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# Women's Report Bulletin des femmes

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## NDP Calls For More Funding

ON TUESDAY JUNE 7th 1988, the federal government announced a long awaited plan for the funding of programs for battered women. This initiative is the Conservatives' answer to the Canadian family violence crisis.

While any money is a step in the right direction, **New Democrats** feel that this program is a poor response to the actual needs of battered women and those who work with them. Brian Mulroney certainly hasn't kept the promise he made in the 1984 women's debate, that his government "would not be inhibited by dollar amounts" when it came to the funding of shelters and services for battered women.



**Marion Dewar, New Democrat critic for the Status of Women,** pointed out at a press conference that the federal government's plan provides only \$10 for each of the million women who are battered every year.

The problem of wife battering is a very important one in Canada. The cost of this violence against women to society and to the individuals directly involved are undeniable. If we want

to significantly reduce or prevent family violence, the federal government must take a real leadership role in providing adequate funding.

The Conservative initiative would create 500 new spaces in emergency shelters across the country over the next four years. **New Democrats** have estimated that the actual need for spaces is closer to 2,800 units. This number would double the number of spaces presently available to battered women and their children.

The Minister of Health responsible for the implementation of this initiative, the Hon. Jake Epp, was unable to guarantee that the provinces

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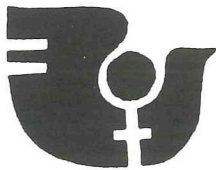
# Caucus Notes

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## NAC Lobby

On May 16th, **Ed Broadbent**, leader of the NDP, **Marion Dewar**, New Democrat critic for women's issues, and 17 members of the NDP Caucus met with over 100 delegates from the National Action Committee on the Status of Women's Annual General Meeting.

**Ed Broadbent** gave his full support to NAC's plans to hold another leaders' debate during the next federal election. As well, Broadbent stated that New Democrats supported NAC and many other women's groups in welcoming the Supreme Court decision on abortion declaring Canada's abortion laws unconstitutional.



**NATIONAL  
ACTION  
COMMITTEE**  
ON THE STATUS OF WOMEN

Topics raised by the NAC delegates included issues such as violence against women, refugee and immigration policy, tax reform, the reinstatement of native women and the Mulroney trade deal.

## Reproductive Technology

The NDP Caucus recently adopted a policy on reproductive technology. Given the major societal changes that could occur with the development of new reproductive technologies and the lack of national standards and ethics to guide current practices, the New Democratic Party Caucus supports the establishment of a Royal Commission to study the implications of new reproductive technologies.

This Royal Commission should be composed of at least 50% women and should endorse equality as expressed in the Canadian Charter of Rights and the United Nations Conventions on equality.

## Day Care Lobby

The NDP Caucus met with delegates of the Canadian Day Care Advocacy Association as they held a lobby of all three parties on Parliament Hill.

New Democrats expressed their support for the CDACA goal to establish a national system of affordable, accessible, non-profit and quality child care.



## Congress of Black Women

The National Council of the Congress of Black Women took advantage of a board meeting held in Ottawa to meet with several members of the New Democratic Caucus on February 29, 1988. Issues of concern to black women, such as racism, refugee and immigration policy, childcare, the Mulroney trade deal and employment were discussed.



## **Committee Reviews Bill C-31**

**IN MARCH OF** this year, the Standing Committee on Northern and Indian Affairs began a review of the implementation of **Bill C-31**, the 1985 legislation that finally removed many discriminatory clauses of the Indian Act. Bill C-31 was particularly important as it aimed to restore Indian Status to thousands of native women, and to their children, who lost their status after marrying non-natives.

Many concerns have been raised in the Committee by witnesses from all parts of the country. The problems with the implementation of Bill C-31 range from a bureaucratic backlog in the processing of applications to the inadequate allocation of resources for housing and social programs for members returning to reserves and limited education funds for reinstated natives.

**Jim Fulton, M.P.,**  
the **New Democrat**  
member of the  
Standing Committee

on Aboriginal Affairs, pushed very hard to ensure that the committee would conduct this review after a 9 month period of inactivity. He has also insisted that the Conservative dominated committee present a report to the Indian Affairs Minister, Bill McKnight, in June. If the witnesses' evidence was fully listened to, the report should be highly critical of the Mulroney government's approach to Bill C-31.

New Democrats recognize the positive aspects of Bill C-31; it ended sexual discrimination in the Indian Act. However, the lack of adequate resources committed to implementing the intent of this legislation means that the new law has not been applied in a fair and equitable way for native women.

New Democrats think it is time for the Mulroney government to meet its obligations to our Native people and to put adequate resources in the areas of housing, post-secondary education and in the simple processing of applications. Only this will ensure that appropriate funds are available so that women who have finally regained their rights, by law, can take advantage of them.

Progress must also occur in the areas of native self-government and the settlement of land claims. The Native and Inuit peoples of this country have a right to a life of dignity, respect and justice. New Democrats are committed to these goals and will continue to press for the full recognition of aboriginal rights in Canada.



## Battered Women (cont'd)

would provide the ongoing funding needed to run these new units. Operational funding is a provincial responsibility. Without the cooperation of the provinces, shelters will not be able to add the one unit they may receive from the federal government.

Women who are battered have a diversity of needs. Their children often

have witnessed violence and they need programs geared to their situations. Often, battered women have very limited financial resources. They may need a job and affordable housing as well as counseling and support programs to help them through the judicial system. Second stage housing is also very much in need to facilitate a woman's return to

the community.

Nothing the federal government has announced will adequately address these issues. Brian Mulroney promised Canadian women he would make family violence a priority. Yet his government is planning to spend \$8 billion on nuclear submarines and only \$40 million on women who are battered every day in this country.

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## Federal Court ruling

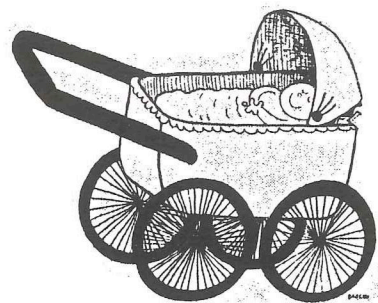
### **Maternity Benefits Upheld**

**IN A RULING** of the Federal Court of Canada on June 8th 1988, Justice Barry Strayer upheld the principle that maternity benefits must be exclusively available to women because of their specific need to recover from childbirth.

Justice Strayer also recognized the right of either parent to a period of parental leave for the care and nurturing of a newborn.

This decision was a major victory for Canadian women as it reaffirmed women's rights to maternity benefits while at the same time opening the door for fathers to play a more important role in childcare.

New Democrats have urged the Conservative government not to appeal this decision. Rather, the NDP would like to see the introduction of amendments to the U.I. Act that would

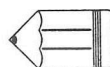


preserve the present maternity leave provisions and create additional parental benefits available to either parent. This would represent a positive step in recognizing fully the role of women in childbirth and the role of both parents in nurturing their children.

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**IF YOU WOULD** like to add a friend's name or that of a women's group to our mailing list, please write to:

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