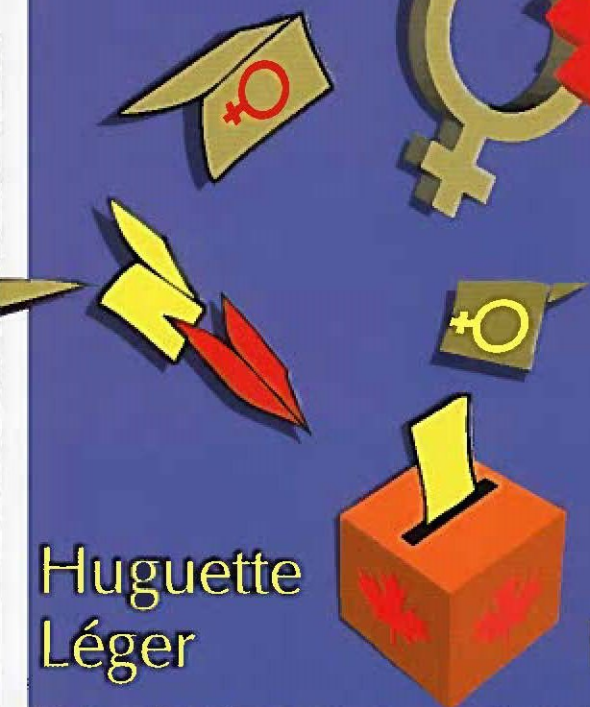


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The

NAC

Voters' Guide



Huguette
Léger

Judy
Rebick

National Action Committee on the Status of Women

Women's groups are not "special interest groups." The interests of 52% of the population are not special interests — they are public interests.

The NAC

Voters' Guide 1993

by

Huguette Léger and Judy Rebick

The National Action Committee on the Status of Women

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PREFACE

The National Action Committee on the Status of Women is the largest feminist organization in Canada. Founded in 1972, NAC is composed of over 550 member groups. NAC is known in Canada and internationally for its dedication and ability to shape public opinion, influence decision makers and mobilize its membership and the Canadian public to work to bring about changes for women.

The diversity of Canadian women and their communities is reflected in NAC's membership which includes national women's organizations, women's centres, service delivery groups, immigrant women's groups, native women's groups and women's committees of church groups, unions and major political parties.

Since 1992, NAC has been involved in most of the major struggles for women's equality in Canada, from the pro-choice movement to efforts to win legal equality in the Canadian Constitution. NAC played an important role in lobbying for the "No Means No" Rape law, against recriminalization of abortion, for a national child care programme and against a variety of cuts to social programmes. NAC was also in the forefront of ensuring that December 6 was recognized as an official Day of Remembrance and

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Action against Violence against Women and is currently campaigning to ensure that gender persecution is considered grounds for refugee status in Canada and internationally. NAC recently had a major role in the mass grass roots campaign for the NO side of the referendum on the Charlottetown Accord.

During the past twenty years, NAC has presented briefs to parliamentary committees and commissions on various topics such as aboriginal women's issues, the Canadian constitution, taxation, employment, the environment, family law, the Free Trade Agreement, government funding, health, human rights, immigration, international solidarity, justice, lesbian issues, media, peace, violence against women and social programmes.

NAC is the major voice of the women's movement in Canada. As such, we consider that a vital part of our role is to inform the electorate about issues of concern to women during a federal election campaign.

INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this voters' guide is to provide women and men across the country with information on vital issues related to women's equality. We hope that our guide will better inform voters on the issues, the current state of federal legislation and the positions of the major parties. Elections in the 1990s are increasingly decided by public perception of image and style. The NAC Voters' Guide is a contribution to focusing the expected 1993 federal election on substantive issues.

The NAC does not endorse any political party. However, we are keenly aware of the importance of an informed electorate. We believe that the coming federal election campaign is a critical one for women. We hope that this guide will provide some of the information voters need to fully participate in the election campaign.

