

# PRIORITIES



A  
FEMINIST  
SOCIALIST  
PERSPECTIVE

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**Spot-  
light  
on**

**New Brunswick**

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*"The issues and demands raised by the Women's Liberation Movement are integral to the development of a democratic socialist society. The NDP actively encourages and provides support for women organizing around the demands of the Women's Liberation Movement and commits an NDP government to creating the legislation necessary to realize these demands."*

— NDP Policy on Women's Rights

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*Thanks to all the workers who have made the production and distribution of this magazine possible.*

## Priorities needs your help

Crises are nothing new to *Priorities*—we have had funding crises, there have been times when our strong stand on certain issues has provoked outcries from the more conservative areas of the party, we have had internal disagreement over content and approach. The fact that *Priorities* has weathered each crisis and continues to appear, issue after issue, year after year, is enough to make it unique. But you have only to talk to someone from outside British Columbia to realize just how unique *Priorities* really is. It is the only magazine of its kind and it is known and read by feminist-socialists across the country. When Alexa McDonough, Leader of the Nova Scotia NDP, spoke at the Women's Dinner in November, she devoted several minutes to talking about how the B.C. NDP Women's Committee is regarded as the leader in the struggle for women's rights and praising *Priorities* for providing a communication link and a vehicle for promoting analysis of issues from a feminist socialist perspective. B.C. women, she said, are the envy of women across Canada because they have *Priorities*.

Comments like these are refreshing. To many of us, *Priorities* is so familiar that we take it for granted. The sun will rise, the tides will flow and *Priorities* will appear. It is a touching display of faith. Except, for the small handful of women who actually put all those words down on pieces of paper and all those pieces of paper together, it is teeth-grinding frustration.

So here is another crisis.

It was decided at the November meeting of the Steering Committee that unless a collective of women willing to make a commitment for one year to producing *Priorities* could be found, *Priorities* should be discontinued. Over the past months, members of the Women's Committee have attended a number of meetings and workshops to determine the directions for the Women's Rights Committee in 1983. For *Priorities* to play a vital part in working towards these goals requires a dedicated band of women who will make sure this happens.

*Priorities* needs more than writers. It needs a group of women who will form an editorial collective to discuss and establish themes for issues, find contributors to write articles, make sure articles that are promised do indeed arrive, and discuss and edit copy collectively. It needs women to produce or find graphics and photographs, take care of finances and record-keeping, mail out issues and promote circulation. Along with its reputation as a valuable resource for women, *Priorities* has had a reputation for burning out women who have shouldered responsibility for its production. If *Priorities* is to maintain its credibility as the voice of the Women's Rights Committee, in fact, if *Priorities* is to continue to exist, there must be a commitment from individual members of the Steering Committee to take a share of the responsibility and the work.

A PRIORITIES WORKSHOP WILL BE HELD JANUARY 15.

If you want to see *Priorities* continue, please attend. If you live outside the Lower Mainland it is perfectly possible for you to work on *Priorities*. Information from this Workshop will be taken to the Steering Committee meeting, Sunday January 16 where the future of *Priorities* will be decided.

## CHAIRWOMAN'S REPORT

by  
Shelley Rivkin



## 1982 review

This past year has been a busy one for the Women's Rights Committee, containing many accomplishments, a few victories and some defeats.

Taking our direction from the policy resolutions passed at the 1981 convention, the WRC identified three main projects for the year: (1) the development of specific policy and strategy for implementation of recommendations coming out of the Task Force on Older Women, (2) the consolidation of child care issues within the Education Policy Committee, (3) the establishment of the Working Group on Technological Change.

In addition, we agreed to continue working with our existing sub-committees: Repeal 251, Non-traditional Jobs, and Family Law, as well as offering support and assistance to other groups working around issues such as manpower and welfare cutbacks.

By January it became clear that we needed to have a more concrete statement of our feminist socialist principles and the political tools we saw necessary to achieve our goals. A committee was struck to draft this statement and discussion took place on how we would present this to NDP women.

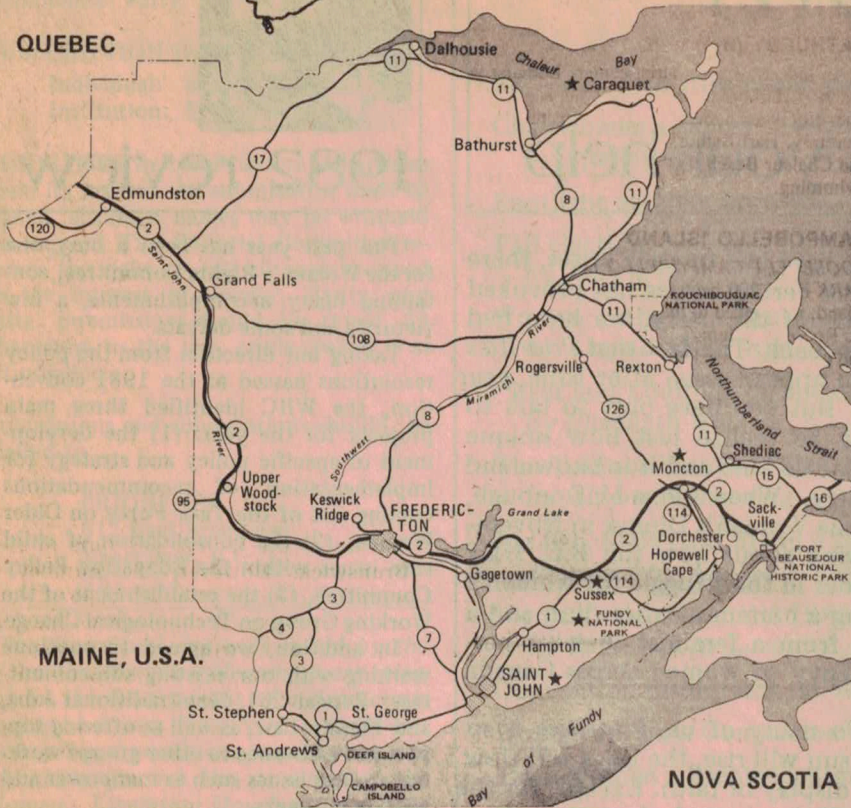
February brought election speculation and the steering committee saw the need to pull together an election platform around women's issues. A one-day conference was seen as a way of identifying and consolidating policy for an election platform, developing new skills or updating existing ones in campaign practices, and presenting our statement *Halfway to Feminism* which talked about where we were and where we should be going.

During this time we were successful in our lobby for a member of the WRC to sit on the provincial Election Planning Committee. This success was minimized when the legislative caucus released its economic strategy entitled *Let's Get to Work*. For nowhere was there any mention of women. This absence only confirmed our resolve to develop viable party policy on women's issues in the committee.

Continued on page 16



# Spotlight on New Brunswick



Few people are aware of the fact that the New Democratic Party of Canada has a practice of pairing its sections in the smaller, struggling provinces with stronger ones who help their sister provinces as much as they can.

New Brunswick is British Columbia's sister province. To help strengthen the ties between us, *Priorities* is privileged to include in this issue articles submitted by women active in the New Brunswick NDP.

The credit for making this possible goes to Alayne Armstrong, the New Brunswick representative on the federal NDP Participation of Women Committee.

New Brunswick:  
Population: 693,200

Legislature: 1 NDP, 37 Tory,  
20 Liberal

Economy: Forestry (pulp and paper), mining, fishing.

## Fall elections: big steps forward

by Judy Wilson  
Provincial Secretary  
New Brunswick NDP

The success of the NDP in the New Brunswick October election in doubling its provincial vote and electing its first ever MLA is seen by many observers as a landmark victory heralding the end of the two part system in the province. The Irving-owned press is having great fun speculating about the future of the Liberals, and at least one Conservative cabinet minister has gone into hysterics over the prospect of a 'socialist' in the legislature. (The former Minister of the Environment has now been relegated to the backbench).

For the NDP the victories of October 12 are the culmination of a long battle to break into traditional voting patterns. Many of the New Democrats who awoke with a hangover on October 13 have been at it for twenty or thirty years... they can remember the days when you could identify the three votes in your poll.

Those days are now firmly behind the party. The NDP is a political force in New Brunswick that can no longer be discounted.

### Robert Hall MLA (Tantramar)

The most obvious success is the election of Robert Hall in Tantramar. Tantramar has traditionally been Tory country. It's a sleepy rural riding, home of a quiet university, with an anglophone population surrounded by francophones. The riding lacks a base of organized labour but has a long history of CCF-NDP activity. To win this riding meant holding out against a heavy Tory sweep. Needless to say, the 400-vote margin on election night was a sweet victory indeed.

Tremendous progress was also made in the Kings County and Saint John area. In Kings West, the leader's riding, George Little nearly tripled his vote, going from 100 votes in 1978 to 3100, representing 27% of the popular vote. And in the nine ridings in the greater Saint John and Kings County area the popular vote is now at just over 21%.

In the north the most interesting battle was in Bathurst where Kevin Mann had come within 500 votes of winning in 1978. Kevin increased his vote by 300 but it wasn't enough to topple the in-

cumbent Liberal.

In all but one riding the NDP increased its vote, with the largest increases being registered in urban areas.

### Trends confirmed

The increases in the popular vote are significant since they confirm trends that have been slowly gathering steam since the early seventies. In 1974 the party doubled its vote, a performance that was repeated in 1978 and now once again in 1982.

