large number of women comprise the working poor - working at retail jobs for minimum wage.

During my three years on the Board of Burnaby General Hospital access to abortion services was not an issue. I think Burnaby Hospital has an excellent record.

Burnaby with a NDP Council is fortunate in having a solid framework to offer programs to women and families. All they need is the dollars.

I expect substantially more women involved in government. I look forward to women's perspective basically permeating every decision government makes in B.C. It's important women's voices are heard and not just on women's issues but in every issue and decision.



Gladys Brown
Chilliwack



Margaret Lord
Comox Valley

What is the current economic situation of women in your community?

Not too good. Most women earn minimum wage or a little more. There is considerable unemployment among women in the area. Most of the jobs on the base (Canadian Forces Base) are held by men while women work in seasonal jobs such as berry picking or food processing.

What is it currently like for a woman in your community who is in search of an abortion or alternate health services?

To my knowledge Chilliwack General Hospital has not done any abortions for a number of years. Women must travel to Vancouver to obtain this service.

What pet project(s) would you like to see the provincial government undertake?

We need more hospital beds and need to clean up the environment. We get a lot of pollution from Vancouver, air pollution in particular. A large percentage of the population are seniors and they are affected by it. Crops are also affected.

How do you see things changing for women in B.C. if (when) the NDP forms government?

Things have got to get better. The next hospital board will be controlled by anti-choicers. We have to change the elections for hospital boards. Hospital boards have to be elected by everybody, just like school boards. We need more daycare and better public transportation. In Chilliwack the bus service is privately owned and there is more concern for the financial bottom line than for customers.

In the Comox Valley we have high unemployment: currently 13.8%. This impacts most on the women of our community. Many are unemployed or forced to take low-paying and/or part-time jobs. On top of that, there is a critical shortage of affordable housing. Daycare spaces are available, but expensive.

Abortion services for the women of the Comox Valley are available at Cumberland Health Centre.

My priorities are based on the needs of my constituents: 1) affordable housing - there is a critical need for low-cost, subsidized and co-op housing in the Comox Valley. 2) an increase in minimum wage and welfare rates. 3) core funding for Comox Valley Resource Centre and for Comox Valley Transition Society. 4) Provision of good quality, affordable daycare.

When New Democrats form government, women of B.C. will see the kinds of changes we have been working towards for many years. We will have a Women's Rights Ministry. We will have a government fully committed to providing true equality for women at work and at home.



Elizabeth Cull
Oak Bay-Gordon Head



Eileen Robinson
Okanagan East

What is the current economic situation of women in your community?

What is it currently like for a woman in your community who is in search of an abortion or alternate health services?

What pet project(s) would you like to see the provincial government undertake?

How do you see things changing for women in B.C. if (when) the NDP forms government?

The general economic situation for women in this community is better than average. However, two areas of concern are seniors living on fixed incomes and single women with children. Employed or unemployed, most single mothers have a difficult time getting by on their income.

Again, women here are better off than most. There are sufficient women physicians per capita. I would like to see abortion clinics in place. The transition house in this community has expanded and there is a sexual assault centre. I am concerned about women who are psychologically ill and sexually abused. There doesn't seem to be a facility to deal with both.

Affirmative action for women in civil service. Daycare is not being addressed from the reality of 1990's societal needs. Projects I would like to see addressed include: licensed childcare for children under three; coordinated kindergarten care; and, a system that will deal with children who are in school 1/2 day and need to be picked up and looked after the other 1/2 day.

When the NDP forms the next government I see a change from talk to action. The NDP will take the action needed to legislate pay equity, expand childcare and return core funding for women's centres. The NDP will put women in decision-making positions.

The economic situation of women in Okanagan East is poor. Part-time employment at low pay and few, if any, benefits is the norm. Okanagan East is mainly agriculture based with spin-off businesses. This industry is in great trouble, mainly due to the Free Trade Agreement, and from pure neglect by the current government. Economic stress on farm families is increasing daily and farm women now find themselves, for the most part, trying to hold down three jobs just to try and keep their heads above water.

There is a crisis in access to abortion services and alternate health services in Kelowna. The Kelowna Anti-Choice movement has infiltrated all aspects of the Hospital. They know who is getting what operation as well as the date and time, so confidentiality is impossible.

I expect that a New Democrat government would move in a positive and decisive way to improve the economic health of women. I see this as key to starting to alleviate the very real problems OF WOMEN AND their families. With a strong contingent of women elected as MLA's I expect that a strong representation of women will be elected to Cabinet so that we can have "real" positive changes in the attitude towards women and those issues of concern to us (i.e. childcare, pay equity and access to health services). British Columbia cannot afford to continue to discriminate against 50% of the population.