This guide includes:

1. An explanation of the key issues by using relevant statistics, and documents and NAC's adopted positions on these issues.
2. Party positions (where available). These were based on our understanding of the responses of the government and the major opposition parties to

NAC's 1992 lobby questions. (Every year NAC holds a lobby with all major political parties. Written questions are submitted to the parties in advance. Where no party positions are listed, it is because there was no lobby question on that issue.) Neither the Bloc Québécois nor the Reform Party answered NAC's questions.

3. Legislative summaries. A look at legislation related to women's issues in the past five years.

4. Affirmative action of political parties. A report on the affirmative action policies of the major political parties.

5. A "how to rate the candidates" form. A fill-in-the-blank form that you send to NAC or share with others.

6. Questions that you can ask your local candidates during the campaign.

Economic Equality

Despite women's increasing participation in the workforce, the wage gap between women and men remains high.

Women working at full-time jobs take home less than 70% of men's wages. With 45% of women working at part-time or temporary jobs, the real wage gap is probably closer to 65%.

While there is an increase of women in managerial and administrative jobs, most women remain in the pink collar job ghetto.

The wage gap is no doubt greater for women of colour, immigrant women, aboriginal women and women with disabilities. While we do not have data on the wage gap for these groups of women, we know that they suffer a higher unemployment rate and are more likely to be ghettoized into low paying jobs.

Over 56% of women in the paid workforce are employed in the clerical, sales and service occupations. One third of all women who work outside the home are employed in clerical occupations. The greatest increase in women's part-time work between 1975 and 1989 was in service industries, where their numbers more than doubled from 613,000 to

1,228,000. (Women's Bureau, Labour Canada, Women in the Labour Force, 1990.)

The following tables show the number of women involved full-time and part-time in the workforce by sector.

Table 1: Full-Time Employment by Occupation: Jan. 1990 - Jan. 1992

	1990	1992	Increase/ Decrease
Managerial	1,473,000	1,562,000	6.0%
Other profs:			
Clerical	1,261,000	1,185,000	(5.9%)
Sales	323,000	315,000	(3.7%)
Service	554,000	528,000	(2.5%)
Processing & Fabricating	292,000	234,000	(19.9%)

Table 2: Part-time Female Employment by Occupation Jan. 1990 - Jan. 1992

	1990	1992	Increase/ Decrease
Managerial	335,000	357,000	6.5%
Other profs			
Clerical	398,000	411,000	3.2%
Sales	202,000	199,000	(1.5%)
Service	370,000	403,000	8.9%
Processing & Fabricating	27,000	21,000	(22.2%)

Source: NAC, Review of the Situation of Women in Canada, 1992.

Women in professional and managerial jobs face a glass ceiling. The more senior the position the fewer the women. Women in lower paid job categories face restructuring that leads to fewer full-time jobs. As the

gap in society increases between rich and poor, women too face increasing polarization. A few women are doing better while the vast majority are doing worse.

In order to get the full picture of women in the workforce, it's important to understand the implications and the consequences of modern neo-conservative and neo-liberal policies on women. When market forces are permitted free rein and labour standards and equity measures are considered barriers to international competition, everyone suffers, women in particular.

The Free Trade Agreement (FTA) and North American Free Trade Agreements (NAFTA) are the central tools for the implementation of neo-conservative economic and social policy in Canada. NAC believes that such policies have the potential of driving back many of the gains that women have made in the last three decades.

Free Trade

The Free Trade Agreement with the United States has had a very negative impact on women. NAC fears that NAFTA will be even worse.

The FTA has meant:

- higher levels of unemployment
- deteriorating working conditions and wages
- downward pressure on social programmes
- more unpaid work

In the short and long term Free Trade furthers the feminization of poverty.

JOB LOSS

Since 1989, as a result of the FTA and the dramatic restructuring of Canada's economy, over 400,000 manufacturing jobs have disappeared. In Ontario alone it's estimated that 500 jobs are lost daily.

There has been an 11% reduction in women's employment in manufacturing.

Given the already low participation of women in the industrial work force, such a loss is major. The majority of women working in these sectors are immigrant women.