In the years that led up to the '82 election the New Brunswick party concentrated efforts in developing organizational skills, building a solid relationship with trade unionists both through the Federation of Labour and at the grass roots level, encouraging women's participation in the party and taking the first steps towards making the party accessible to the 35% of the population who are French-speaking.

These efforts, combined with a solid campaign and the effective leadership of George Little have all added up to the progress seen on October 12. ♀

# Women in the N.B. election

by *Alayne Armstrong*

*New Brunswick delegate, NDP Participation of Women Committee*



*Elizabeth Weir, New Brunswick NDP candidate in York North*

One of the most exciting developments in the recent provincial election was the participation of women in the New Brunswick NDP. When nominations closed, the NDP had a substantial lead over the other three provincial parties in naming women to run for election, with nine women candidates out of fifty-four, or 17%. Tied for second place at 10% were the Conservatives with six out of fifty-eight, and the Parti Acadien with one out of ten. Trailing a distant third were the Liberals with three women candidates out of fifty-eight, or 5%. (The four sitting women MLAs—three Conservative and one Liberal—were all re-elected).

The women who ran for the NDP were Dee Dee Daigle (Saint John Harbour), Bertha Huard (Dalhousie), Marion Jeffries (Kings Centre), Nancy McFarland (Fredericton North), Patricia Morrell (Grand Falls), Judy Olsen (St. Stephen-Milltown), Anna Trefry (Sunbury), Elizabeth Weir (York North), and Louise Winchester (Edmunston).

## High calibre candidates

The quality of the NDP women candidates was particularly high. Although some weren't nominated until the middle of the campaign, all are active both in the party and in their local communities, unions and professional associations. And although none came close to being elected, all ran serious and committed campaigns. Four of the nine had percentages of the popular vote equal to or

greater than the provincial NDP average of just over 11%.

There was some interest in women's issues throughout the campaign. Early in September, a special riding association meeting in Saint John North was held on the concerns of single parents, in an area where 50% of social assistance recipients are single parents, most of them women. Issues discussed were low-rental housing, rent controls, civil legal aid, day care, public kindergarten, employment opportunities, and federal cutbacks in Family Allowance and Old Age pensions.



*Bertha Huard, New Brunswick NDP candidate in Dalhousie; Past President Dalhousie Labour Council.*

Also, early in the campaign, a list of recent NDP policy resolutions affecting women was prepared for local and campus media coverage. Copies of provincial policy as well as federal policy resolutions on women's issues were sent to one candidate on the North Shore who was to address a meeting on women's issues, and a similar request for party policy on women's issues for an all-candidates' meeting was sent to a candidate in Charlotte County.

## Women's issues in the campaign

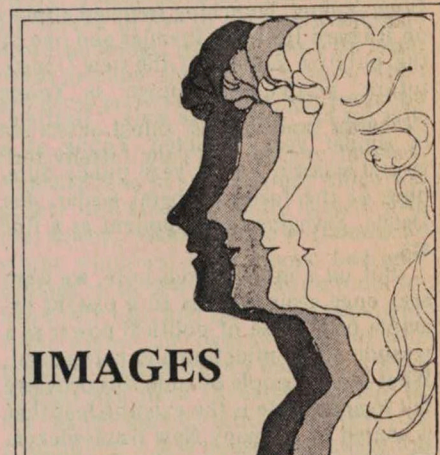
Women's issues did not figure in the overall campaign. According to a researcher for the Liberal Party, the only request for information on women's issues she received up to the fourth week of the campaign was from candidates in Charlotte County where a particularly active women's council scheduled the all-candidates meeting on women's issues referred to earlier. The provincial Advisory Council on the Status of Women

released a pamphlet on women's issues but little use appears to have been made of it.

Representatives of the three major parties were invited to address the first provincial conference on domestic violence during the election campaign. Judging from audience reaction the NDP clearly won the panel discussion on Response of the Political Parties to the Issue of Battering. Of course, the NDP already has policy on this and other women's issues, and has had for some time, whereas the other parties make up policy as it suits their needs.

Preliminary analysis indicates that the women's vote is not yet ours in New Brunswick. However, the number of women actively involved in local campaigns throughout the province shows a higher level of participation of women in the New Brunswick NDP than ever before. In many of the seven 20% ridings, women played an active leadership role, as campaign managers, canvass organizers, and official agents. With more and more women becoming actively involved in the party we can look forward to their continued participation as a significant political force. ♀

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# "Fear and loathing on the campaign trail"



Dee Dee Daigle with Manitoba Premier Howard Pawley (left) and New Brunswick NDP Leader George Little.

For far too long New Brunswick has been characterized by near-sighted Upper Canadians, and some even further west, as a "have-not" province. But this view indicates not only an acceptance of the line the Tories have been flogging to hide their mismanagement of the province and sack of the economy, but also blithely ignores our rich heritage of political skulduggery with such unforgettable episodes as the Atkinson scandal, the Bricklin "affair," and the Lepreau fiasco still warm in the minds of New Brunswick voters. Our province may have been pillaged by the pulp companies and sold out by the Liberals and Tories, but we will not be robbed of our rightful place in the annals of Canadian political history.

Since subtlety has never been a word which springs to mind when the issue of the use and abuse of political power in New Brunswick is raised, our latest election has continued that tradition. In one corner we had the Liberal leader, Doug Young, launching frenzied attacks on Richard Hatfield, Premier and one of the putative fathers of the new Constitution, particularly known as Young cites for his "distinctive walk." Hatfield, in similar vein, depicted Young as a virtual assassin for his very public dumping of the former Liberal leader, Joe Daigle. Savaging the opponent as a fine art.

But on a more serious note, we were also once again witness to a blatant example of the use of political power as a weapon of intimidation and harassment. What many people outside this province fail to appreciate is the existing fear that is shared by so many New Brunswickers of the consequences which surround desertion from the old-line parties. The haunted look of desperation in the eyes of people who say, "I would really like to work for you and want you guys to win, but I'm afraid of losing my job." And it is precisely this fear which has

been one of the real organizational obstacles for New Democrats in this province.

## Candidate suspended

At the outset of the campaign, Dee Dee Daigle, NDP candidate in Saint John Harbour, one of the Port City's industrial core ridings, was suspended from her job as an assistant claims officer at the Workers Compensation Board. The suspension was effective for the period of the election and without pay or benefits. Dee Dee is also treasurer of the New Brunswick party and vice-president and chief shop steward for CUPE Local 1866.

In New Brunswick, the Workers Compensation Board is not a creature of the civil service with its accompanying restrictions on political activity, but rather an independent agency whose workers fall under the authority of the Public Service Labour Relations Act, as do school board and hospital workers and others. There are no legislative restrictions on political activity nor were there any Board policy limitations in existence at the time Dee Dee announced her candidacy; however, this was soon to change.

Dee Dee's nomination seemed to spur the Board into a hectic phase of political review and development of the regulation of the political activity of its workers. And following what it termed an exhaustive (perhaps exhausted would be more apt) search, the board issued a policy directive stating that as of June 1, 1982 all candidates nominated for political office would be required to take what was euphemistically termed an "unpaid" leave of absence from the date of the election call.

When notified of this directive, Dee Dee informed the Board that the order could not be applied to her as she was nominated as a candidate on May 25, 1982 and the order clearly stated that it was to apply as of June 1st. Not to be

— with no apologies whatsoever to  
Hunter S. Thompson.

by Elizabeth Weir  
Vice-President New Brunswick NDP  
NDP candidate York North

deterred by such irrelevant considerations as the concept of natural justice and fairness, the Board rescinded their previous order and instituted a new order, the only change being that the new order was effective May 1, 1982. Dee Dee still maintained that the Board had no authority to pass a retroactive order or regulate the political activity of its workers in such a fashion. The Board's message was loud and clear; they would suspend any of their workers who ran for political office, especially if they were New Democrats.

What is even more ludicrous about the Board's actions is that the Board itself is viewed as a cesspool of political patronage. Many of the sanctimonious statements were issued by the Chairperson of the Board, a former Tory cabinet minister. The Board's chief administrator is the nephew of a current Tory minister.

## Grievance filed

Dee Dee has filed a grievance arguing that she was in fact suspended from her job, and her case is proceeding to adjudication. In conjunction with the NDP she also raised the issue during her campaign. What is clear about this incident is that there was a strong woman involved, with a union and a party that were willing to support her. Consequently Dee Dee could speak out against this kind of intimidation and also speak out on behalf of all those people in New Brunswick at the mercy of the Tory machine.

The kind of restriction that was instituted by the Workers Compensation Board must be fought and revealed for what it really is: a mechanism to ensure that only people who are independently wealthy will be able to run as candidates for political office. How many ordinary working Canadians and particularly women, can afford to take five or six weeks off work without pay? This kind of provision guarantees control of our political system by the privileged. It is discriminatory and constitutes not only a case of intimidation, but also an abuse of the democratic process. Dee Dee Daigle in her own way has started that fight in New Brunswick. ♀

When people think of native women in New Brunswick, they think of Sandra Lovelace. Sandra is the quiet, unassuming Maliseet woman from the Tobique Reserve in Victoria County, northwestern New Brunswick who, through a petition to the United Nations focussed world attention on those sections of Canada's Indian Act that discriminate against Indian women.

