



New Democratic Party
responses to lobby
questions of the National
Action Committee on the
Status of Women (NAC),
June 17, 1991

1. Equality-seeking women's organizations perform essential work in achieving full economic, social and legal equality for women. That is why the New Democratic Party fought for the restoration of women's centre funding, and against the budget cuts that have, over the past few years, impaired many organizations, while eliminating others.

The New Democratic Party would restore full funding to the Secretary of State Women's Program, with annual indexation. The New Democratic Party would also financially support the efforts of groups working toward equality and dignity of aboriginal peoples, visible minorities, disabled people, and others working for human rights and equality.

2. We know that 1 in 10 women is battered by the man with whom she lives, and every 17 minutes, a woman is sexually assaulted. We know that the attitudes that men have a right to control women are prevalent among judges passing sentence on wife beaters and rapists, such as the judge who said, "Rules are like women, they are meant to be violated."

NDP status of women critic Dawn Black put together a list of some judge's statements for the Minister of Justice, and has issued press statements and made public education speeches on this issue. The New Democratic Party has repeatedly spoken out on this matter in the House of Commons, and would certainly institute mandatory judicial education on gender equality and violence against women.

In addition, since the above is only a drop in the bucket in the prevention of violence against women, we would also increase shelter

spaces and second stage housing for battered women and their children; fund expanded services to transition houses, such as follow-up, child care, prevention and public education programs, and counselling; expand the role of the National Clearinghouse on Family Violence so that it could play an active role in collecting statistics; fund national annual conferences for transition house workers; put in place a comprehensive education program, not just for judges, but for professionals who come in contact with battered women, police forces, and the public, ensuring of course that resources exist to deal with the increase in demand for services that usually follow public education programs; work to develop a strategy to help battered women in rural areas; and stand by a commitment to work with aboriginal and multicultural communities to develop services for survivors of violence that fully meets their needs.

NDP status of women critic, Dawn Black, M.P., has a Private Member's bill chosen for debate which would establish a National Day of Remembrance and Action on Violence Against Women, to be commemorated every December 6th.

3. New Democrats have fought deindexation and the destruction of universality at every step. We remain committed to universal, fully indexed family allowance and Old Age Security programs. We believe that universality and accessibility are the keys to quality social programs, and would restore funding to Established Programs Financing, would eliminate the spending limit on the Canada Assistance Plan, and revive the government commitment to universal, accessible medical care.
4. As in Ontario, the federal New Democrats recognize and would act on the inherent right of aboriginal nations to self-government. Aboriginal communities will be free to choose their own forms of governance, without interference from Indian Affairs bureaucrats or the Indian Act. Where First Nations wish to entrench self-government agreements in comprehensive land claims agreements (thereby providing constitutional protection), a New Democrat government would do so. We would recognize those treaties with sovereign First Nations and the obligations undertaken by Canada as a signatory to UN declarations

and covenants.

Negotiations on the practical aspects of self-government (economic self-sufficiency and development, parallel aboriginal justice systems, community control of community initiatives) will be dealt with on a nation-to-nation approach and will consider the rulings of the Supreme Court of Canada which require the broadest possible interpretation of treaty and aboriginal rights.

The New Democratic Party is the only party to recognize aboriginal title and undertake to negotiate claims agreements which do not require the extinguishment, or "cession and surrender", of aboriginal rights and title. As the federal government is in a conflict-of-interest position with regard to the "validation" and settlement of aboriginal claims, we would negotiate with aboriginal peoples the establishment of an independent commission to settle claims, and deal in good faith with legitimate leaders of aboriginal peoples chosen by them within national aboriginal representative organizations, not with government-picked individuals. Meaningful aboriginal participation will require adequate funding to aboriginal political organizations and communications systems.

NDP leader Audrey McLaughlin has spoken about how women, visible minorities, and aboriginal peoples should be fully represented in the process of constitutional change through a constituent assembly which would make recommendations for a renewed constitution that would include the needs and concerns of all Canadians. The NDP is the only federal party with such a policy.

5. The New Democratic Party will NEVER introduce criminal abortion legislation. Abortion is a matter for a woman to decide for herself, not the state. Reproductive choice is a necessary part of equality for women.

The New Democratic Party will look for ways to increase women's access to all reproductive health services, including abortion, whether it be through the Canada Health Act or other means. We would not block the introduction of RU-486. We support the practice of trained midwives. We have endorsed Planned Parenthood's Directions for a

Sexual and Reproductive Health Policy for Canada.