Val Beckett
Okanagan West

The economic situation of women in Okanagan West is probably better than some communities, and worse than most. Several unionized companies and many public sector jobs in Kelowna provide higher paid clerical positions to women who would otherwise find themselves in wage brackets just above minimum wage. There are a great many single women with families and a very definite housing shortage. Many women are desperately trying to upgrade through the college or correspondence courses, however, high costs and built-in barriers make it difficult.

For women in search of an abortion the closest facility is Kamloops. This is unacceptable.

Help women break the poverty cycle. Educating them to the fact that there are many 'non-traditional' jobs out in the workforce, and that it is okay for women to be in those positions.

Certainly nothing will happen overnight. Under the NDP women will be listened to and there will be many women MLA's who will speak out for and on behalf of women. Good daycare will be a high priority item which will help relieve some of the everyday stress women are faced with. The surface has only been scratched on the issue of pay equity. There is a great deal of education needed for both men and women in this area. Women must be valued \$ for \$ with men, not .60.



Jean Leahy
Peace River North

Poor. The economic situation is the same as it is for women everywhere. They earn 60 cents for every dollar a man makes and are mostly in lower paid service jobs.

I'm not sure. The service is available in Fort St. John, but women usually go to Dawson Creek which is 45 minutes away, or to Grande Prairie (Alta.). Because of the close connections of a small community women prefer to go somewhere else so that people will not find out about it.

For this area to retain more control of resources. We have agriculture, hydro, oil and gas, and forestry, with most of it going to Victoria.

More educational programs, job training and retraining programs and more apprenticeship programs through colleges. Pay equity will be stepped up. Health care will be enhanced and day care will be more accessible.



Anne Matheson
Peace River South

Multifaceted - good in the high employment areas and poor among native, the disabled and low income families.

The situation is acceptable - except in Tumbler Ridge, a community of 5,000 where the medical services cannot even deliver a baby.

I would like to see a concentrated program for education for native women and a concerted effort for natives to educate their young people in their own native schools.

I am hopeful that pay equity will become a reality, and that safe houses for battered women will become a norm.



Barbara Copping
Port Moody-Burnaby Mountain

The general economic situation of women in my community is consistent with other communities. Low wages paid to single parents accepting the responsibility of raising and caring for their children make it almost impossible to get by. For university students inadequate wages paid for summer jobs and part-time employment make it extremely difficult to complete their education. Lack of education leads to low income jobs. All of these problems are relative to women being paid 60 cents on the dollar.

There is adequate access to abortion in my community. However, women's physician's practices tend to fill up quickly, and access to feminist counselling and support services is inadequate. Gaining access to these services is often a matter of who you know.

I have very real concerns about pay equity and abortion. I am extremely aware and sensitive about highly skilled women working for low wages, and am distressed at the lack of action. On abortion I am concerned that every woman does not have easy access regardless of where she lives. Clinics and planned parenthood facilities would ease the drain on hospitals and be more comfortable for women to attend.

The NDP believes that women are equal and would do more than pay lip service to them. There will be action taken to improve women's status.

What is the current economic situation of women in your community?

What is it currently like for a woman in your community who is in search of an abortion or alternate health services?

What pet project(s) would you like to see the provincial government undertake?

How do you see things changing for women in B.C. if (when) the NDP forms government?



Lois Boone

Prince George-Mount Robson

My riding is split in two, an urban and rural split. Prince George is no different from other urban centres in the province. Women are underpaid, although some inroads have been made in the higher paying jobs in the pulp mills, for example. The big difference is in the rural areas where there are no jobs for women. Young women in particular have to leave their communities to find work. If women want to work there's little for them.

Abortion services are not too bad in Prince George. The hospital is still performing abortions. Women outside Prince George have to travel.

On a regional basis we are anxiously awaiting the opening of the university - UNBC. The university will make a big difference to women in the community, enabling them to complete degrees without having to travel to other parts of the province. The university is key to development. We also need a cancer clinic from both an economic and medical standpoint.

I think it will be a slow change. We can't expect changes overnight. Women should have an equal participation rate in boards and committees that are now dominated by men. My biggest fear is that people's expectations are so high they might expect everything in E+30.



Elsie McMurphy

Saanich North & the Islands

The most recent census figures show women in Saanich North earning an average of \$13,000 compared to \$24,000 for men. It's clear that women aren't making progress in terms of economic equality, and, in fact, may be falling further behind.