Sandra grew up in Tobique. Her grandfather was its Chief for 22 years. But when she left the reserve and married a white man, she lost all her rights and status as an Indian under the Indian Act, section 12(1)(b). The child of her marriage could never be considered an Indian under Canadian law. At the time, she didn't even know about the Indian Act. Sandra was still a Maliseet in her own mind and so was her son. But Sandra's marriage ended in divorce and, like other native women in her situation, she returned to live in her home in Tobique. There she discovered that legally she was no longer an Indian, no longer a member of the Tobique Reserve, and no longer entitled to live in reserve housing.

She stayed anyway, living first in a tent, then in the band office, then in the jail, and finally in her sister's house, part of a large group of Tobique women living under deplorable conditions caused by woefully inadequate housing facilities coupled with clearly discriminatory provisions and practices under the Indian Act.

#### Appeal to United Nations

Sandra could have changed her status if nothing else, by marrying her new Maliseet common-law husband, making her and her son Indian again. Instead she sent a communication to the United Nations Human Rights Committee in January 1978, arguing that the discriminatory provisions of the Indian Act were in violation of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights. The Committee agreed to look into her complaint. After waiting nearly a year for Canada to respond to a request for information to help it decide whether it could hear the case, the UN decided to hear it anyway.

The hearing was held in July 1980, and the Committee issued an interim report authorizing further hearings and the taking of additional evidence. In March 1981, a second hearing was held, and in September the Committee ruled that the Canada Indian Act did, in fact, discriminate against native women.

Sandra had won. In August 1982 two Parliamentary Sub-committees of the Standing Committee on Indian Affairs and Northern Development were estab-



lished, one on Indian women and the Indian Act, and one on Indian self-government, to investigate changes to the Indian Act indicated by Sandra's victory.

The first sub-committee has already reported, recommending the deletion of section 12(1)(b), a program of reinstatement so Indian women and their first generation children could regain status and band membership, and the removal of other sexually discriminatory provisions of the Indian Act.

#### Fight for decent living conditions

But bringing about changes to the Indian Act is really only half the struggle Sandra Lovelace and the Tobique women have come to stand for. The other goal is to change the really deplorable living conditions that exist for so many native women on the Tobique reserve, and the political power structure that has helped to perpetuate them.

The basic problem is that housing facilities on the Reserve, as in many reserve communities across Canada, are overcrowded and terribly inadequate. As new housing becomes available, married couples are given priority regardless of family size—families headed by women alone are at the bottom of the band council's new housing list.

Some of these women have been left homeless because of the discriminatory practice of the Department of Indian Affairs in issuing Certificates of Posses-

ion (legal documents showing that the holder is in lawful possession of land in a reserve) to the husband alone, rather than to the wife, or to husband and wife jointly. Thus, when a marriage breaks up, a woman can find herself and her children literally out in the street, while her husband continues to live in the house by himself, or rents it out to another party.

Others are women who, like Sandra, have lost their status permanently on marriage to a non-Indian. As a result, native women who are raising families are forced to live in over-crowded, run-down buildings, while others with lesser needs occupy the newer houses. Their problems are myriad. One woman raised her entire family before being given her own house two years before she died. Another lived in an old house which was poorly insulated and badly heated, with old wiring, rotten window frames, no storm windows, leaky doors, bedroom ceilings so sloped there was no room for a bed with legs, and rats in the basement. Each winter she had to move in with relatives for the coldest months. A third woman had been allocated \$18,000 by the band administration for the construction of a new house. The house was never finished—there were no floors and the roof leaked. The receipts indicated that she had been charged twice, or charged for material never received.

In 1977 a group of Tobique women, fed up with the situation, took over the

band council office to protest the poor housing conditions and discrimination against non-status women. They stayed there with their children for three months. During that time the Chief, George Francis, turned off the heat and power in the building in an effort to drive out the women. When a New Brunswick Power lineman arrived to restore the power, the Chief reportedly chased him off the reserve with a shotgun.

On another occasion the band hall was set on fire while the women and children slept inside; fortunately, the fire was put out before anyone was hurt, by nearby residents who supported the women's plight.

After the occupation 90% of the Tobique voters petitioned then Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Develop-

ment, Warren Allmand, to conduct an investigation into band policies during the occupation. They did not even receive an acknowledgement that the petition had been received.

#### Walk to Ottawa

In 1978 Sandra's petition was filed with the United Nations. In 1979 about 75 Tobique women and their children decided to walk to Ottawa from Oka, Quebec, a distance of about 100 miles, to protest the same living conditions that led to the 1977 band office occupation. The New Brunswick NDP responded quickly to their call for financial support and publicly endorsed their cause. In Ottawa the group met with several cabinet ministers and presented a position paper. Some were told privately by then Prime Minister Joe Clark that if the National Indian Brotherhood did not support them within the next few months, he would take action without them. Then the Clark govern-fell.

One of the main problems at Tobique—lack of accountability of the Chief and council for their actions—was still not being addressed. Complaints to Indian Affairs about housing policy regulations continually fell on deaf ears. Appeals to the federal Human Rights Commission and provincial courts met with the same response—lack of jurisdiction over Indian people or reserves.

In November 1979, three Tobique women again moved into the band council offices to protest the same living conditions, lack of response to their

## Militant women fight for five years



problems, and to provide a warm place for their children. The occupation lasted a week before the women and children moved to a nearby motel in fear of violence threatened against them on the reserve. Department representatives promised that the women's houses would be repaired and that housing would be provided in the meantime. About the same time George Francis was re-elected Chief in an election for which very few people turned out to vote.

#### Audit of band's books agreed to

In December 1979, the federal government agreed to audit the books of the Tobique council following allegations of irregularities between invoices for repair material sent to the band council by suppliers and invoices sent to some native women for payment. The annual audit of the council's books had not been done in 1978 because the auditor was ill.

On February 8, 1980 Cheryl Bear, one of the three women, moved into a partially finished, unallotted new house because her old house had been condemned. She had been on the waiting list for a new house for 6 years and her name had been at the top of the list but was left off the priority list in the spring. Meanwhile, single people who already had homes were getting new houses. The Chief had promised to fix her old house under an RRAP grant but this did not include other needed repairs like insulation. Cheryl did not want to accept the RRAP proposal since it would tie her to an old house that would never be adequate. Three days after Cheryl moved

into the new house the Council passed, by a narrow margin, a by-law proposed by the Chief, making interference with or occupation of band buildings, including unallotted houses, a summary conviction offence.

Later that year Cheryl Bear and four others were charged with occupying the band offices. They had gone there to seek a meeting with the Chief over Cheryl's house problems and had to wait around for councillors to show up for a meeting. The Chief told his employees that the offices were being occupied and to go home for 3-5 weeks.

The women denied the allegation. At the trial, the legality and intent of the by-law was put in question. As well, it was stressed that there was no occupation of the premises.

The validity of the by-law was upheld and the women found guilty. On appeal the conviction was overturned.

#### Wrongs not yet corrected

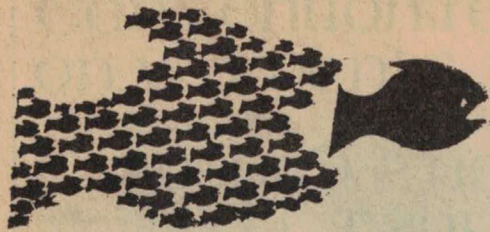
Things have been relatively quiet on the Tobique reserve over the last few months. There have been a few improvements in some individuals' housing. But the problems behind the housing crisis—the discrimination against single-parent and non-status women—have not been addressed. Women are still unable to obtain Certificates of Possession and have no protection from being turned out of their homes by their husbands. Women and children are still being forced to live in houses so dilapidated that they have been condemned.

#### Many men not supportive

The attitude of many native men, particularly those in positions of power, is still not very supportive. But the women of Tobique are used to waiting. They waited four years for the victory of Sandra Lovelace's petition. They waited one year for the victory over Chief Francis' by-law. They can wait a little longer to achieve the rest of their goals. But in the end they will win them all. ♀

*MP Jim Manly will mail copies of the NDP Caucus newsletter Native Network to anyone interested in following the progress of the parliamentary committees addressing the questions raised in the article above. There is no cost. Write to Jim Manly, House of Commons, Ottawa K1A 0A6.*





# Big fish, little fish - life in a New Brunswick fish packing town

by Allayne Armstrong

Based on an article by John Rousseau, (*Black's Harbour*, *Mysterious East* Vol. 18, Winter 1971)

## East Side, West Side

Connors Bros. Ltd. of Black's Harbour, New Brunswick, has a few things in common with B.C. Packers. Both are large fish-packing companies owned by the Weston chain, a giant food conglomerate and the largest company complex in Canada. Both have a work force comprising a significant number of women.

Beyond that, the similarities cease. Connors Bros. Ltd. of Black's Harbour owns 95% of Canada's sardine industry. It is one of the largest fish companies in New Brunswick, employing thousands of workers in half a dozen communities, with sales of \$35 million in 1976 and profits over \$1 million the same year. It is reported to be the largest sardine company in the world.

Connors Bros. has never had a union and efforts to organize one in the early seventies met with swift and harsh company reprisals.