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In one of her latest studies, Marjorie Cohen reports that:

"...in the first three years of the FTA, women's employment in manufacturing has decreased by 66,000 (11.1%) ... the biggest job losses for women were in the clothing and electrical products industries. Almost 19,000 jobs (a 20% decline) were lost in clothing and 10,300 (17%) in electrical production ... the vast majority of these job losses are due to capital flights." ("The Implications of Economic Restructuring for Women: the Canadian experience." Paper presented at *Canada in Transition Conference*, Mexico City, November 27, 1992).

OFFICE WORK

One of the major concerns about NAFTA is its increased impact on office work. NAC is concerned about the possible implications for women in the "expansion of services provisions" contained in NAFTA. With more than 56% of women in the paid workforce employed in the clerical, sales and service occupations, we fear that the extensive measures concerning trade in services in NAFTA will lead to an increase in unemployment and a decrease in available jobs among office workers.

As a forewarning, in December 1992, the Canadian Imperial Bank of Commerce announced that it will be eliminating 2,500 jobs across the country. We are afraid that this "streamlining" will be accompanied by

potentially more dangerous trends such as off-shore processing and teleworking.

Provisions in NAFTA guarantee U.S. and Mexican financial institutions in Canada, the right to process information outside Canada. This change will have serious implications for data processing jobs in Canada. Technological developments in the last decade have made it possible for data entry to be done by women (working at sub-standard wages) in other countries. Until now, legislation such as the Canadian Bank Act stood in the way of a wholesale reorganization of labour. To conform with NAFTA the Bank Act will have to be changed, eliminating controls on the wholesale re-organization of data processing.

HOME WORK

Another impact of free trade has been the restructuring in the workforce. "Restructuring" basically means loss of good full-time jobs and increase of part-time and part-year jobs. One of the most serious consequences of such re-structuring is the resurgence of "home work" in the clothing industry.

In its ongoing research ILGWU (International Ladies' Garment Workers Union) demonstrates that "home working" is on the rise again. Women, mostly immigrant women, are working at home with no

benefits, no control over working conditions and no enforcement of minimum wage.

The average wage of home workers in Toronto is \$4.00 per hour. IGLWU even found one woman working for \$1.00. It is even worse when you consider that these workers must provide their own equipment, pay hydro and other operating costs.

Another disturbing trend that will be reinforced by NAFTA is telework, or doing office work at home using new technologies. Government, banks and the telecommunications industry are all beginning to use teleworkers. Employers claim that teleworking gives women more freedom, more time and can help solve child care problems. The reality is, however, that telework, like home work, opens the road to increased exploitation and isolation of women.

PART-TIME WORK

In 1992, 26% of all women employed in the formal workforce held part-time jobs, compared to 9.6% of men. Women are currently 70% of the part-time workforce. (Economic Council, 1990).

A recent Statistics Canada report says that 45% of women are working part-time or part-year. Almost half of these women would rather have full-time work.

Part-time workers are often lower paid, have no job security, and are not covered by benefits. Since the FTA, part-time work has grown, especially among young women.

Economic restructuring as a result of free trade will also have consequences on immigrant and non-white women in this country. Professionals from the U.S., Canada and Mexico will have their credentials recognized in each country but the educational credentials of immigrant women will continue to go unrecognized.

LABOUR STANDARDS AND SOCIAL PROGRAMMES

The FTA has exerted a downward pressure on social programmes. The various cuts to UI can be best understood as an attempt to harmonize our Unemployment Insurance with that of the U.S.

While public social programmes are formally protected by NAFTA, there are a variety of ways that NAFTA will result in a deterioration of social programmes. We are already seeing a trend toward the privatization of various services in the public sector, like laboratories and laundries for hospitals. These services will be subject to free trade and national treatment, which means that U.S. and Mexican companies must be given an equal chance to compete with local companies. Provincial governments and public institutions such as hospitals

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and universities may no longer be able to have a "buy local" policy to purchase such services. Finally, NAFTA contains a review of the exclusion of public social programmes in 1998, the same year that direct federal financing of social programmes ceases in many provinces.