In terms of choice, women in the area have access to the Greater Victoria area hospitals. Health care is still a problem for women due to the lack of government-funded health centres that deal with women's health concerns.

Projects relating to pay equity, funding of community health clinics, and affirmative action programs. I'm particularly concerned about violence against women and children. We need transition house funding and better legislation to protect women from violence. The cycle of poverty and powerlessness has to change.

A government with a larger number of elected women, that will put women in charge of specific programs and pay attention to issues that are important to women. We will address poverty issues through increases to welfare rates and minimum wage; eliminate health care user fees; make education and training more accessible to more people. The plight of single women is particularly obvious because of low pensions and lack of support services for older women.



Shannon O'Neill
Shuswap



Sue Hammell
Surrey-Green Timbers

What is the current economic situation of women in your community?

What is it currently like for a woman in your community who is in search of an abortion or alternate health services?

What pet project(s) would you like to see the provincial government undertake?

How do you see things changing for women in B.C. if (when) the NDP forms government?

I have no statistics regarding the economic situation of women in my community, but know that even though there are a fair number of single parent mothers here, they are better off in a small town. They pay less rent, more people have their own gardens so food is plentiful. Retired women are not well off, but again with less rent and more access to food they are getting by. There isn't as much poverty in a small community. There are a number of high profile women in this community.

My nine years on the hospital board leads me to believe there isn't a problem. We have good health services for women, but because this is a small community, there isn't a wide range of services. There is not an overabundance of doctors in this community but there are sufficient to provide needed services. There is a family resource centre and a transition house. Ours is a good community for women.

I would like to see the provincial government undertake to close the large gap between the rich and the poor, as well as take more action around environmental issues.

Things will be better for women when the NDP form the next government because the NDP are more aware of women's issues. The NDP won't just pay lip service they will take action. The NDP will take the lead in all issues.

Surrey-Green Timbers has more single-female parent families than average, typically renters whose income is well below the provincial average. Some co-ops, but poverty among women - including single women - is widespread. Services for women are inadequate and opportunities are abysmal. Training and assistance at Kwantlen is more accessible than it was, but not good enough. Daycare that is both affordable and available is scarce.

There is no freestanding abortion clinic. Surrey Memorial has no services for victims of family violence, and Boundary Health is so understaffed that basic public health standards are barely met.

All aspects of public policy that affect women need radical improvement if equality is to be achieved. Unless we tackle the whole range of problems no single project has much chance of success.

A NDP government will develop a legislative framework to provide for the implementation of pay equity; expand opportunities for upgrading and job training; provide better access to post-secondary education for women; extend benefits and protections to part-time workers; and establish affirmative action programmes for women. In Surrey we have four women candidates, and once elected, we are confident that we can make a difference in government.



Penny Priddy
Surrey-Newton

Many women live below the poverty line... women receiving income assistance, on pensions, many women heading single parent families, working for minimum wage, often without benefits, and working in their home without remuneration, benefits and pension plans.

There is some access for women to abortion and alternate health care. Barriers for women include: access to information regarding available health care, on the basis of age, language and literacy; a strong anti-choice movement;

Across the board inequities suffered in Surrey must be addressed. Lowest education funding, fewest per capita hospital beds, lowest funded health unit and almost non existent funding for services for women at risk. There must be initiatives aimed at building a support system for women and their families including home support services, a sexual assault centre and counselling for women and children who have been abused.

More women in positions where major decisions are made and policy is developed. There will be a mandate to enforce policy and legislate support for women to reach their full potential. There will be initiatives in the area of gender equality and pay equity. Perhaps the most exciting will be an opportunity for the children of British Columbia to see women in their rightful role shaping the future of the province.



Joan Smallwood
Surrey-Whalley

Surrey Whalley is a working class community. The average income for women (1986 Census) was \$10,522. We are a poor community, and as in any community, women are the poorest. Surrey Whalley has a disproportionate number of single parent families headed by women.

Very limited access to abortion services, due to long waiting lists for all services. This limits the use of the hospital generally. Most women are referred to Vancouver or the US.

I would hope that our government will be able to increase choices and reduce poverty for women.

In addition to my answer of the previous question, it is my hope that women will begin to take a stronger and more influential role in discussions that affect themselves, their families and their communities.



Joy MacPhail
Vancouver-Hastings

My constituency is a microcosm of economic issues facing women. It's a working area and there's not enough jobs, day care, money, transit or housing to make women's lives comfortable.

We're very fortunate in Vancouver. We have the only free standing abortion clinic in the province. We're in better shape than women in the rest of the province. Women in the rest of B.C. should have the same services that we in Vancouver have.