In 1982 Black's Harbour, the largest of three fish-packing communities on the Fundy coast, is still a 19th century company town. Historically, the company owned virtually all the houses, stores, restaurants, theatre, community hall, library, garage, and even the local skating rink. Up until 1972, the town, now numbering about 1600, was not even incorporated. And although New Brunswick legislation says that only a legally-incorporated town may hire its own police, Black's Harbour had its own three-man police force, police and fire station, fire trucks and police cruiser, all provided by the company, long before the town was incorporated.

## The company town and social control

Started in 1883, Connors Bros. was bought out by a prominent New Brunswick family, the McLeans, in 1923. The company grew into the largest of its kind in the world and the town grew with it. The company built small, identical wood-frame houses, heavily subsidized with government grants under the Winter Works program. When the company was sold to the Weston group in

1966, the McLean family retained ownership of the company houses and the former owner stayed on as local boss.

Even today most people in Black's Harbour live in company houses. A 1977 survey turned up 83 owner-occupied and 1174 rented houses. Rents have always been below market—around \$100 a month in 1979 for a two or three bedroom house or apartment. But if a worker quits working for the company, his rent is immediately doubled. There is no protection against such action. A fired worker (at Connors firings are swift and arbitrary) will probably lose his home as well as his job.

In the same way, the company does not allow welfare or UIC recipients to live in the town. There was the case of a widow whose husband, a plant employee, had died of cancer. She was on welfare with several young children, having refused to work in the plant because she believed her husband's death was due to his work there. The company would not tolerate this—she was evicted from her company house and thus from the town. Similarly, if a person tries to collect UIC benefits, the UIC office calls up the personnel manager who gives assurance that work is available at the plant, and the person's benefits are cut off.

## Pattern of family employment

In Black's Harbour one-income families are unusual. Among workers' families, almost without exception, both husband and wife work and often the children work too. According to the 1971 census, of 420 families, 75 had one-income earners, 225 had two-income earners, and 120 had three or more earners.

The power of the company over people's lives is also manifested in other ways. By owning the land on which the town is built, the company can control who has access to its services. Stories from the past include accounts of a stop-post on the main road into town where a person would be asked his or her business before being allowed to proceed.

French Village, a small Acadian community at the edge of town, consists of houses that have always been privately owned. The residents are therefore much more independent of the company than their counterparts living in company houses. Many of the men commute to work in Saint John, sometimes for considerably more than the average wage paid by Connors Bros. Even more unusual for Black's Harbour, many of the women stay home as housewives. The only non-company retail outlets are located there, selling briskly to those who refuse to shop at company stores. Some ten years ago, the company ordered a company worker to build a roadblock across the company road leading to the Village, as an act of opposition to these elements of independence. The worker obeyed; then, realizing the consequences of his actions, inspired the already aroused Acadians to tear it down. The police arrived and rebuilt the barrier. Eventually, the company agreed to remove the roadblock but the worker was fired. Today the area which is on a hill suffers long periods of low or non-existent water pressure. Although the town was incorporated in 1972, its council, which controls utilities, is still largely dominated by company people.

The school and hospital, owned by the provincial government, were built by the company on company land and senior company officials, including two members of the McLean family (the former owners) sit as trustees and directors on their boards.

## Media control

Another example of company power is its pervasive influence over local media. At one time the company had its own newspaper. Now none of the newspapers in the surrounding area report village news other than of the birth, death or reunion variety. As a result, company workers have a total lack of perspective about their own situation. They know very little about the company. They can give only the vaguest accounts of the

Continued on page 10



*Women's Rights Committee new Vice-chairwoman, Louise Maurakis and new Chairwoman Joan Smallwood.*

## Women's Caucus at the 1982 B.C. NDP convention

*by Jo Dunaway Lazenby*

It was a quiet, uneventful convention, according to the local media reporters. But then, what do they know? They didn't even notice the important and highly significant accomplishments of the Women's Caucus. We now have three members of the Women's Rights Committee on the provincial executive and our resolutions on technological change, pensions, pornography and battered women were passed virtually unanimously by convention delegates.

### **Ballot victories**

Our victories on the ballots are a result—long-in-coming, well-earned payoff on our years of steadfast insistence on the principles of collective action, accountability, and open, democratic process. There have been times in those years that it seemed that this stubborn adherence to our principles was a guarantee of failure in contesting the election of party officials. And it is to our credit that we have been immovable in our stubbornness. We have succeeded in having our candidates elected, we have established and held for two years a base vote of one-third of convention delegates for all candidates running on the Women's Caucus slate, and we have helped to democratize the election process within the party.

A brief review of the past two conventions is useful in evaluating the events of this one. At the 1980 convention, the women's caucus decided to set aside its traditional policy of running a half slate of candidates and offer only the candidate for the Participation of Women delegate to federal council (Mercia Stickney). In the absence of any alternative slate from other programmatic caucuses (like the Open Caucus or Environmental Caucus at previous conventions) the regional caucuses met as usual to choose nominees for the official slate.

Last year the Women's Caucus ran candidates for the POW position, 4th vice-president and two member-at-large positions. We felt that since the Women's Committee represented a feminist per-

spective not necessarily shared by all women in the party, running 4 candidates would be analagous to the Labour Caucus running a limited number to represent trade union interests specifically and not necessarily all "workers" in the NDP.

We were successful in getting Hilda Thomas elected POW delegate and Elaine Bernard as an alternate Member-at-Large. (Elaine later became a full member-at-large when a vacancy was created by a resignation).

### **8 positions contested**

This year a recommendation from the Steering Committee that we again run candidates for only these four positions was rejected by the Caucus and it was decided that we would run the POW delegate, traditionally chosen by the Women's Caucus, and for 4th vice-president and six member-at-large positions.

The Caucus also passed a new motion to replace the one that has been reaffirmed at past several conventions: "That no woman nominated by the Women's Caucus allow her name to stand on a slate not democratically chosen."

It was felt that some of the regional caucuses were making an attempt to democratize the process of electing party officials and that our Women's Caucus candidates could further that aim by taking a feminist perspective into their regional caucuses and running for nomination there on a women's rights platform.

To facilitate this, the above motion was replaced by one stating that any woman nominated by the Women's Caucus and seeking nomination in her regional caucus must inform that caucus that she was a candidate on the Women's Caucus slate, that she supported the aims and principles of the Women's Rights Committee, and that this statement must appear on her candidate statement.

The following women were nominated to run for the Women's Caucus Hilda Thomas (Vancouver Point Grey)

POW delegate, Elaine Bernard (Vancouver Little Mountain) 4th vice-president and, for members-at-large: Louise Maurakis (Cranbrook), Joan Smallwood (Surrey), Muriel Overgaard (Victoria), Doris Lee (Nanaimo), Sharon Hazelwood (Cowichan-Malahat) and Shelley Rivkin (Vancouver Little Mountain).

The Women's Caucus nomination of Muriel Overgaard was later withdrawn because it was felt that she had not complied with the motion governing the seeking of nomination in regional caucuses.

### **Three elected**

Joan Smallwood took her nomination as a Women's Caucus candidate and our feminist platform into the Surrey regional caucus and won the nomination there in a democratic election. Her name appeared on both the Women's Caucus and the official slate. Joan went on to win one of the member-at-large positions on the provincial executive.

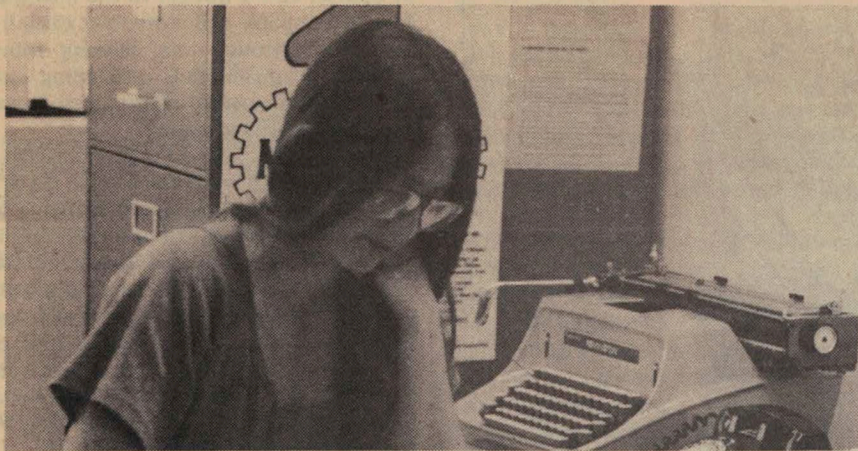
Hilda Thomas was elected POW delegate and Elaine Bernard, losing the battle for 4th vice-president by fewer than 60 votes was elected as an alternate member-at-large.

Our unsuccessful member-at-large candidates all pulled one-third of the vote, a very positive statement about the credibility of Women's Caucus candidates and the women's rights platform.

Our victories at this convention are only a step forward. It certainly is not the parity promised in party resolutions, as Hilda Thomas pointed out on the convention floor. But it does feel good!

A great deal of the good feelings can be attributed to the way in which the caucus functioned. Through long, frequent meetings (sometimes three a day—who needs breakfast or lunch anyway?) the women showed their commitment to work through difficult problems together and to continue to work until everyone was satisfied with the solutions. It was a shining demonstration of cooperative action and sisterhood. ♀

# Convention resolutions on women's rights



Jane Stinson, a researcher for the Canadian Union of Public Employees, was a guest speaker on technological change at the convention.

