

THE FACTS OF POLITICAL LIFE IN THE ONDP
BACKGROUND PAPER FOR AFFIRMATIVE ACTION
POLICY RESOLUTION

I. Introduction

This document offers a review of the participation of women in the Ontario New Democratic Party, as well as a series of policy recommendations to be considered at the ONDP Women's Conference in November 1981. The purpose of this paper is to generate discussion among ONDP members, and particularly among conference participants, regarding the problems of female party involvement and possible remedies to the existing under-representation of women.

II. The Facts of Political Life in the ONDP

A.) Electoral Behaviour

Research on women's participation in the ONDP has been undertaken by Marilyn Roycroft (1973), Marianne Holder (1980), and Sylvia Bashevkin (1981). The results of this research can be discussed under four major categories, the first of which concerns electoral support for the party. In this area, numerous studies of Canadian politics since the 1960's have reported that the NDP tends to be a 'masculine' party, in that its voter base is predominantly male. This generalization is born out quite clearly in recent Ontario data from the 1979 Social Change in Canada study, which surveyed approximately 3000 respondents nationwide and, in Ontario, provided the following breakdowns in provincial party identification and party preference:

TABLE 1 Provincial Party Identification of Ontario Respondents, 1979*

	<u>Women</u>	<u>Men</u>
Conservative	46.4%	39.8
Liberal	40.1	34.8
New Democratic	13.1	25.1
(N)	(473)	(396)

*Data in Tables 1 and 2 are derived from the Social Change in Canada study, directed by Professors T. Atkinson, B. Blishen, M. Ornstein, and H. M. Stevenson of York University.

Respondents were asked: "Thinking of provincial politics, do you usually think of yourself as a Liberal, Conservative, NDP, or what?"

TABLE 2 Provincial Party Preference of Ontario Respondents, 1979*

	<u>Women</u>	<u>Men</u>
Conservative	48.0	38.1
Liberal	36.9	35.6
New Democratic	15.1	26.0
(N)	(450)	(388)

*Respondents were asked: "If a provincial election were held today, which party's candidate do you think you would favour?"

Figures in Tables 1 and 2 indicate that in the spring of 1979, women in Ontario were substantially less likely than men to express identification with the ONDP (13.1 versus 25.1%), and to state their intention to vote for the party were a provincial election held immediately (15.1 versus 26.0%). Female respondents in this sample were thus more supportive than men of the provincial Liberals and, in particular, of the Conservatives. While it might be tempting to attribute these patterns to such factors as lower rates of unionization among women in Ontario, controls for union membership indicate a continuation of the same basic trend, with 15.6% of female trade unionists and 31.7% of male unionists expressing identification with the provincial NDP.

If we consider only ONDP identifiers in the 1979 sample, we find that men comprise 61.5% of our party's electoral base, while women make up the remaining 38.5%. In other words, not only do women appear to be significantly less likely to identify with the ONDP and less likely to express willingness to vote for the party, but also females comprise substantially less than one-half of the ONDP voter base in this 1979 survey.

We can thus conclude from these data as well as from the results of a number of previous studies that women are underrepresented at the foundation of our party's support structure, the electorate.

B.) Riding-Level Participation

The second category to be considered in any review of women's participation in the ONDP would most logically be party membership, where we might question the extent to which females are represented at the most fundamental level of formal political affiliation. However, given that Provincial Office has not coded members by gender, we are unable to assess the proportion of card-carrying members which is composed of women.

Our second concern is therefore the participation of women in riding-level activities and, more specifically, their involvement in riding executives and riding delegations to Provincial Council. On this constituency level, we are blessed with some longitudinal or over-time data, which permit us to evaluate the progress made by ONDP women during the past few years:

TABLE 3 Riding-Level Participation of ONDP Women, 1973-1981

<u>Year</u>	<u>Riding Presidents</u>	<u>Riding Secretaries</u>	<u>Membership Sec.</u>	<u>Council Delegates</u>
1973	(10/117) 8.6%	N/A	N/A	N/A
1980	(36/125) 28.8	(82/125) 65.6	N/A	(53/160) 33.1
1981	(36/125) 28.8	(84/125) 67.2	(67/125) 53.6	(41/147) 27.9

Perhaps the most striking pattern to emerge from Table 3 concerns the ongoing underrepresentation of women in all but the most stereotypically feminine of local party functions. That is, while women have clearly become more numerous between 1973 and 1981 as riding presidents (from 10 to 36), and have increased their proportionate share of presidencies as a result (from 8.6 to 28.8%), they have tended to remain ghettoized in the positions of riding secretary (84, or 67.2% in 1981) and membership secretary (67, or 53.6% in 1981). The figures available to us also indicate that females currently comprise less than one-third of riding delegates to Provincial Council (27.9%), which is approximately the same percentage as female riding presidents.

Using these data, it is impossible to assess the extent to which riding presidents, secretaries, membership secretaries, and council delegates exert influence over decision-making on the constituency level. However, given what we know about the predominantly clerical responsibilities of riding and membership secretaries, it would seem fair to conclude that ONDP women are clustered in 'pink collar' occupations within the ridings, and that they are far from a position of representational equality (i.e., 50%) in what would appear to be more powerful offices, namely riding presidencies and council delegations.