My highest priority issues are pay equity and affordable and accessible day care.

Our lives will be immediately better. We will have a government that represents our interests rather than one that hates us. I'm looking forward as a woman to being part of a new government to bring about equality for women.



Darlene Marzari
Vancouver-Point Grey

Point Grey is one of the more affluent ridings in the province. However, we can assume that women in the riding still earn only 60% of men's wages. There are also a large number of single parents living on welfare rates that are 40 to 60 percent below the poverty line. Poverty may be more invisible in Point Grey than in other areas, but there's no doubt it exists.

Access to abortion in the riding is relatively easy through Vancouver hospitals and local health clinics.

Under an NDP government, hospital boards will not be able to obstruct a woman's choice to have an abortion. Women's equality, whether in pay in the workplace, in freedom from violence in the home or on the street, and access to justice will be part of an NDP women's agenda.

Although all women's issues cannot be addressed at once, women can be assured that all the issues they have raised will be addressed. Planning will be a major focus and committees will be consulted. Budgets will be based on that planning, and not on expediency or rewards to friends. Specific programs will include education on gender issues for judges; comprehensive anti-violence programs; pay equity initiatives; doubling the number of day care spaces; affirmative action; core operating funding for counselling services and women's reproductive health clinics.

What is the current economic situation of women in your community?

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Gretchen Brewin
Victoria-Beacon Hill

Although people assume that Victoria has a good economy, the women are not well-off financially. The area is home to a large number of seniors and single parents, 73% of the population earns less than \$30,000 a year, and 69% of the housing stock is rental accommodation.

Health services are readily available, through the new wellness centres designed for seniors and the James Bay Health Clinic (started under the previous NDP government). Abortions are readily available through the local hospitals.

I would like to see a program to combat violence against women, including an education component, as well as money and resources to enable groups to develop anti-violence programs. We won't be just talking about it; we'll be doing something positive.

I expect the new NDP government to look at pay equity and employment issues, to establish policies that affect women in the work force. Housing is another area that will see some changes. Older affordable housing in the inner city is being demolished to build condos that are usually too expensive for families and seniors. Those people are having to move outside the city, where they don't have the same employment opportunities and they are far removed from health services, decent public transit and other services.



Helen Chaplin
West Vancouver-Capilano

The general economic situation of women in West Van Capilano is extremely good. Although there is no visible poverty, I am concerned about some senior women who are not able to get out. There could be an underlying problem with seniors that is not being addressed.

It is not difficult for women to access abortion or alternate health services. The Lion's Gate Hospital is a good facility that provides support or services for women. I am concerned that there is only one refuge for battered women in this community, that isn't enough.

I would like to see the provincial government get their act together on educational reform. Teachers deserve to be shown more respect. A new direction needs to be taken in the education of students. The future will be very different, and they will need to have skills to fit into a very different workplace. Students are being denied access to universities because of high standards, and educational alternatives, such as trade schools, are not in place.

The change for women will be like night and day. The Women's Ministry will coordinate all legislation e.g. pay equity, opportunities, and improved day care which will lead to more access to education. It will be a revolution. I foresee more feminist input in school texts, and more respect for native peoples and their cultures.

In Memory of Grace MacInnis

July 1905 - July 1991

Grace MacInnis represented all that is best in a politician and an M.P. She was an outstanding Canadian who spoke French and had a sensitivity to all regions. She practiced democratic socialism in practical ways - speaking eloquently about bread and butter issues that affected people's lives and encouraging people to organize and take collective action to solve problems and work for change.

She had clear goals as a socialist, a deep respect for people and a dogged determination to fight for what she believed was right. She didn't hesitate to speak her mind as the Prime Minister of the day discovered.



She was a defender of the poor and elderly, supported women and labour in their struggles and continued her husband Angus's fight for redress for Japanese Canadians.

I new Grace best on the front lines of community action in the 70's. She encouraged public housing tenants and mothers on welfare to organize and fight for their rights to childcare, jobs, decent housing and a say in decisions that affected their lives. Grace took up their cause in Parliament.

Grace had a lonely life as the only woman Member of Parliament. But despite heckling from some male MP's, whom she once called 'M.C.P.'s', she continued to fight for birth control programs and the right to choice on abortion. She often said that all children should be wanted and loved and women should make their own decisions on medical matters. She also advocated pay for parenting so women would not have to suffer the indignities of welfare and their essential work would be recognized.



Grace continued her interest in people, in Canada and in our party after retirement and despite failing health, she was in demand as an inspirational speaker and she rarely refused an invitation. She used to say 'I work fine from the head up.'