A year of hard work on the part of the Tech. Change sub-committee of the Women's Rights Committee culminated in a convention panel session chaired by WRC Chairwoman Shelley Rivkin with sub-committee chairwoman Joan Smallwood as resource person.

Highlight of the panel session was guest speaker Jane Stinson, a researcher from the CUPE national office in Ottawa. Jane spoke again when the resolution on technological change was brought to the convention floor.

The following resolutions sponsored by the Women's Rights Committee were passed. Because of the length of the resolutions, only the *Be It Resolved* portions appear here.

## Technological Change

Therefore be it resolved that the B.C. NDP, through the Women's Rights Committee, undertake the following program of action in 1983:

1. Distribution of the questionnaire

on technological change;

2. Organization of community forums on technological change;

3. Preparation and publication of a report on technological change for the 1984 provincial convention; and be it further resolved:

that the policy committees of the party (Labour, Health, Fisheries, Forestry, etc.) be urged to address the question of technological change in liaison with the Women's Rights Committee.

## Judicial Affairs

Hilda Thomas drafted the following resolution, prepared as a background paper, and served as resource person during the panel session.

Therefore be it resolved that:

1. The provincial government should press for immediate implementation of the recommendations of the House of Commons Committee Report on Wife Battering, with particular emphasis on Section 17 and Sub-sections A-G;

## 1983 WOMEN'S RIGHTS COMMITTEE TABLE OFFICERS

The following table officers for the 1983 NDP Women's Rights Committee were elected by the Women's Caucus at the convention:

Chairwoman: Joan Smallwood (Surrey)	Treasurer: Gail Hopkins (Surrey)
Vice-chairwoman: Louise Maurakis (Cranbrook)	Secretary: Sharon Hazelwood (Cowichan-Malahat)
Priorities Coordinator: Sherry Schniad (Surrey)	Editor of Women's Rights Page <i>The Democrat</i> : Nancy Walsh (Vancouver South)

Past Chairwoman Shelley Rivkin also sits as a table officer. Members-at-large and Regional Representatives will be chosen at the January 16 Steering Committee meeting. Quite a few names were placed in nomination at the final meeting of the Women's Caucus and women may still be nominated or volunteer for one of the positions.

## CAUCUS SETS WRC DIRECTIVES FOR 1983

The Women's Caucus adopted a recommendation from the Steering Committee regarding the directions for the 1983 activities of the WRC.

Two workshops were held prior to the convention to evaluate the past year's activities and to develop proposals for 1983.

The Caucus decided that:

1. The Women's Rights Committee strive to play a leadership role by organizing educational programs to deal with current women's issues from a feminist-socialist perspective.

2. The WRC set up an External Affairs Committee to publicize our positions on topical and other questions in the community.

3. That the primary function of *Priorities* would be the reflection of these activities in its pages. ♀

2. The provincial government should initiate measures equivalent to those recommended in the federal report on wife battering in all those areas which fall under provincial jurisdiction;

3. The provincial government should implement NDP policy on permanent funding for women's centres, transition houses and rape relief centres.

## Women's Rights

Be it resolved that the B.C. NDP condemns the distribution, sale and public display of pornographic printed, written, film or video materials and models;

Be it further resolved that the B.C. NDP considers material depicting the humiliation, domination, mutilation or murder of women and/or children for the sexual stimulation of the consumer to be pornographic;

Be it further resolved that the B.C. NDP strongly condemns such pornography as hate propaganda directed specifically at women and children;

Be it further resolved that the B.C. NDP demand that the Attorney-General of B.C. enforce existing provincial laws relating to hate propaganda to combat pornography; and

Be it finally resolved that the B.C. NDP pressure the federal government for amendments to the Criminal Code which will specify that pornography is hate propaganda against women and children and allow prosecutions by private citizens without the permission of the Attorney-General.

Under Women's Rights (submitted by Nanaimo Women's Rights Committee):

Be it resolved that an NDP government would enact a Provincial Pensions Act that would incorporate a section to provide pension plans for all regular part-time and seasonal employees. ♀

## FISH PACKING IN NEW BRUNSWICK



*"Union organizers have been denied lodging at the hotel... and quickly ushered out of town by company police."*

1966 company take-over or the 1971 unionization attempt. The company is particularly paranoid about exposure by the outside media. When an article on Black's Harbour appeared in a now defunct regional left magazine during the unionization campaign and was subsequently covered by the CBC, the company confiscated all copies of the magazine in town and dealt harshly with the CBC reporter.

### Fear and gratitude

The dependency of workers on the company produces a combination of fear and gratitude. Fear stems from the authoritarianism and harsh treatment of workers who step out of line. Fridays are heavy days in the packing room. To get enough packers, foremen threaten all kinds of consequences. There are women who miss doctors' appointments on Fridays because they fear losing their jobs. Firings are swift and arbitrary. The contract allows 'dismissal for just cause,' which is never defined. A worker is quietly taken aside at the end of the day and told not to return to work. If the person comes from a long-employed company family, the family will plead for a second chance. This is usually granted if the family agrees to take responsibility for the individual's work. An outsider gets no second chance.

Gratitude is based on the fact that the company has provided jobs over the years, especially during the Depression when other New Brunswickers went hungry. Another factor was the liberal paternalism of the former owner, the kind of boss who was on the plant floor each

day, knew every worker and his or her family members by name, and who could be approached for loans or reduced rent requests. As well, he handed out Christmas turkeys and trimmings to deserving poorer families.

### Union busting

The company's treatment of those involved in unionization attempts has been especially severe. Union organizers have been denied lodging at the hotel, refused room and board in people's homes, ostracized by former friends, and quickly and effectively ushered out of town by company police. During the 60's, a 14-year old boy from a company family was fired for refusing to reveal the identity of two company workers who were soliciting support for a union.

In 1970-71 the Canadian Food and Allied Workers Union began to sign up company workers in a unionizing drive. A committee of 45-50 people was set up and it had to work in complete secrecy. The sign-up campaign was long and difficult. A week's canvass of workers totally dependent on the company might win five or six. Better results came from those with some independence from the company, particularly French Village women whose husbands worked out of town. Meetings had to be held in nearby communities since the company owned or controlled all Black's Harbour meeting places. Attendance at information meetings was encouraging but some who had promised to come did not show up. It was later discovered that on the day of a union meeting, company trawlers would stall on the way home or cruise about at

the harbour entrance, arriving at the factory wharf just as the meetings were about to begin. Cargoes of fresh fish had to be unloaded, processed and packed requiring a large number of workers who, of course, could not get to the meeting. Senior company office-workers casually wandered through the packing room giving out unsolicited, misleading and frequently incorrect information about the union to the workers.

Nevertheless, the union managed to sign up enough workers at the Black's Harbour and two neighbouring plants to bring an application for certification before the New Brunswick Industrial Relations Board. In the face of strong company resistance to unionization, the Board ruled that the proposed unit of fish-plant workers was not appropriate for collective bargaining since everyone in town was really a company employee, and rejected the union's application.

The company moved swiftly and harshly to prevent any further organizing attempts. They fired all the members of the secret committee and evicted them from the town. Then they introduced an 'Employee Committee' of representatives from each plant which negotiates an annual contract. The primary purpose is to weaken worker solidarity and to identify and defuse discontent. Since the Committee is not certified there is no meaningful way it could call a strike. The Committee does not draw workers together since only the representatives meet—there is no mechanism for general meetings. Company representatives, usually the local boss and personnel manager, attend the Committee meetings. There are no membership dues; the company pays all the Committee's expenses.

The Employee Committee seems to have accomplished the company's careful design of keeping Connor Bros. workers non-militant and satisfied. Their perception is that they are doing well. Relative to previous pay, wages have risen substantially. In 1979 the best packers could earn \$50-\$60 on a good day; in 1969 they were doing well to make \$50 a week. Although working conditions have improved, compulsory overtime still exists, dismissal procedures are non-existent and there are no guarantees of steady work.

### Packers, piecework and social control

Connors Bros. wages have consistently been lower than those of other Atlantic fish workers, and considerably less than the national average. There are few, if any, fringe benefits. One way in which the company keeps wages down is to

## INTOLERABLE WORKING CONDITIONS

*"With the outside doors of the packing-room left open to unload the fish, the women packed wearing their overcoats while foremen passed pails of hot water to restore fingers frost-bitten from packing deep-frozen fish."*

hire local students during school vacations, laying off higher-paid regular workers, many with families, for seven to eight weeks. Of course, the School Board must give written permission for the employment of under-age labour, but then there have always been company representatives on the local Board. In 1970, when a warehouse collapsed, spilling 250,000 cases of sardines into the harbour, the company retrieved them and paid school children 1¢ per can to remove the rust with steel wool. One 16-year old student worked a full 40 hour week and made \$17.

Another method of keeping wages down is to hire hundreds of women on a piecework, part-time basis. Since a married man generally cannot make enough to support a family, his wife works too, usually in the fish packing room. Because of rather narrow pay differentials between workers and the piecework system, it is quite possible for a woman to earn more than her husband. This appears to foster a certain independence of spirit in the women packers. Although most of them are responsible for all the house work and child care at home, they do not let themselves be pushed around by their husbands, and they feel freer about shaping the direction of their lives than most women in their socioeconomic position. For the company piecework assures both maximum output and positive work attitudes among the packers.

