

THE PINK PAPERS

GOVERNMENT FUNDING AND GOVERNMENT CONTROL
IN THE WOMEN'S MOVEMENT

DISCUSSION PAPER

MARCH 1983

SASKATCHEWAN ACTION COMMITTEE
STATUS OF WOMEN

The Saskatchewan Action Committee Status of Women was founded in 1971 to advance the political, economic and social equality of women. In the past decade, the women's movement has affected society. Today, as the economic crisis deepens, women are the first citizens to face the burden of cutbacks. Women's labour in the workforce, domestic and community all become the target for increasing control. Cutbacks to women means a reduction in already low wages; reductions in social services, health care, daycare and matrimonial property rights push women further from the goal of self-determination and full equality in the public forum. The Canadian women's movement has been shaped by a decade of government funding and government policies. It is time we discussed what effect this has had on the women's movement. It is time we asked who is driving the women's movement and who's interests this driver is serving.

We present the Pink Papers. We encourage your input, your experience and your dialogue.

We call for the united voice of women to demand the right to a self-determined women's movement.

SASKATCHEWAN ACTION COMMITTEE
STATUS OF WOMEN

I. How does government control work of women's groups?

Government Procedure and Policy

A. Secretary of State Women's Programming has been administering funds in accordance with a list of priority issues defined by government. The priority issues over the past four years were:

Action Strategies
Communication
Culture
Rural Women
Violence
Women and the Economy

In February of 1983, Saskatchewan women were told by Secretary of State that the 1983-84 priorities were:

Violence
Communication
Women and the Economy

Since the government works on a four-year planning cycle, Secretary of State was to forecast women's priorities, not only for the upcoming year, but for the next four years.

Impact on Women's Organization

B. As women work towards a society free from sex, race and class prejudice, we must remain responsible to women, and the issues which threaten women's equality and right to self-determination. In the past year, women have seen cutbacks and threats to minimum wage laws, daycare, reproductive rights, matrimonial property rights and social service. The immediate impact of controlling the priority list and the corresponding funds is that the government:

1. Enlists volunteer labour to work on government's priorities.
2. Controls limited volunteer hours to projected educational and political work making organized action in the current political and economic crisis extremely difficult.
3. Imposes a bureaucracy on community based groups which is alien to the accessible and collective nature of women's organizations.
4. Provides direction to project content. Women's groups of necessity redefine their activities to fit government priorities.

II. How does the government direct which groups will benefit from public funds and which groups won't?

Government Procedure and Policy

A. Government bureaucrats determine which groups receive funding guided in large part by the government priority list.

Impact on Women's Organization

B. Women are denied the right to develop and direct their own movement work. Government, by maintaining controls of decisions related to money, perpetuate the belief, that women are incapable or "not ready" to be self-directing and responsible, in their struggle for equality and justice.

III. How does government direct women's project activities?

Government Procedure and Policy

Impact on Women's Organization

A. During funding negotiations for 1983-84, government maintained the right to intervene and direct the number of board activities that would be acceptable to government. As well, the government directed money to be spent in specific activity areas.

B(1). We were told that we had committed ourselves to too many activities. Our work, skill and commitment was undermined by government's judgement that we had planned to do too much. The government then demanded that we develop an activity flowchart, to be included in our funding proposal. This chart was to list issues, strategies, dates, goals, wages, and volunteer hours involved for 1983-84. While maintaining that we must reduce our activities, the government reserved the right to decide that fewer activities could mean less funding than we had applied for.

This bureaucratic catch 22 is alien to community based action groups organizing against women's dependent status.

Women's unequal status is deeply rooted in government legislation and policy. To submit, for government approval, our plans and strategies to reform sexist systems is self-defeating. If the women's movement allows itself to be coerced in this way, we are giving government the resources to eliminate community based action against the status quo.

Community based planning is vetoed by government interference. Communities are accountable but not responsible. The government assumes a powerful managerial role.