Grace had a rare ability and strength to accept a debilitating disease with great courage and dignity and to go on from there.

Grace was the first woman president of the B.C. NDP, and she continued to be very active in policy matters and on the Honorary Life Members' Committee and the Woman's

Committee. Those of you who attended the Regina Convention of 1983 when our Party was very low in the polls and we were feeling very depressed, will recall how Tommy Douglas and Grace MacInnis, both frail and in poor health, came out of retirement to inspire us all with their eloquency and supreme optimism.

Grace continued to be an inspiration for aspiring politicians. Ian Waddell and I benefited from her wise advice on several occasions. As Audrey McLaughlin said, women across Canada continue to consider Grace MacInnis their role model.

Above all Grace cared for children and wanted a better world for future generations. I know that Grace would want her lasting legacy to be the Lucy L. Woodsworth Fund, which she established in memory of her mother, to enrich the lives of disadvantaged children. She said she wanted the fund to provide kids, who have few opportunities, with a little lift-up through new experiences such as music or drama lessons, camping or outtrips or equipment for sports. Her hope was that this Fund, which is administered by the Vancouver Neighbourhood House Association, would continue to grow to benefit more children. Your contribution will be a tribute to Grace.

The last time I saw Grace was when I drove Stanley Knowles to visit her in Sechelt. They had a grand reunion recalling 50 years of friendship and Grace was as sharp as ever. Stanley told me on the phone 'she was always working for a better world for all of us, but especially for young people.'

Grace MacInnis will remain an inspiration to future generations for her pioneering efforts in the CCF-NDP, her integrity as a politician, her love of Canada and her dedication to achieving a peaceful and caring world through social democracy.

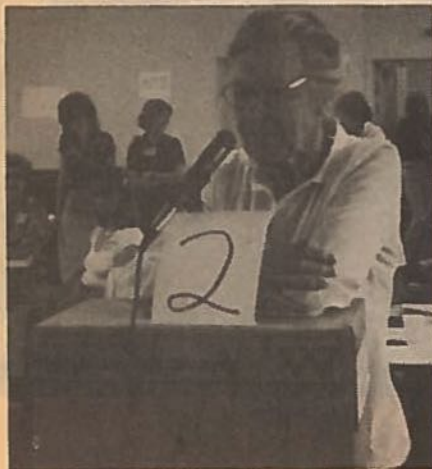
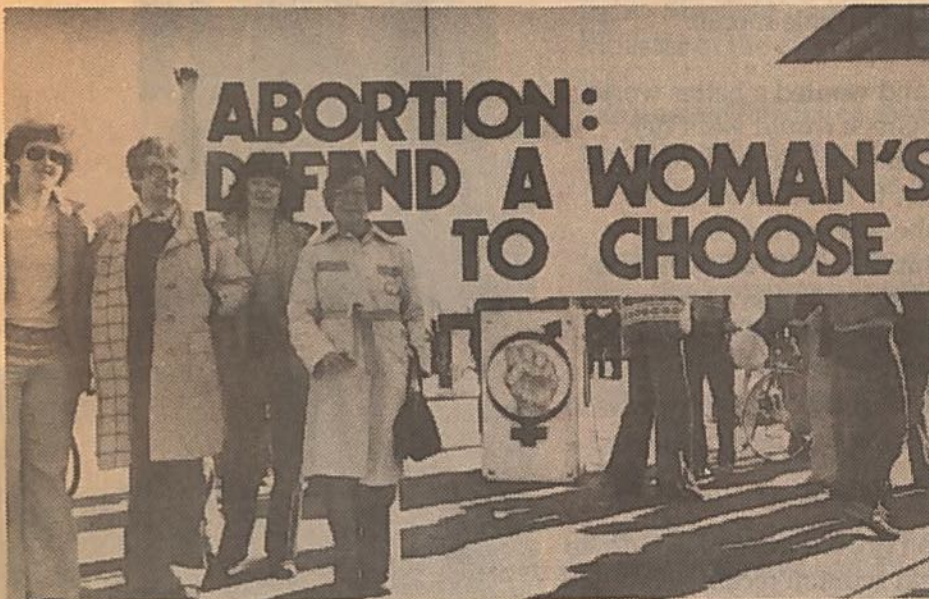
We extend our condolences to her family and friends in their loss. But we also celebrate a rich life that has left a legacy for us all.