6. The New Democratic Party would finance a national child care program, with national objectives to ensure quality, availability/flexibility, and affordability of child care, to be developed with community input. We also support culturally accessible child care, for aboriginal and ethnic minority children and those with special needs. We would fund non-profit centres only; the best interests of children, including adequate child-staff ratios, good salaries for child care workers, good health, safety and nutritional standards, should be the cornerstone of a national child care system, not making a profit.

There is a child care crisis in Canada. We would attempt to act quickly on such a program.

The New Democratic Party strongly opposed Bill C-69 which placed a spending limit on the Canada Assistance Plan (CAP), which funds child care, social assistance and shelters for battered women. We would remove this cap on CAP.

7. The New Democratic Party would withdraw the Goods and Services Tax, and implement a restructuring of the tax system so that the burden of taxation does not fall upon the poor.

The New Democrat caucus has spoken out and presented petitions to remove the GST from sanitary napkins and tampons.

We intend to bring fairness into the tax system and generate revenue to pay for social programs by making the following changes:

Corporate: Remove tax breaks for depreciation and real estate firms; remove tax breaks that help finance mergers and acquisitions; tighten up tax rules for multi-nationals; remove the Manufacturing and Processing Tax Credit; introduce a minimum corporate tax; cancel the Business Entertainment Tax Deduction; and clamp down on deferrals. Personal: restore progressivity to the tax system meaning tax breaks for those at the bottom end of the scale and tax hikes for those at the upper end (over \$50,000/year); impose an estate transfer tax; impose a wealth tax; eliminate the Dividend Tax Credit; remove the lifetime

exemption and special rates for most capital gains.

Sales tax: remove the GST; introduce a green tax, to encourage the consumption of environmentally-friendly products, and to pay for the environmental costs of less friendly products; maintain taxes on alcohol, cigarettes and gasoline, but undertake a review of how a new fuel tax regime might be needed to help the Canadian freight transportation system survive.

8. a) The New Democratic Party would provide for increased benefit eligibility up to 52 weeks in regions where the unemployment rate exceeds the national average.

b) The New Democratic Party would increase maternity, adoption, and parental leave benefits to 26 weeks as a short-term measure. The long-term goal, as outlined in party policy, is to eventually extend these benefits to 9 months of paid leave. We believe the short parental leave provisions in Canada, which lag behind many European countries, make it very difficult for women to combine paid work and family responsibilities, and that this is not only harmful to women and families, but to the workforce and the country. Our policy is also to introduce an additional 10 days a year leave for family responsibilities.

9. New Democrats strongly support the conversion of military production to civilian production. In our 1988 defence position paper "Canada's Stake in Common Security", we stated that conversion is "an opportunity for economic growth because of the far greater effectiveness of capital investment in the civilian sector to create jobs."

New Democrats have consistently advocated using the Defence Industry Productivity Program (DIPP) to protect workers who lose their jobs during conversion, for retraining, and to assist companies who are actively seeking to convert. We believe that present DIPP subsidies should be halted immediately as they promote military production, making future conversion more difficult and expensive.

10. New Democratic Party policy calls for an effective enforcement system for mandatory goals and timetables in the Employment Equity Act to improve the representation of women, aboriginal peoples, visible

minorities, and the disabled. We believe employment equity measures should apply to all federally regulated businesses with more than 50 employees. Currently, only federally-regulated employers with 100 employees or more are covered by the Act.

The Employment Equity Act is coming up for review this year. The New Democrat caucus is a strong voice in strengthening the Act. Currently employers are simply fined for not filing a report. They are not fined or penalised in any way for failing to be fair to the designated groups. That is unacceptable.

We would work with groups working for better employment equity in establishing an agency to monitor plans and compliance, and to ensure that designated groups are fairly represented in training and other programs.

11. The New Democratic Party has called for sexual orientation to be included as a prohibited ground of discrimination in the Canadian Human Rights Act since the Act was proposed 14 years ago. The New Democratic Party has been the strongest voice, and sometimes the only voice, in the House of Commons on this issue. New Democrat MPs began a Canada-wide letter and petition campaign to force the government to uphold its promise, made 6 years ago, to amend the Act.

Lesbians, gay men and bisexuals have been waiting long enough for freedom from discrimination. When elected, we do not intend to make them wait longer.