

# Women's rights BULLETIN

NOVEMBER 1988

Ontario Federation of Labour Women's Committee

## The Mulroney Years

Over the past five years the women's movement in Canada has been strong enough to force even a pro-business Tory government to respond on major issues. The response has been half-hearted. The breadth and strength of the women's movement and the labour movement in Canada has prevented the kind of assault on women's rights we have seen south of the border.

Looking at four key issues we can see how dismal the Tory response has been to the demands of women.

### Free Trade

While free trade goes beyond women's issues, one of the worst aspects of the Mulroney-Reagan trade deal is the way in which the government has ignored the impact on women. Women will be worst hit by the deal in terms of job loss, lowering of income, reduction of social services, and over direction towards more of a market economy.

We still have not heard these famous plans for retraining for women who would lose jobs under the deal. No study of the effects of the deal on the service sector have been done by the government despite the fact that it is the largest sector of our economy and this is the first free trade agreement that covers services. Could it be because 80 per cent of women work in the service sector?

### Employment Equity

One of the first new policies announced by the Tory government was an employment equity bill. In response to the Abella Commission Report, which revealed scandalous statistics about systemic discrimination against women, visible minorities, disabled and native peoples in Canada, then-Employment Minister Flora MacDonald announced the government would bring in employment equity legislation.

Bill C-62 was an extraordinary piece of hocus pocus that required employers to report statistics on hiring and promotion of the target groups but not to implement plans with targets and timetables to improve the representation of target groups at all levels. So that if an employer hired 10 women this year into non-traditional jobs and 5 women next year and report that, he would be complying

with the legislation.

Women's groups, labour and others denounced the legislation as useless. Reports from the almost 400 employers covered by the Act will be made public shortly but the best we can hope for is a graphic illustration of the extent of systemic discrimination in this country.

### Choice

The behaviour of the Mulroney government on abortion has been an insult to every woman in this country. For their entire term, they did nothing to amend the abortion law, despite the views of a large majority of the population that abortion should be a matter of choice between a woman and her doctor.

Then, following the Supreme Court decision striking down the abortion law, Mulroney shamelessly refused to take any responsibility to ensure women's rights. His government did nothing to stop cowboy Premier Bill Van der Zalm from breaking the law by denying funding for abortions in British Columbia. He freed his caucus to pontificate day after day upon the evils of abortion and vote in large measure to ban abortion altogether, defying the Supreme Court decision and voting for a bill that would amount to a death sentence on thousands of women.

All through this, Mulroney himself said

nothing on the issue. If nothing else convinces women to vote this government out, their behaviour on the choice issue should.

### Child Care

Mulroney's Canada Child Care Act is probably the best example of how this government has used rhetoric and sleight of hand to try to trick the population into believing that they are doing something progressive. Fortunately a strong child care movement was able to scotch the bill before the election.

The Child Care Act was a step backward for child care. Instead of helping to expand service, the legislation introduced new ceilings on spending. The Act did not contain national standards to ensure quality and affordability. And for the first time the Act ensured funding to commercial centres. Mulroney's child care policies would have been disastrous for women and their families. Yet Mulroney claimed that it was a big step forward.

Whether on women's issues or on free trade, taxes, and environmental issues, Tory policy will impact worse on women and others at the bottom of the income scale. It is in the interest of every woman in this country that this government be thrown out on its ear.

— Judy Rebick



Rally supporting 110 striking cleaners, members of SEIU Local 204. Joe Pantalone, Metro Councillor for Ward 4, Sister Julie Davis, OFL Executive V.P., CUPE, OFL V.P.

## CONVENTION CALL

**OFL ANNUAL CONVENTION**  
November 28-December 1, 1988  
Sheraton Centre  
123 Queen Street West, Toronto  
Telephone 441-2731

**New Delegate Session**  
November 27, 1988  
3:00-4:00 p.m.  
Sheraton Centre, Dufferin Room  
Contact: Carrol Anne Sceviour  
441-2731

**OFL Women's Forum**  
November 28, 1988  
7:00-9:00 p.m.  
Sheraton Centre,  
Civic Ballroom  
Contact: Carrol Anne Sceviour  
441-2731

**OFL Human Rights Forum**  
November 27, 1988  
6:00-7:30 p.m.  
Sheraton Centre  
Dominion South Room  
Contact: June Veacock  
441-2731

### CBRT & GW Convention Delegates vote for Women's Committees

At its annual convention, the Canadian Brotherhood of Railway, Transport and General Workers Union passed resolutions to appoint a National Women's Committee and encourage their membership to form women's committees at the local level.