The work consists of cutting the heads and tails off small, raw herring (sardines) and placing the fish in cans. It is something that anyone with at least some manual dexterity could do if she were able to take her time. But time is a luxury in a fish-packing plant. A packer must work at a tremendous pace simply to keep her job. Broken or torn fish is not acceptable, so the packers learn quickly

to place the best looking fish on top. They also develop unique body motions and rhythms to enable them to keep up the pace. So, to work at the pace required is a skilled job that takes a long time to develop.

Pay is based on the number of cases of fish packed and varies with the size of the fish and the cans. The base-rate, the lowest hourly rate in the plant, has only obtained since the end of the 60's. If a packer consistently fails to pack the equivalent of the base rate she loses her job.

The packers say they like their work and the piecework system. The harder they work the more they earn. Secondly, being a fast packer earns respect and recognition in the community and the plant which is fostered by the company staging annual contests for the fastest packers. Working hard also reduces the boredom of the job. Finally, the self-imposed pace of the work reduces company supervision.

### Working conditions

The company benefits not only from piecework but from the frightful working conditions it has always been able to impose. Packers used to work only on call, having to phone in at 5:30 a.m. and hourly thereafter to find out whether and where there was work. Since the installation of freezing facilities at the new plant, work is steadier and overtime is voluntary at least some of the time.

However, the new freezer plant provides new work hazards. In the winter of 1970-71, truckloads of frozen fish were driven to the Black's Harbour plant from Nova Scotia. With the outside doors of the packing room left open to unload the fish, the women packed wearing their overcoats while foremen passed pails of hot water to restore fingers frost-bitten from packing deep-frozen fish.

The new plant is a windowless structure where the packers work standing on a concrete floor. It is very cold and dank because of the freezing facilities and the outside door often left open for receiving fish. Many packers suffer from spinal rheumatism caused by standing on concrete and handling frozen fish. Soft fish causes rashes on some packers' arms and packers periodically cut themselves, or are stabbed by a tablemate when both go for the same fish.

### Conditions changing

While packers are generally hostile to the idea of unions and strikes, seen as interfering with opportunities to work hard for good money, they can and do act in ways they believe will individually

benefit themselves, whether or not it benefits the company. The packers only 'go all out' when they think they can make a lot of money by doing so. On pre-cut fish, recently introduced to automate, they don't go 'all out' because they only make the base rate regardless of how hard they work. Also, some packers only turn up for work three or four days a week, contributing to a shortage of packers. Finally, packers have been known to conduct spontaneous walk-outs. Several years ago a group walked out to protest excessive compulsory overtime. The company threatened to fire them all, then gave them two days to get back to work. Those who came back as ordered, lost the two days' pay while those who stayed out longer lost all seniority with the company. A recent threatened walk-out over parking facilities at the new plant was averted when the company backed down. Sometimes an individual packer will walk out if she becomes fed up enough. Usually she will be allowed back with an appropriate penalty, usually loss of seniority.

At the only Connors Bros. New Brunswick plant that is unionized the packers are not on piecework. Yet even without a union it seems that the piecework system at Black's Harbour is coming to an end. Automated pre-cutting of fish and future machine-packing will replace packers' jobs with those of machine-tenders at hourly wages.

This move to automation comes out of a real shortage of labour for packing. It is ironic that the very methods used by the company to create and maintain social control have produced cracks in the system. By using the instrument of the company town to get rid of troublemakers; to create conditions forcing every able-bodied person to work; to use piecework for maximum productivity and a docile work force, the company has created a labour shortage. Its answer to this—automation—will mean the end of piecework and the company's most effective instrument of social control.

### Changes now evident

The process of change has already begun to take hold in Black's Harbour. The new owners no longer own the company housing. Incorporated, the town has a legal entity of its own in contrast to the earlier feudal fiefdom. As a good portion of the male labour force now work at new job sites in the area, most of them organized by fairly militant unions, a growing sense of worker awareness and militancy is now felt in the town. It is likely that the advent of unionism, even in Black's Harbour, may not be so far behind.

♀

## THREE FINE FEMINISTS

# Lynn McDonald M.P.



## Thanks, Alexa

by Jo Dunaway Lazenby



The B.C. NDP Women's Rights Committee was delighted to welcome Alexa McDonough, Leader of the Nova Scotia NDP, as their guest speaker at a dinner in Vancouver on November 5.

Over 100 people attended the dinner and pub night, one of a series of events organized by the Women's Committee to raise funds for the Margaret Livingstone Memorial Fund.

The only NDP member in the Nova Scotia legislature, as well as the only woman member, Alexa spoke warmly about the B.C. women who have led the way in the struggle for women's rights within the party. She also stressed the importance of *Priorities* in providing a link between NDP women across the country.

Thank you, Alexa. We look forward to having you back in the not-too-distant future. ♀

Feminists across Canada were extremely gratified in October when well-known feminist Lynn McDonald won the by-election in the Ontario seat of Broadview Greenwood for the NDP. This victory gives the NDP three women in the federal caucus. Lynn assured *Priorities* that she views these three as a collective to work together for women's rights.

Less gratifying is the fact that Lynn, the Ontario Participation of Women Committee representative, had to fight three men for the nomination, including Gerry Caplan who has since become the new federal secretary. She had to fight against a negatively-posed media image (shared by some in the NDP) as a "strident feminist-activist."

Well, she won the nomination and went on to take the riding by a well-executed recruiting campaign, signing up many new members for the NDP. Two-thirds of these were women and single parents.

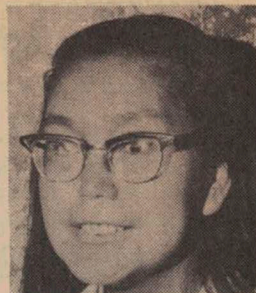
### Hard campaign

McDonald campaigned hard for seven months, slogging the streets from door to door and dealing with a wide spectrum of issues. She says that women's issues were not particularly up-front in the campaign; people were most concerned with the pervasive pressing issues of unemployment and its consequences.

Lynn's career as a feminist, which culminated in her becoming the president of the National Action Committee on the Status of Women, goes back to 1971. She was a teacher of sociology at McMaster University and got involved in a campaign by a group called the Group for Equal Rights regarding promotions and tenure for women staff, and for an end to quotas keeping women out of medical school. The quotas went and other improvements resulted.

She continued her feminist efforts

# Doris Fine-Day



## The Editorial Committee

Recently, we lost one of our most dedicated sisters to cancer. Doris Fine-Day of Nanaimo was, for the past few years, a member of that constituency's executive, chairperson of its policy and internal education committees, its representative to the Women's Rights Committee, local co-ordinator for the Task Force on Older Women, and a member of the B.C. NDP Indian Affairs policy committee.

She will be very much missed by all who have been privileged to know and work with her. ♀

while teaching at Dalhousie in Nova Scotia. After that, she helped organize the Ontario Status of Women Committee.

### B.C. background

Lynn grew up in New Westminster, B.C., graduated from UBC and spent two years working in social science in B.C. She subsequently graduated as a Ph.D. from the London School of Economics which was followed by teaching and research appointments to universities in Paris and Sweden.

With such a background, there can be no doubt that Lynn will soon acquire high visibility in Canadian politics.

By reaching out to take her place in the House of Commons, Lynn has taken a big step forward for all her sisters. ♀

by Joyce Meissenheimer

## PLAN TO SPEND THE WEEKEND OF JANUARY 15 AND 16 WITH THE WOMEN'S RIGHTS COMMITTEE

### A 'PRIORITIES' WORKSHOP WILL BE HELD ON SATURDAY, JANUARY 15

The November Steering Committee meeting decided that, in order for *Priorities* to continue we must form a collective of at least 12 women willing to make a commitment to work on *Priorities* for one year.

This workshop is crucial to the survival of *Priorities* so please plan to attend. Out-of-Vancouver women too! You don't have to live in the Lower Mainland to make a contribution to *Priorities*.

### THE STEERING COMMITTEE WILL MEET SUNDAY, JANUARY 16

Women members of the NDP are welcome to participate in all meetings of the Steering Committee of the Women's Rights Committee.

Members-at-large and regional representatives for 1983 will be elected at this meeting. Those on the mailing list will be sent additional information before the meeting. Please write or phone our organizer, Margaret Birrell, 879-4601 517 East Broadway, Vancouver, B.C. V5T 1X4 if you want to participate.

# The Participation of Women Committee



Hilda Thomas, B.C.  
Chairwoman



Barbara Levy, N. Scotia  
Secretary



Dorothy Inglis  
Newfoundland



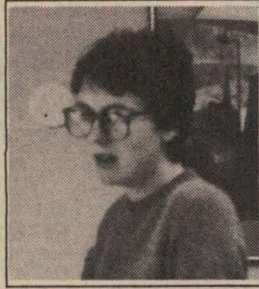
Alayne Armstrong  
New Brunswick



Chernaz Choksi  
Quebec



Margaret Thomson  
Yukon



Ann Thurlow  
Prince Edward Island



Chris Banman  
Saskatchewan



Lauranne Dowbiggin  
Manitoba



Lynn McDonald  
Ontario

*We regret we have no photos of NWT and Alberta delegates.*

The last meeting of the federal NDP Participation of Women Committee took place in Ottawa in October. The Committee reported to a subsequent meeting of the Federal Council and expressed its appreciation for the co-operation of the federal caucus and the welcome extended to POW by Ed Broadbent and Margaret Mitchell when POW met with the federal caucus in the spring.

