

NAC  
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PRESIDENT'S REPORT

NAC ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING - MARCH 1982

TEN YEARS' LATER

On its 10th Anniversary, NAC is alive, well and growing. This report addresses the specifics of this conclusion by examining the activities of this Executive as they relate to our major purposes.

The major goals of NAC are clear in all our planning documents and are reasserted and undertaken by each successive Executive. We are here to:

- (1) Build and improve a national communications network for affiliated organizations and individuals
- (2) To develop and maintain a representative national organization

The first two are the means by which we work to:

- (3) Influence legislation and policy on all issues affecting the status of women

First, I want to detail some of the things we have done to build and improve a national communications network for affiliated organizations and individuals. As President, I have reported regularly to you through the President's Letter in MEMO. After each Executive Meeting, we prepared an issue of MEMO with one of the Vice-Presidents taking responsibility each time for seeing it through. We produced eight MEMOS throughout the year and have received lots of praise for them. We wished to let you know what the Executive was doing, meeting by meeting, as well as covering items of general interest to all of us in the women's movement.

Status is back in a new format which looks wonderful and is a credit to NAC. The effort and cost required to publish this magazine in the inhospitable world of publications in Canada is monumental. NAC and the phenomenally hard working Editorial committee have devoted incredible energy and wit to the production of Status, and we have something to be proud of.

For the first time since 1979, NAC held a mid-year meeting, this time in St. John's, Newfoundland. This was the third mid-year meeting in our ten year history, and was very successful. The NAC Executive was able to meet the remarkable women of Newfoundland; women working on reproductive freedom,



transition housing, the status of women in the outports, employment opportunities for women, and many other issues, with energy, commitment and humour. Also, with an occasional infusion of Screech.

The Pensions Seminars across the country have been reported to you and will be covered in the report of the Pensions Committee. The quality of that effort is something to be proud of, as those of you who have attended the seminars and/or read the Pensions Kits can attest. Doing seminars on an important topic across the country is a model for how we should be working together. NAC should be working in greater partnership with our member groups across the country. As an organization, we had better access to grass roots opinions on pensions. The local groups enhanced their image and organization, and we were able to learn from each other. In this model for policy development and mutual education, NAC played the role I think it can and should play - that of facilitating the process of exchange and building from the grass roots up.

Another good model for us is the joint conference on Microprocessing Technology being planned with CRIAW and CCLOW. This partnership, where CRIAW represents the research component, CCLOW the learning component, and NAC the lobby component, has great appeal to me. Future Executives will have to decide whether this is appropriate or not, and will have to donate womanpower to this kind of cooperation.

This year's Executive voted to have a person doing membership liaison on the staff of the organization. Our membership is steadily growing, with 66 new groups this year. We lost 21, so there was a net gain of 45. We need a more consistent way of involving our groups in the day to day work of NAC, publicizing their concerns and getting grass roots information and concerns to the Executive more steadily and in greater detail. I hope this year's NAC Executive proceeds to act on this idea.

We regretted the loss last year of two Quebec member groups, FFQ, which left us at last year's AGM, and L'AFEAS, which withdrew during the year. As a result, we had no Quebec representative on the Executive. We attempted to mend fences throughout the year. Now we are glad that a regional representative from Quebec has been nominated and acclaimed to next year's Executive. There is very good news in that FFQ has decided to rejoin NAC, as expressed in their letter to us of March 3, 1982, and we welcome them back with great pleasure.

Our national perspective (goal No. 2) is achieved partly by the Executive, which has 23 members and national representation. The cost of this, with frequent Executive meetings, is high. The roles within the Executive have been well-defined and function fairly well. The role of Regional Reps still requires clarification and the next Executive might wish to address what the function of the Regional Rep is and how this role is different from Member at Large.



One problem we need to solve is continuity on the Executive. The Executive are all nominated for a one-year term, though people can run for more than one term. The first few months for a new Executive member who has not been in the NAC central office before are bewildering. Yet, there is a sense of urgency to get "the work done", and carry out the policy concerns of the membership. The lack of continuity because of our election system is, I think, an area of concern. The issues are complex, the expertise needed is great, and the day to day operations of the organization have grown in size and dimension. All of this, I think, argues for greater continuity in the Executive. Perhaps we should explore terms longer than one year on a staggered basis, so that the organization and the individual Executive members can benefit from experience.