The delegates also authorized the new National Women's Committee and the National Executive Board to develop a policy on Sexual Harassment and report on the policy's implementation at the next Convention.

### OCBCC 6th Annual Conference & Lobby

November 4-7, 1988  
Downtown Holiday Inn, Toronto

The theme of this year's conference is **CHILD CARE: VISIONS OF CHANGE LOOKING BEYOND OUR BORDERS**. There will be speakers from the U.K., U.S.A., Italy and Denmark plus workshops, videos and exhibits. For conference brochure or further information please call (416) 323-0513.

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15 Gervais Drive,  
Don Mills, Ontario M3C 1Y8.

## Mini-Skools contract major breakthrough

Members of SEIU Local 204 Mini-Skools have a new 18-month contract that provides wage hikes of 12.5 per cent for non-qualified classifications and up to 33 per cent for qualified classifications, such as early childhood educators.

The contract also includes new benefits, such as a three-day personal leave provision with few restrictions, a voluntary benefit plan of which the employer will pay 50 per cent, life insurance for the employees and their families, a major medical plan and a dental plan.

The union was also able to negotiate a group registered retirement savings plan to be introduced on a voluntary basis. For every dollar that is contributed by the employee, the employer will contribute 50 cents to a maximum of two per cent of the employee's gross earnings per year. Employees may contribute from 1 to 6 per cent of their salary to the pension plan.

Mini-Skool employees were also able to achieve child care at reduced rates.

The contract is retroactive to February 1, 1988, and expires August 31, 1989.

## Equity Language Training Program

Immigrant and visible minority women's organizations have lobbied extensively over the last 10 years for an improved language training policy. Despite this, little progress has been made to meet their recommendations on the delivery of English as a Second Language training programmes.

A concerted effort by these organizations to obtain grants has resulted in the initiation of the "Equity Project in Language Training". The Equity Project will focus on developing a strategy to initiate change and producing a lobbying

and public education kit for community organizations. The kit will be available at the National Organization of Immigrant and Visible Minority Women in Canada Conference to be held in Vancouver in November 1988.

For further information please contact Alma Estable or Mechthild Meyer, project consultants, 99 Findlay Avenue, Ottawa, K1S 2V1, (613) 232-2832 or Carmencita Hernandez, Advisory Committee Equity Project, 777 Lansdowne Avenue, M6H 3Z1.

## SEXUAL HARASSMENT

### What can you do about it?

You too can help. If you have fallen victim to sexual or personal harassment, follow these steps:

Confront your harasser stating clearly that the behaviour and/or remarks are unacceptable. (This may appear difficult for some rather timid individuals, but remember, harassers choose their victims carefully. They usually choose an individual they feel will not speak up. Often confronting the harasser will deter further occurrences.)

Document all occurrences, dates, times, and the nature of the offence.

Include witnesses whenever possible.

Determine if you are the only victim or if group action is possible.

Call your union representative for guidance on the matter.

Lodge a complaint through your union.

— Written by Christine L. Jacobs, Assistant National Executive Director, Guild of Broadcast Journalists. Reproduced from ACTRASCOPE

## Disabled women to determine needs

The Disabled Women's Network (DAWN) is conducting a project to determine the needs and priorities of women in Canada who have disabilities.

DAWN will distribute a questionnaire and conduct interviews on a variety of areas. To obtain a questionnaire, contact Jillian Ridington, 3464 - 27th Avenue, Vancouver, B.C. V6S 1P6.

## Ottawa appeals court ruling allowing UIC payments to fathers

The federal government has decided to appeal the June ruling by Justice Barry Strayer which would allow working mothers to double UIC maternity leave to 30 weeks or provide 15 of those weeks for fathers to spend with their newborns.

The decision was viewed as a breakthrough in a number of areas, as it recognizes the importance of maternity leave for women to recover from childbirth, the equal role of fathers in child rearing and the importance of working parents having more time at home with a newborn.

Until the appeal is heard, the benefit levels will remain at 15 weeks and fathers will not be eligible for the new level of benefits.