At the May meeting Dorothy Inglis was welcomed as the new POW representative from Newfoundland, replacing Frances Ennis.

The Task Force on Older Women has met in three provinces to date: P.E.I., where POW representative Ann Thurlow got the hearings off to an excellent start; Nova Scotia, whose POW representative is Barbara Levy, and Manitoba where the previous POW representative Maxine Hamilton, and the new POW representative Lauranne Dowbiggin, have been active in organizing a series of provincially sponsored regional hearings in addition to the federal hearing in Winnipeg. Of course, the Task Force could not succeed without the energetic support of committees of NDP women on the provincial/territorial level.

## Hearings to conclude in December

At the time of the October meeting covered in this report, firm dates were set for the remaining hearings. They were: Saskatchewan (Yorkton, October 23-24); Yukon (Whitehorse, October

29-30); Quebec (Montreal, November 12); New Brunswick (Fredericton, November 19-20); Newfoundland (St. John's, November 22); Ontario (Thunder Bay, November 26-27, and Hamilton, December 3-4); Alberta (Calgary and Edmonton, December 9-11).

Reports from the POW representatives at the October meeting confirmed that the NDP is the only party with strong, developed policy on women's issues. The committee feels, however, that more needs to be done to ensure that a feminist perspective is included in all our published documents, in election planning, and in the representation of women in the party structure.

## Native Women's Association presentation

A presentation by Marlyn Kane of the Native Women's Association of Canada to the POW meeting raised some urgent questions about a possible delay in the rescinding of Section 12(1)(b) of the Indian Act, and about the participation of native women in deliberations respecting aboriginal rights under the Constitution. A resolution developed out of this discussion was passed by Federal Council and is published on page 14 of this issue.

Also of importance is the disposition of the court case respecting Section 251 of the Criminal Code. No date has been set for the hearing, but the Canadian Abortion Rights Action League is preparing an intervention. Should Borowski

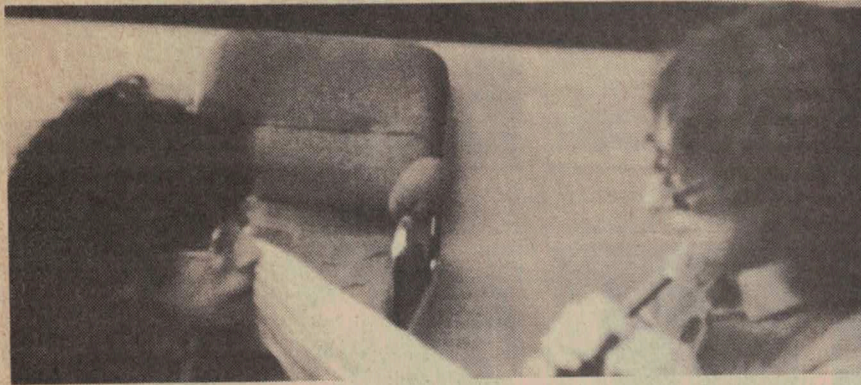
be successful in his challenge to the present abortion law, the effect would be a prohibition of all abortions in Canada and may, in fact, call into question many forms of contraception. It is worth noting that a recent Gallup Poll indicates that the pro-choice position has the support of a substantial majority across the country: We urge provincial sections to give all possible financial and moral support to CARAL.

A related issue brought to the attention of the committee is the campaign by the anti-choice groups to abolish funding by CIDA for family planning projects. Excellent programs, administered through the International Planned Parenthood Federation are being threatened. Provincial sections are urged to write to CIDA expressing their strong support for continued funding.

A lengthy discussion of pension policy, which we hope will be of assistance to federal caucus members, will be summarized for later circulation. A paper will also be prepared by Alayne Armstrong, POW N.B., on the problem of women in prisons.

Finally, the Committee extended its warm congratulations to Lynn McDonald, POW Ontario, for her splendid victory in the Broadview-Greenwood by-election which has increased the representation of women in our NDP federal caucus by one-third, all in one 'swell foop!' ♀

# Native women demand inclusion in rights talks



*Marlyn Kane of the Native Women's Association of Canada in discussion with federal NDP Women's Organizer Mary Humphrey*



The Native Women's Association of Canada issued the following statement in Ottawa on October 6.

The Assembly of First Nations has betrayed the native women of Canada by asking a Parliamentary Committee to give the women a token place only with a new Subcommittee on Indian Government.

A past friend of the Indian people and former Minister of Indian Affairs, Warren Allmand, agreed with the Assembly of First Nations that the women had no place on this Subcommittee as an ex officio member which will continue its study of sex discrimination against Indian women and other band government issues.

Dave Ahenakew, President, Assembly of First Nations, wrote to Chairman Keith Penner of the Standing Committee on Indian Affairs and Northern Development on September 29, 1982, saying N.W.A.C., like the Native Council of Canada, had no right to have an ex officio member on the Subcommittee on Indian Government.

Ahenakew said there is no logic to giving the women such a seat.

## Women promised a seat

The Native Women's Association of Canada, representing some 100,000 registered Indian females and some 15,000 non-status Indian women, struck a bargain in early September, 1982 with the Assembly of First Nations to pass over the first Subcommittee in a tight time frame so that this second subcommittee could begin its hearings before Parliament is recalled October 27th.

The Native Women's Association of Canada has been assured a seat on the Subcommittee on Indian Government by Mr. Ahenakew and some of his assistants. Because representation was

expected on the second Subcommittee, the N.W.A.C. agreed to deal with two major issues in the second Subcommittee namely, reinstatement and band control of membership. We thought we would be there to protect our rights.

We are worried about the outcome of the Subcommittee because Chief Ahenakew, in his address to the Subcommittee on Indian Women and the Indian Act, said the Charter of Rights should not apply to Indian Governments. The discrimination we now suffer under the federal Government will simply be transferred to the band level.

The Native women of Canada began their fight without friends. We began in 1970 by taking on all of the male-dominated Indian organizations in this country who lined up against Jeanette Corbiere Lavell when she asked the Supreme Court of Canada to end sex discrimination under section 12(1)(b) of the Indian Act. We have been unpopular. We have lost some battles—including the Lavell case—but we intend to win, with or without the Assembly of First Nations.

For more information call Jane Gottfriedson, (613) 236-6057 ♀

## FEDERAL NDP RESOLUTION ON NWAC DEMANDS

At its October meeting, the federal NDP Participation of Women Committee met with Marlyn Kane of the Native Women's Association of Canada. The Association's statement, published on this page, explains the urgent problems confronting them.

As a result, POW prepared the following resolution which was subsequently adopted by the NDP Federal Council.

### NDP resolution on Native Women

WHEREAS the Native Women's Association of Canada (NWAC) is presently the only recognized national organization representing the concerns of Indian, Metis, non-status Indian, and Inuit women in the country; and

WHEREAS Native women continue to be discriminated against, through legislation such as the Indian Act, and continue to be excluded from crucial discussions and decision-making processes surrounding the rights of Canada's aboriginal people; and

WHEREAS Native women fear that their unique problems can be overlooked if they do not participate equally in de-

termining the future of aboriginal people in Canada; and

WHEREAS the NWAC participated as an ex officio member in the recent Parliamentary Sub-committee on Indian Women and the Indian Act, but has not been granted the same status in the current Parliamentary Sub-committee on Indian Self-Government, despite the efforts of the NDP; and

WHEREAS the NDP recognizes the right of Native women to full participation as equals in all deliberations respecting the status of aboriginal people in Canada;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the NDP continues to lobby on behalf of the Native women of Canada to ensure their equal representation, through their national organizations, in all relevant deliberations concerning the rights of aboriginal people in Canada, including Parliamentary committees and conferences respecting the Canada Constitution Act, and continues to call upon the Federal Government to provide the funding necessary to facilitate their full participation. ♀



## Mitchell demands government action for older women

Margaret Mitchell, NDP critic on women's affairs challenged the Minister of Employment and Immigration to act on the findings of the NDP Task Force on Older Women, and to develop expanded employment and training opportunities for mature women in Canada.

Her demands were the subject of a news release issued late in November.

"The Task Force on Older Women has been holding hearings in every province in Canada and has been told repeatedly that women who have spent their lives raising children face extreme poverty, loneliness, and isolation in their middle and later years." Mitchell went on to say, "I feel it is imperative that the government does not allow older women to become our forgotten Canadians."

The Task Force on Older Women is an NDP organized group which has been travelling across Canada holding hearings and meeting with older women and with service groups which focus on women's concerns. The Task Force's goal was to assess the problems and concerns which are faced by women in their later years in Canada.

### The price of dependence

"Every brief in every province has pleaded for a better deal for women in

their middle years. Continuation of outreach programs are essential and women must have access to training and jobs."

Mitchell stated, "Many women have been dependent on their fathers in youth and their husbands after marriage and are left alone with no program for independence when they reach 40 or 50. Widows are often forced to live on only half of a deceased husband's CPP or DVA pension. Several reports have shown the increasing number of women who are forced to live with men who batter them because those women have no other place to stay."

Mitchell, who has just returned from hearings in the Atlantic provinces, recommended to the Minister that he establish a method of assessing and recognizing the skills which women acquire as homemakers.