The third major goal of NAC, influencing legislation and policy, is achieved through various forms of lobbying. The work of lobbying has been carried out this year through the committee structure which has been maturing over the years. The number of issues on which we need committees is numerous. We started out this year by conducting a priority setting session, and the following ranking resulted (this ranking was based on a number of criteria such as direction from the membership, urgency, etc.).

In order of priority:

NAC Policy/Lobby Area

Pensions  
Employment  
Social Services  
Constitution  
Federal/Provincial Fiscal Arrangements  
Native Women  
Justice  
Media Policy  
Educational Opportunities  
Culture  
Women in Sport  
Housing  
Volunteerism

NAC Operations/Communications Area

Annual General Meeting  
MEMO  
Nac Membership  
Membership Meetings other than AGM  
Finance  
Editorial (Status)  
Fundraising  
Executive Meetings  
Staff - Executive Secretary  
NAC Trust                   )  
Media Relations) equal ranking  
Friends of NAC           )  
Staff - Fundraiser) equal ranking  
NAC Constitution

Once we had established the areas in which we would have committees or were constitutionally required to have committees, the chairs were nominated and committees formed. These committees were assigned budgets and were responsible for carrying out plans to lobby in their particular area, with major actions and positions being subject to Executive approval. The Committee Reports here at the AGM (a new feature of our process of reporting to you) will tell you in greater detail what we have done this year.



I hope the committee structure continues to develop. Well-developed committees allow all the expertise on NAC to be recognized and used effectively, and they enable the women on NAC to take responsibility for areas of policy and to carry through on that responsibility.

I personally would like to see the lobby cycle at NAC more firmly tied to the federal political cycle, and I wrote a few papers on this topic. Such was the pressure of other things that we did not get a chance to discuss them. They may be of use to future Executives.

No report of this year would be complete without reference to the struggles and tensions which, again, were reported to you as they happened - often blow by blow. The committee nominated to set up the Special Meeting of the membership has reported to you on the sequence of events. From these reportings you know that there was a consistent minority who felt they had grievances with the 1981-82 Executive procedures and actions.

It is obvious that, in an organization such as NAC which represents a wide spectrum of opinion, there will be differences. These differences are healthy and can lead to vital debate. This view is clearly reflected in the Report of "The Strategy for Change" Conference of Women in Canada in April 1972. To quote:

"We agreed that a certain amount of tension is healthy. If we want our movement to be dynamic, we must accept the clash of forces which creates the all important process of change."

In our normal process, the decisions of the majority take precedence. The people holding minority opinions have several choices: they can choose to unite with any majority on those issues which they can work on together, and regret those they can't; they can choose to lobby all their colleagues on the Executive to change or rethink their stands. In this case, the choice was to create a paper campaign among the member groups, and unfortunately this campaign was conducted in a highly personal manner. I think this year's Executive dealt with the events in an honourable manner within the established procedures of our organization. I regret they occurred, but I have praise for how we handled them. We, in the women's movement, must not force ourselves to carry an added burden of false unity and harmony. We will differ. We are not an homogenous body of opinion. Managing our diversity honourably is the key, and I think we achieved that.

I offer some procedural suggestions which arose out of the events, which were discussed by the Executive, and which might be worthy of consideration for future Executives:



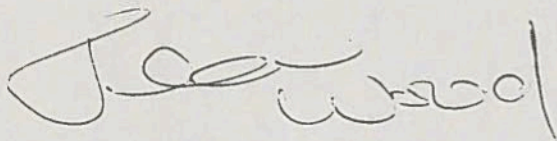
- That an Executive member is accountable to the member groups in policy matters and to the Executive in day to day operational matters. (It was requested, at the February Executive Meeting, that I include this in my report.)
- that future Executives should determine the channels through which expression of opinion can be made in order to facilitate constructive debate between the differing viewpoints of members of the NAC Executive.

NAC is evolving and needs to evolve to meet the needs of the next ten years. It has grown from 35 "member" and "participating" groups in 1972, to almost 200 affiliated paid-up groups today.

The size of the budget, staff and the Executive has grown similarly. NAC has had many achievements over the years. We may, as the 1972 Conference said, have "miles to go", but we must truly celebrate with Canadian women some of the successes of this year:

- A constitution which reflected some of our concerns
- A woman on the Supreme Court of Canada
- Paid Maternity Leave in significant union contracts
- Equal Pay for Work of Equal Value decisions which affected thousands of workers

I wish NAC continued success in all its endeavours.

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Jean Wood".

Jean Wood  
President