C.) Provincial-Level Participation

The third aspect of female participation we shall examine is on the provincial level; that is, within the ONDP Provincial Executive, the committees of Provincial Council ^{and Executive} / and elected delegates to Federal Council. To what extent have women on this level broken through the 27-28% figures

which we found in 1981 among riding presidents and Council delegates? Are women better-represented at the higher, and presumably more powerful, levels of party organization?

TABLE 4 Provincial-Level Participation of ONDP Women, 1970-1981

Year	Provincial Exec.	Committees of Prov. Council & Executive***	Elected to Fed. Council
1970	(3/	N.A.	(1/6) 16.7%
1980	(11/28) 39.3	N.A.	(2/7) 28.6 *
1981	(11/28) 39.3	27.6% average**	(2/7) 28.6 *

*Includes federal P.O.W. representative

** Excludes ONDP Women's Committee Executive

*** Committees are listed on page 8

Data in Table 4 suggest a negative response to both of these questions.

They show that while women are nearing the 40% mark on Provincial Executive, they remain in the under 30% range in the delegation to Federal Council, and in the average level of representation on provincial committees. It is

notable that without the P.O.W. representative in the Federal Council delegation, women would be at the one in six level which existed in 1970.

As well, it is important to recognize that in what are arguably the most significant provincial committees (including Constitution, Election Planning, and Administrative), women comprise between 0 and 25% of the members.

It is only in the Fundraising committee that

women reach their pinnacle of committee representation, 46.1%. (Here we have excluded the ONDP Women's Committee from consideration, since our 100% representation on the Women's Executive would obscure severe underrepresentation elsewhere.)

On the provincial level overall, then, we can summarize these findings as follows. First, in the committees of Council (on average) and in the

delegation to Federal Council, women presently comprise less than 30% of participants. Second, the proportion of females is greatest in the Fund-raising Committee, and decreases systematically among the more administrative and probably more powerful provincial committees. Third, women now comprise less than 40% of Provincial Executive members.

D.) Political Candidacy and Campaign Participation

The fourth aspect of ONDP participation we have examined involves female candidacies and campaign management. It is on this level that women perhaps have the most significant role to play in the party, since the contemporary NDP -- like the CCF before it -- has brought forward important feminist policy initiatives. Our own Policies for Equality, adopted as ONDP policy in Guelph in 1980, form a very significant part of this recognition of women's rights in Canadian society. By fielding strong women candidates who can speak to these policy concerns, we can increase our credibility as a pro-feminist party, and could work toward equalizing female representation in our electorate and party organization.

TABLE 5 Campaign Participation of ONDP Women, 1971-1981

<u>Election</u>	<u>Candidates</u>	<u>Campaign Managers</u>
1971 provincial	(9/117) 7.7%	(19/117) 16.2
1972 federal	(12/92) 13.0	(8 / 92) 8.7
1979 federal	(15/96) 15.6	N.A.
1980 federal	(8 /96) 8.3	(28/96) 29.2
1981 provincial	(24/125) 19.2	(41/125) 32.8

To what extent have women participated as NDP candidates in recent elections in Ontario? Data in Table 5 demonstrate that between the 1971 and 1981

provincial contests, women candidates nearly tripled in number (from nine to twenty-four), but they remained an abysmally low proportion of our candidates overall (19.2% in 1981, the highest so far). In recent federal campaigns, we have also fielded few women candidates; in 1980, for example, our female representation in Ontario was merely eight out of 96, or 8.3%. This is clearly inequality, in a party which professes concern for equality in its policy and election statements.

When we consider the fate of our women candidates, these figures become even more glaring. The ONDP elected one female MPP in 1981, Marion Bryden in Beaches-Woodbine. Our women candidates placed third in 22 ridings, so that in nearly all ridings where the ONDP nominated a female candidate, that candidate placed last of the major contenders. This point indicates that in 1981, ONDP women candidates were very heavily concentrated in no-win -- or at least long-shot -- constituencies.

The role of women in ONDP campaign management is also summarized in Table 5. Here we find that while ONDP women have generally been better represented as managers than as candidates, they comprise only 32.8% of campaign managers in 1981 -- a figure which is in the same range as much of the riding- and provincial-level participation data reported above. We might hypothesize that women in campaigns remain clustered in canvassing and fund-raising activities, although data are not available with which to pursue this point.

III. Conclusions

The data presented in this review of women's participation in the ONDP tend to suggest two major conclusions. First, women were and continue to be

underrepresented in positions of responsibility on the riding and provincial levels, including as candidates. Second, women have generally broken through the 40% level of participation only in 'pink collar' areas, including as riding and membership secretaries. These two findings lead us to propose a series of recommendations regarding increased female participation in the ONDP, especially in positions outside the 'pink collar' sphere which we have identified.

October, 1981

Committees of the Provincial Executive & Council considered in this study:

Administrative
Budget
Campaign Techniques Review
Constitution
Education
Election Planning
Electoral District Agents (EDA's)
Ethnic Liaison
Franco-Ontarian
Fundraising
Media Advisory
Policy & Resolutions
Policy Review
Tripartite
Youth Steering