"Many women are handicapped in job hunting because their skills are all related to homemaking and not readily apparent to a potential employer. The Minister should offer testing services through the Canadian Employment Offices which would provide a certificate to formally recognize management, human relations, and other skills which can be offered to prospective employers by mature women," Mitchell said. ♀

## WRC on prostitution

On December 9, 1982 Hilda Thomas, chairwoman of the federal NDP Participation of Women Committee, released the following statement on behalf of the B.C. NDP Women's Rights Committee:

"The human body, female or male, is not an object to be bought, sold or used.

Prostitution should be recognized for what it is—a form of slavery in which the physical person of a human being is treated as a commodity.

We support the removal of prostitution from the Criminal Code because it singles out one person—the prostitute—in a transaction which involves two

people.

However, we completely reject any suggestion that prostitution be legalized. A society which legitimizes prostitution is accepting the degradation of women, and the exploitation of adolescents, while ignoring the economic and social conditions which give rise to it.

Prostitution is inseparably linked to the oppression of women. It will cease when women take their place as equal, autonomous, independent human beings and when the community rebels against the exploitation of sex and the sale of bodies as mere objects for the sake of profit." ♀

## Affirmative Action in the NDP

After a discussion in the Participation of Women Committee in which dissatisfaction was expressed with the amount of attention given to the equitable participation of women in party structures, the POW presented the following motion which was passed by the Federal Council.

WHEREAS the 1981 Federal Convention adopted an internal affirmative action proposal which included the following guideline regarding party structure:

when party committees, convention delegations, etc. are being formed, every effort should be made to achieve male-female parity; and

WHEREAS the membership of federal committees does not reflect the intent of the resolution, i.e., achievement of male-female parity; and

WHEREAS the 1981 resolution also states that:

the women's committees of the party are to monitor the success of this voluntary compliance affirmative action plan, and if there is no significant improvement in the drive towards parity, they are to consider proposals with more force;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the federal executive be directed to examine the barriers within the party which are impeding the achievement of parity in the party committees and report to the next federal council with recommendations for resolving the problem. ♀

### NO COMMENT

This quote of the year comes from a profile of Frank Nolan, Vancouver NDP activist, published in *Vancouver Magazine*. Says Nolan:

"What I always look for in an organization is women. When I see an organization that has a lot of women—middle-class women, older women, yeah—I know they're in good shape, I know they're in touch with the constituency. And let's face it, they're a morale booster...." ♀

# Letters to 'Priorities'

## Advice to unemployed

Dear Sisters:

It was with interest I read the article by Bonnie Geddes in the last issue of *Priorities*, called 'Pounding the Pavement Looking for Work.' I am a preschool teacher looking for work in daycare or nursery school. I am in the process of visiting all the preschools in the area of New Westminster. I spend a morning looking around and observing, then I leave them with a resume and a copy of my certificate.

There is some information that your readers may not know that could help them in looking for work. I received lots of good advice from a group of women located at 411 6th Street, New Westminster, called Aware. Aware stands for Assisting Women's Awareness Regarding Employment and the group is run for women by women and funded by Manpower. In my view, it is worth a trip out of Vancouver as they give follow-up appointments. Their phone number is 525-0294 and they also have groups in Surrey and Coquitlam.

For those looking for work in industry, there is a magazine called *Labour Research Bulletin* put out by the Ministry of Labour that is available free. It gives details on all the contracts signed in B.C. and a perusal could give many ideas on where to apply for work and where there are union jobs that one can do. Compiling the necessary information would take a bit of work, but in my view it would be worth the trouble. I have back issues for the past year and anyone wishing to read them can call me at 521-6487 or order their own from the B.C. Ministry of Labour. The magazine is put out monthly.

I hope this information will be of some help to others looking for work.

Yours truly  
Sharon Catherine Hager  
New Westminster, B.C.

## CANADA'S ONLY WOMEN'S UNIVERSITY SEEKS AID

*Priorities* has been asked to publicize a fund appeal for Mount Saint Vincent University, 166 Bedford Hwy., Halifax N.S. B3M 2J6. This school is Canada's only women's university and the campaign aims at obtaining \$1 from every Canadian woman. Donations exceeding \$5 will be income tax receipted.

## Fraser Valley 'Education for Peace' Conference

Dear *Priorities*:

Enclosed is \$5 renewal for *Priorities* (I do like that title!).

In spring—likely March 1983—our peace groups and supporters plan a 2-day *Education for Peace* conference for the Fraser Valley.

We will be extending invitations to associations to attend and take part.

Having a display by the Women's Rights Committee etc., or a slot for a speaker relating to our theme would be arranged.

Perhaps you would accept a short article in a future *Priorities* issue.

Sincerely  
Bette Pepper  
Fraser Valley Peace Council  
1570 Cory  
White Rock B.C. V4B 3J2

## Medical and Refugee Aid to Palestinians

Dear Friends:

The Committee for Medical and Refugee Aid to Palestinians has been organized to raise funds to provide emergency aid to the homeless and injured in Lebanon. We urgently request contributions for the relief of war victims.

We ask that you make out a cheque or money order to the *United Holy Land Fund*, a charitable trust registered with Revenue Canada and for which a tax-deductible receipt will be issued.

We also request that you lend your efforts to creating a climate for a just and humanitarian resolution of the Palestinian people by petition to the Prime Minister and your M.P.

Yours sincerely,  
Hanna Kawas, President  
Canada-Palestine Association  
Box 3255, Vancouver, B.C. V6B 3X9

## CHAIRWOMAN'S REPORT (Continued from page 1)

The conference was a success with 90 women from across the province attending. There was a lot of energy, commitment and creativity, and the skills of the women in attendance confirmed for us that women would be playing substantive roles in their constituencies when an election was called.

The steering committee wanted to move on the energy and enthusiasm generated by the conference, and to begin to enlist support for our election program. In addition, as it has been our policy to work actively for those women candidates who have made a commitment to the feminist socialist principles contained in our program, we felt the time was right to begin discussions with women candidates around the program.

As a result, a special meeting of the steering committee was held to which women candidates were invited. They were given an opportunity to make a statement about the issues they saw as important and then respond to questions. Seven women candidates attended. While it was gratifying to hear support for our policies, it was disappointing to realize that few of those present actually identified with the WRC or would work with us on a continued basis.

While no meetings were held over the summer two significant activities took place. One was the launching of the Margaret Livingstone Memorial Fund Film series; the other was the completion of an election platform to be presented to the Election Planning Committee.

I continued to attend Election Planning Committee meetings and it became increasingly apparent that our submission was not going to be included in the EPC

platform, despite polling results indicating that our greatest support was coming from women. This frustration culminated in our "going public" at the September provincial council meeting. As a result, our policy has now been incorporated into the platform policy and women's issues will be highlighted in the central leaflet.

September/October found the WRC re-evaluating our goals and direction. Many of us felt that too much work had been taken on by too few. There were times when we seemed to be only reacting rather than initiating, and our continual battle to keep feminist socialist issues in the forefront was causing energy drain, burnout and disenchantment. The WRC has developed proposals for the activities of the committee for 1983 and these new directions, adopted by the 1982 convention women's caucus are published elsewhere in this issue.

I believe that we can look back at this year with a sense of pride. *Priorities* has consistently addressed important issues, the Technological Change Committee has worked hard as evidenced by their panel at convention, and we have been continually reminding the party of its commitment to women's issues. Functions ranging from the women's conference to the Alexa McDonough dinner have reached out to a wide variety of women in the party. We have representation on the Provincial Executive and Federal Council, and our Participation of Women representative was elected chairwoman of the POW Committee.

But it is a slow and sometimes frustrating process and we need your support and energy to continue. ♀

# Priorities thanks

Don Lockstead  
Susan Sanderson  
Mercia Stickney  
Sylvia Bergerson  
Edith Thomas

Margaret Mitchell  
Anne Hogan  
M.A. Hugel  
Garth Brown  
Jane Evans

## who have given us donations

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UNIVERSITY EXTENSION CONFERENCE OFFICE  
UNIVERSITY OF VICTORIA  
P.O. BOX 1700, VICTORIA, B.C. V8W 2Y2

# Bah, humbug!

is what we suspect a lot of our readers are feeling at this time when we are supposed to rejoice and exchange greetings of happiness and joy. In truth, the realities of unemployment and insecurity are much too uppermost in most minds.

So, at the end of 1982, perhaps the best thing we can wish all our readers, yearning for the advent of world socialism and feminist liberation, is:

May 1983 be a year of concerted fightback and victories won by all of us victims of capitalism's depression.

Together we stand; united we can win!

### PUBLICATION NOTICES RECEIVED:

#### THE DAY THE FAIRIES WENT ON STRIKE

by Linda Briskin and Maureen Fitzgerald  
Illustrated by Barbara Eidlitz

Published by Press Gang Publishers, 603 Powell St., Vancouver, B.C. V6A 1H2  
\$4.95, 36 pp. Illustrated in three colours. For children aged 5 to 9

STEPHEN BUEL, Box 1028, Berkeley, CA 94701 requests submissions of prose, poetry, fiction, etc. on the topic of abortion for a book being compiled by Debi Mandel and Stephen Buel of California.

"Abortion is a private matter . . . a subject about which too little is said . . .

#### WOMEN AND CHILDREN FIRST

by Michele Landsberg

A provocative look at modern Canadian women at work and at home  
Published by MacMillan of Canada  
\$19.95 cloth. 256 pp. Vancouver contact Fleur Matthewson 874-1111

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