Increased competition for low wages such as in Mexico will mean a downward pressure on labour standards, equity measures and social programmes. Provinces will compete with each other to provide the most profitable environment for business to prevent capital flight to Mexico and the southern U.S., which means lower wages and benefits.

DEMOCRACY

The NAFTA will also have an impact on the ability of federal and provincial governments to bring in legislation that meets the needs of the Canadian people. The NAFTA sets up an unelected North American Free Trade Commission that will have the power to decide issues that up until now have been the responsibility of national decision-makers. Labour standards, environmental standards, establishment of public corporations, and decisions on what constitutes a trade barrier will be decided by this Commission. NAFTA, unlike the FTA, gives the federal government the responsibility to bring provincial and municipal legislation into line with NAFTA.

Many Canadian laws will need to be changed to comply with NAFTA. That is why the Canadian enabling legislation for NAFTA is 4,000 pages long. We have already seen how provisions in NAFTA impact on the drug patent laws in Canada. The twenty year patent for drugs just adopted by Parliament, despite massive opposition from consumer groups, complies with provisions of NAFTA.

MEXICAN WOMEN

The effects of structural adjustment in Mexico, which will be accelerated by NAFTA, have been devastating for women. There have been drastic losses in real wages. Unemployment has risen from 8.5% in 1982 to 17.9% in 1991. Vacation pay, daycare and leave for women to look after their children are all threatened.

Women working in the maquiladoras (where free trade applies) face appalling conditions that include mandatory pregnancy testing, three month contracts, lack of health and safety regulations, wages that begin as low as 55 cents per hour and continued sexual harassment on the job.

Question to ask: If elected will your party oppose NAFTA and abrogate the Free Trade Agreement with the U.S.?

PARTY POSITIONS ON FREE TRADE.

NAC: Is your party willing to commit itself to the immediate abrogation of the Free Trade Agreement and oppose signing of the North American Free Trade Agreement?

Progressive Conservative Party: The answer was obvious in the sense that they lauded Free Trade and the ensuing NAFTA.

Liberal Party: The Liberals would "renegotiate" not "abrogate" the FTA. They would oppose NAFTA if certain provisions are not included.

New Democratic Party: This party would abrogate FTA and NAFTA. They hold the FTA responsible for job losses particularly those of immigrant women.

LEGISLATIVE SUMMARIES

This section summarizes bills which were introduced in the past five years. For more information on NAC's position, briefs for the majority of the following issues are available through the National Secretariat of NAC.

C-144, An Act to authorize payment by Canada toward the provision of child care services, and to amend the Canada Assistance Plan.

This bill would have limited availability of services, restricted access and fostered poorer quality child care. Provinces would have had to choose funding for child care through the new legislation. The problem with choosing between CAP and the proposed legislation would have given the provinces enormous discretion for the provision of child care. Several provinces expressed serious concerns about this bill.

Parliament was dissolved while the bill was in the Senate. The NDP and the Liberal Party failed in a motion to have the Bill withdrawn.

C-21, An Act to amend the Unemployment Insurance Act and the Employment Immigration Act.

Although the bill introduced 10 weeks of child care benefits in addition to pregnancy leave, it cut back

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Questions to ask: Do you support same sex spousal benefits for lesbian and gay couples? Will you oppose attempts to define "family" as exclusively heterosexual?

Will you and your party reinstate the Court Challenges Programme to give women and other equality seekers access to the use of our equality rights?

PARTY POSITIONS ON HUMAN RIGHTS

NAC: Would your party be willing to immediately reinstate funding to the Court Challenges Programme? Do you support amending the Human Rights Code to include sexual orientation?

Conservative Party: No, they would not. Sexual orientation is being examined through the revision of the Human Rights Act by the Department of Justice. They did not answer the question.

Liberal Party: Yes, they would reinstate funding to the Court Challenges Programme. The Liberals continue to stand by the recommendation of 1985 — all-party Report "Equality for All" — which recommended that the Canadian Human Rights Act should include sexual orientation.