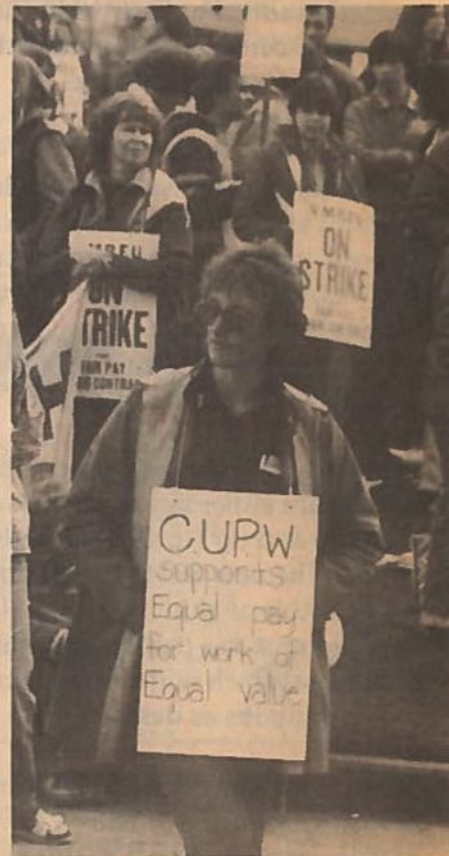
Margaret Mitchell, MP
July 17, 1991



A Retrospective...

The photos on these pages are representative of just a few of the hundreds of women that have marched, spoken out, attended meetings and seminars, and gone to conventions to the furtherance of women's issues in the NDP. This is our salute to you! If you can find your face here, drop us a line at Provincial Office giving us an idea which photo, when and what event it was taken at, and we'll give you a one-year subscription to PRIORITIES!





Gun control is a women's issue...

This article has been reprinted with kind permission from Dawn Black, MP, Women's Report, Summer 1991.

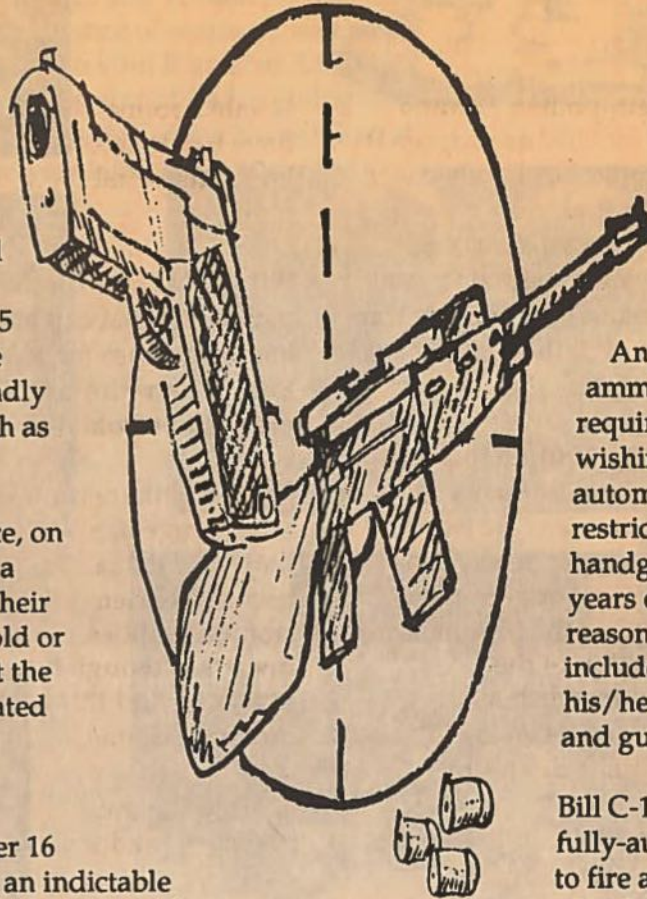
Guns do not cause violence against women, but are overwhelmingly linked to the fatality of this violence. The majority of women killed by husbands are killed with guns. Gunshot wounds are 15 times more deadly than those from knives and far more deadly than those from weapons such as clubs, fists or feet.

Guns can be used at a distance, on women attempting to escape a sexual assault or battering. Their presence in a violent household or sexual assault can ensure that the woman is constantly intimidated into doing exactly what the aggressor demands.

Currently, any individual over 16 without a criminal record for an indictable offence involving violence within the past five years (ten years for a subsequent offence) may legally purchase a firearm. One can be convicted of drug trafficking, fraud, theft, break and enter, and still be legally permitted to buy a gun.

Especially relevant to women's safety: as most wife beaters are either not reported or convicted, many men can and do legally buy guns and shoot their wives. The new Bill C-17, introduced in May 1991, changes this only in the respect that now a 16 or 17 year old requires parental permission to obtain a certificate which will allow them to purchase as many weapons as desired.