Faced with the threat of reduced funds, we were still committed to the employment of two workers. Production costs for the newspaper far outstretched 6%. Any reduction in funds would have meant further reduction in salaries than the 6% solution already necessitated.

- (2). As a condition of funding, the government then directed a reallocation of money. We were told to place no more than two thirds of the funds with Network newspaper, the other one third was to be used for political and educational work. This condition holds a series of implications:
- a) Since salaries was the largest budget item, redirecting one third of funds meant redirecting salaries. Paid employees would not only produce the newspaper but would have to carry out educational and political work on behalf of the organization. This result has more implications:
 - The newspaper quality or quantity of issues would be reduced.
 - The volunteer board would have to design political

and educational activities that would reflect the ideology of the board, and would be done as part of a job definition.

- The volunteer board would assume an administrative role, not only for the newspaper, but also for political and educational work. This increase in administering of government funds would have effectively consumed the amount of woman hours available at a volunteer, community based level.
- b) If the government chose to defund SAC or the entire women's movement, the paid workers would be the few women left with needed skills to organize and work for change. The volunteers, much larger in number than movement employees, will have developed skills of administering government funds.
- c) The Network newspaper has strived to be a means of communication for women of all feminist ideologies.. The paper was "reader written" thus reflecting the issues relevant to Saskatchewan women.

Equal access, or the appearance of equal access, would be compromised if newspaper staff were involved in political organization or development education on behalf of SAC.

IV. How does government impose ongoing control of specific project activities?

Government Procedure and Policy

Impact on Women's Organization

A..The project of a community group applying for funding over \$60,000 is set out in a memorandum of agreement. This memorandum is a legal contract, prepared by government employees, based on a proposal submitted by the community women's group. Budget components and activities are ultimately determined by government.. Money cannot be transferred from one budget component to another without the approval of the government.

The government defined budget components of Administration, Political and Education, and Communications gave the appearance of adequate salary money for administrative tasks. Majority funds appeared in Administration with low budgeting to programme costs.

In practice, this ignored our concepts of:

- a) project activities
- b) paid and unpaid labour

As a volunteer board, we do political, educational and service work. Women on the committee develop political and educational skills so that women can continue to organize towards complete political and economic equality. The labour for political and educational work is therefore unpaid. This work is supplemented by project funds for material costs such as postage, paper and envelopes.

The production of Network was a service which was delivered by paid skilled workers. The cost of this labour was \$47,300, 63% of the total budget.

V. How does the government generate work for the community based group of volunteers?

Government Procedure and Policy

Impact on Women's Organization

(1) The government is demanding increasingly complex methods of bookkeeping and reporting. Flow charts, priority charts, labour hours/paid and unpaid, were all compulsory before funds would be approved. Funds, once approved, would be released in installments after quarterly activity reports and financial statements, submitted by the women's group, had been approved by government bureaucrats.

(2) Government decision making systems ignore the crisis community agencies face when cheques are late. Although we had our proposal to Secretary of State by February, 1982, we did not receive money until December, 1982.

B(1) Community based groups operating largely on volunteer time and inadequate funds face unrealistic burdensome reporting systems and deadlines.

The community base of volunteers is responsible for fulfilling the demands of government generated duties with no extra funds for administrative overhead.

The volunteer labour required to make up for deficient clerical support systems goes unrecognized and remains invisible, perpetuating the injustice of women's invisible, devalued labour.

(2) Although government bureaucrats retain control over the disposal of funds and decisions about those funds, the community volunteers bear the responsibility for wages and service commitments.

The Board of Directors, led from one month to the next with promises of a payment forthcoming, personally contributed \$50,000 to the production of the newspaper.

The Credit Union would not accept the SAC organization (as opposed to individuals) being eligible for a loan as the government would not guarantee the project funds. Boards composed of low income women would be placed in severe jeopardy. Most women, both in and out of the work force, are low income. This system of funding, and lack of understanding, for the constituency group being served, has a built-in class bias.