There is no way of checking for mental disturbance involving violence or hatred of women. There is no registry of all firearms: prohibited (fully-automatic weapons), restricted (handguns), and unrestricted



(rifles, shotguns, many military and paramilitary weapons). There is no limit to how many guns can be owned by one person.

Anyone can buy unlimited ammunition. No reason is required to be provided for wishing to purchase a semi-automatic weapon. To require a restricted weapon, such as a handgun, a person must be 18 years of age, and have a valid reason for requiring the gun, which includes protection of life, use in his/her occupation, target practice, and gun collecting.

Bill C-17 would ban the import of fully-automatic firearms converted to fire as semi-automatics, and provides for the future restricting or prohibiting of other weapons, upon the recommendation of the Canadian Advisory Council on Firearms, which is dominated by firearms owners.

One does not need a permit to own a gun, only to buy a new one: A person pays \$10 for a Firearms Acquisition Certificate (FAC) which allows one to buy an unlimited number of guns for the next five years. C-17 would raise the FAC fee to \$50.

A small number of MPs or Senators can challenge any proposed regulation in the House of Commons, including the restricting and prohibiting of military- and paramilitary-style weapons, and have it defeated in the House of Commons. In this sense, C-17 is considerably weaker than its predecessor, Bill C-80, which died before it could be passed in spring 1991.

A staff inspector with the Metropolitan Toronto Police Force stated that \$100 (not \$50 as proposed) for each FAC application "would just barely cover the administrative costs." The firearms administration system is running a deficit of \$3 million. Canadian taxpayers are subsidizing gun purchases for recreation. Persons who hunt or trap in order to sustain themselves and their family are not required to pay an FAC fee, nor should they.

Currently, no training or test is required to purchase or use a gun. Legislation has been on the books since the late 70s requiring that firearms owners pass a competency test. It has never been proclaimed into law by the federal government, because the latter has never given the provinces any funds to set up the administration of this requirement. Bill C-17 would establish a competency requirement that can be waived in rural areas at the local firearms officer's discretion.

In some areas, one can obtain a FAC in 15 minutes. The bill propose a waiting period of 28 days between the application for and the granting of an FAC, to prevent some people from buying guns on the spur of the moment to use in so-called "crimes of passion" or suicide in the depths of despair. C-17 also requires the provision of a picture and two references (of the applicant's choice) to obtain an FAC.

If Marc Lepine had been carrying a knife instead of a legally purchased semi-automatic weapon, he would probably have been unable to kill 14 women and wound another 13 persons. As he possessed two legally purchased 30-round clips of bullets, he was able to kill or maim 27 people within a short period of time, with no possibility that anyone could realistically intervene.

If only 5 round clips had been available, he would have had to reload 11 times, each time providing at least a few vital seconds for his victims to escape or hide.

Bill C-17 allows for the future restriction of handgun magazines that can hold more than 10 cartridges, and magazines for semi-automatics that hold more than 5 centrefire cartridges. Competition shooters are exempt from this provision.

Currently there is no definition of what constitutes safe storage of a firearm. Gun control advocates have said that all firearms owners should be required to demonstrate to police that they have safe storage facilities. Some representatives of gun owners, although firmly in favour of safe storage practices, find this suggestion too cumbersome and time-consuming.

Court decisions about what constitutes safe storage may vary, and include free access to unguarded



"New airline strategy. All first-class passengers have to have one."

(Gun control continued...)

loaded weapons in a locked house. The bill provides for regulations to be drawn up in the future on what constitutes safe storage and gun collecting.

Comparative studies show that gun control saves lives. No one wants to take guns away from legitimate users. In a rural area, a gun can be a way of controlling one's environment: eliminating gophers, shooting wild animals which threaten the livestock, hunting for food and sport. Much of the opposition to stricter gun laws come from gun owners in rural areas. Polls show 80% of Canadians support stricter gun laws, including a majority in rural and small town areas.

NDP justice critic Ian Waddell, MP (Port Moody-Coquitlam) supports C-17 with amendments that he will propose, as a step toward better control of firearms.

In the same session as the government introduced C-17, it also introduced C-6, a bill to facilitate the export of automatic weapons and light armoured vehicles with mounted automatic weapons. Canadian arms manufacturers can now play a greater role in supplying other countries with weapons which can be used against Canadian soldiers, and civilians in other areas of the world. Stay tuned for another war such as that in the Persian Gulf.

For more information about guns and women, write to Dawn Black, MP, House of Commons, Ottawa, Ontario, K1A 0A6.



The world according to Kathy Hill...

by Kathy Hill

In my letter on page 3 I mentioned that I enjoy reading. About four years ago I realized that I had spent almost 30 years reading primarily male-written, male-published books. I therefore decided that it would be fair if I only read women-centred books until I am approximately 70 years old.

I include here a sample of some of the wonderful books, written by women, that I have read. They have changed my life, and I am grateful to the extraordinary women who wrote them.

Sonia Johnson has undoubtedly given me more joy and hope than any other author. I highly recommend any of her books, but you should start with *Going Out of Our Minds - The Metaphysics of Liberation*, then read her semi-biography, *From Housewife to Heretic*. She also has published *Wildfire - Igniting the She-Volution*, and has a new book forthcoming this fall dealing with relation'ships'. Videos are available as well, from her publisher, Wildfire Books, Albuquerque, New Mexico, 87184.

I don't read a lot of novels, but I highly recommend the International Women's Crime series from Seal Press (P.O. Box 13, Seattle, WA 98111). I love mysteries, and these are feminist mystery-dramas. Try *Hallowed Murder*, by Eileen Hart; *Antipodes*, by Maria-Antonia Oliver; or *Glory Days*, by Rosie Scott. Also available from Seal Press is a remarkable book called *Past Due - A Story of Disability, Pregnancy and Birth*, by Anne Finger. The press release read: 'A riveting true-life story of one writer's account of her struggle to control the birth of her baby, (this book) explores the complexities of disability and reproductive rights.' It most certainly does.

While *Sisterhood is Global*, by Robin Morgan, may not be the type of light reading you prefer, it can be read in many stages without losing continuity, and unquestionably remains one of the greatest and most readable reference books of all. It is published by Penguin Books.

Other reference books I have found valuable (and fascinating) are: *A Women's Thesaurus*, by Mary Ellen S. Capek, (Harper and Row); *A History of Their Own, Volumes One and Two*, by Bonnie Anderson, and Judith Zinsser, (Harper and Row); and especially

interesting is *The Woman's Encyclopedia of Myths and Secrets*, by Barbara Walker, (Harper and Row).

I have been reading more on the subject of the religion of women and have enjoyed: *The Crone - Woman of Age, Wisdom and Power*, by Barbara Walker (HarperSanFrancisco); *The Great Cosmic Mother - Rediscovering the Religion of the Earth*, by Monica Sjoo and Barbara Mor, (Harper and Row); *Spiral Dance - A Rebirth of the Ancient Religion of the Great Goddess*, by Starhawk (HarperSanFrancisco); and *Drawing Down the Moon*, by Margot Adler (Beacon Press).

In poetry my most favourite recent reads include: *Another Language*, by Sue Sanie Elkind (Papier Machè Press, Watsonville CA), a wonderful collection of the most woman-centred poems on aging that I have ever encountered; *Talk About It*, by Rozena Maart, which brings us the power and passion of Black, African women; and *Woman Sitting at the Machine Thinking*, by Karen Brodine (Red Letter Press, Seattle WA) a posthumously published volume of poetry by a most remarkably sensitive woman.

Feminist organizing is the topic of: *Feminist Organizing for Change - The Contemporary Women's Movement in Canada*, by Nacy Adamson, Linda Briskin and Margaret McPhail (Oxford University Press, Toronto); and *Bananas, Beaches and Bases*,

Making Feminist Sense of International Politics, by Cynthia Enloe (Pandora Press, London).

Lastly I would like to pass on a few of the many magazines I have come to enjoy. *Canadian Demension* (Winnipeg Manitoba); *off our backs*, a newspaper/magazine which seems to be the longest running women's magazine anywhere, something like 25 years! (Washington DC); *Connexions, An International Quarterly* (Oakland CA), which sounds stuffy, but is actually an extremely interesting collection of articles written by women around the world, each issue deals with a specific topic; *Welfare Mothers Voice* (Milwaukee WI) published by the welfare warriors, whose editorial statement defines them as 'angry and bored with the lies and stereotypes about moms who depend on government child support. We will no longer remain silent.'; *Canadian Woman Studies* (York University, Downsview Ontario) which again sounds like a stuffy university publication but in fact is a wonderful collection of articles and interviews, by and about Canadian women, with each issue focussing on a single topic, now in its twelfth year; and of course *Kinesis*, our very own Vancouver based women's newspaper.

Most of these titles are readily available, but if you have problems finding addresses, drop me a line c/o Provincial Office and I will be glad to give you more information.

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