VI. How does the government undermine unity in the women's movement and contribute to the demoralization of volunteers?

Government Procedure and Policy

Impact on Women's Organization

A. The Saskatchewan Region Secretary of State budget for women's programming is \$195,000.

B. Regional funding does not meet the needs of women's groups seeking project money. This clearly means that women are competing for limited funds. This competition is a divisive dynamic. Women are pitted, one constituency against another, one issue against another.

The Canadian government, through Secretary of State, has identified women as being barred from full and equal participation in the social economic and political arenas of society.

The government, by funding women's struggle for equality, on the one hand, holds out the promise of state commitment to equality. On the other hand, underfunding contributes to low-income wages for paid workers and consumes many unpaid hours from volunteers to fulfill obligations to the government.

Women do not want to duplicate the exploitation of women's labour in our own struggle for equality. Women's contribution to the economy gives us the right to use public funds to fight for justice for women. Women have the right to self-determination which, by nature, opposes the status quo of sex, race and class divisions.

VII. How does the government prevent women's groups from taking public stands on political issues?

Government Procedure and Policy

Impact on Women's Organization

A. Women's services such as rape crisis centres, transition houses, employment outreach, health clinics and so on often risk defunding if they take a public stand on issues related to women.

B. Due to the severe lack of funds, women's services cannot risk defunding. Women are discouraged from forming alliances between service and political organizations. The women's movement is forced to divide, rather than unite, due to the economic and political power of the funding agencies (This may include agencies other than the Secretary of State). Women's political freedom is controlled through fear of defunding.

VIII. How does government's definition of labour value continue to exploit women?

Government Procedure and Policy

Impact on Women's Organization

A. Government, in assessing "value" assigned to various budget components in a community project, only credits labour paid for from the public purse.

B. Since projects are designed and delivered in the community by a volunteer board, this government assessment does not value labour which is unpaid. This attitude reinforces the bias of labour only having marketplace value. It is this organization of women's labour that has rendered domestic work invisible and devalued women's paid labour. The government maintained that too much money was put into Communications. Therefore, we were told to reassign one third of our total budget to political and educational work. At the same time, the government refused to recognize volunteer time as having any labour value. This discount of community based volunteer labour shows a disrespect for community work and the women who do it.

IX. How does the government evaluate the credibility of a group's project?

Government Procedure and Policy

Impact on Women's Organization

A. Government demands quantitative as opposed to a qualitative system of programme evaluation. Numbers of sponsored or co-sponsored political events, and educational events, numbers of briefs and position papers, membership numbers, conferences attended, and so on, are all assessed for quantity, not quality.

B. The quantitative evaluation tool is used to assess the "success" of women's work. If political, educational and service production doesn't meet the government's notion of success, groups could be defunded.

Women's values are not quantitative measurements of struggle. As women, we value our own work, development and community, as a dynamic process of growth and change.

X. Conclusion

Government is a powerful form of social, economic and political control..

The current organization of society incorporates values of sex, race and class divisions, which women work to change.

It is a contradiction to believe that the very systems of organization established by white men of privilege to uphold the values of white male dominance can provide direction for change towards a society of equality that calls for the elimination of white privilege, male privilege and class privilege.

The government system of decision making and responsibility is grounded in a system of male dominance. Women are obliged to work inside of a fundamental contradiction of the status quo preferring funds to change the status quo.

Struggling towards self-determination and equality inside of a system controlled and dominated by male values results in frustration, alienation and burn-out.

Women working towards systemic change from feminist educational, political and service organizations must decide an alternate means of administering public funds to women's organizations. Community based responsibility that guarantees the right to women to direct our own political, educational and service work must be developed.

We invite you to dialogue about this in your communities.

The Saskatchewan Action Committee believes women can create an alternative to the system resulting from government disbursing public funds.

We would appreciate any comments or ideas you may have regarding this paper.

We will continue to struggle towards freedom.

WE SHALL OVERCOME!

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