New Democratic Party: Yes, they would reinstate funding to the Court Challenges Programme. In 1977, the NDP passed policy to protect rights of lesbians, gay and bisexuals by including rights of sexual orientation as a prohibited ground of discrimination in the Charter of Rights

leave for adoptive parents from 15 to 10 weeks. The bill also introduced the following cutbacks:

- * stringent criteria to become eligible for UI.
- * shorter benefit periods
- * harsh penalties for voluntary termination, losing of job by reason of misconduct, refusing "suitable" employment or disobeying a directive
- * withdrawal of federal government funding to insurance

The Liberals and the NDP voted against this Bill. It passed with a solid majority.

C-62, An Act to amend the Excise Tax.

This omnibus bill known for the introduction of the GST (Goods and Services Tax) proposed to remove the manufacturers' tax on goods and consumer goods and replace it with a direct tax on goods and services.

The NDP and the Liberals opposed this Bill.

C-43, An Act respecting Abortion.

This law, had it passed, would have recriminalized abortion.

The vote on this Bill was officially a free vote. All NDP members opposed it; the Liberal and Conservative votes were both split. It passed by a narrow margin and was then rejected by Senate.

C-69, An Act to amend certain statutes to enable restraint of government expenditures.

The bill announced an expenditure control programme which included a ceiling of 5% annual growth in Canada Assistance Plan transfers to those provinces who did not receive equalization payments (B.C., Alta and Ont.). In addition fundamental changes to the federal share of transfer payments were included.

Overcame Liberal and NDP opposition and passed with a solid Conservative majority.

C-202, An Act respecting a National Day of Remembrance and Action on Violence Against Women.

A private member's bill introduced by Dawn Black, the critic on women's issues for the New Democratic Party.

Agreed to by all parties and passed third reading without a nominal vote.

C-17, An Act to amend the Criminal Code and the Customs Tariff.

The Act introduced stricter gun controls.

Passed third reading with overwhelming all party majority.

C-26, An Act to amend the Public Service.

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Among other amendments, this bill dealt with classification and equal pay for work of equal value, lay-off and contracting out and transfers.

The NDP and Liberals opposed Bill C-26. It passed third reading with a solid majority.

C-49, An Act to amend the Criminal Code (sexual assault)

This bill was meant to replace the Rape Shield Law which had been struck down by the Supreme Court of Canada. Bill C-49 addressed the issue of consent in sexual assault cases.

This bill passed second reading with all party support.

C-80, An Act to amend the Income Tax to enact the Children's Special Allowances Act, to amend certain other Acts in consequence thereof and to repeal the Family Allowance Act.

This spelled the end of universality of the Family Allowance.

Opposed by both NDP and Liberals, passed on third reading.

C-86, An Act to amend the Immigration Act.

This bill proposed policies which are considered discriminatory to domestic workers. e.g. proposed a requirement of six months full-time training in a type of occupation related to the job of care giver. This act

put a series of restrictive limits on immigration including excessive power to immigration officials to turn back refugees at the border.

Passed third reading without support of Liberals and NDP.

C-91, Patent Act Amendment Act.

This legislation proposes to extend the Patent Act to twenty years which will, by all accounts, result in an enormous increase in the cost of drugs for consumers.

Passed third reading although strongly opposed by NDP and Liberals.

C-113, Government Expenditures Restraint Act.

An omnibus bill which proposes to cut Unemployment Insurance to voluntary terminations and to decrease the insurance from 60% to 57% of earnings.

Passed third reading although strongly opposed by Liberals and NDP.

RATING YOUR CANDIDATES:

In Canada it is in the ridings that women can have the most influence on issues that affect them on a daily basis. The candidate that your riding sends to Ottawa plays an essential part in the quality of life for women and their families.

Therefore it is extremely important to pay attention to who is running for office in your riding and to use your vote to elect candidates who support feminist issues.

To help you do this, we prepared the "local candidate report card." You can photocopy this page for each candidate you want to evaluate.

You can use the report card to rate the candidate on the issues listed on the reverse side of this page. If the newspapers, campaign literature, etc. don't offer you enough information on issues, call the candidate's campaign office. Use the questions listed in this guide to further question candidates on issues of concern to you.

It's a good idea to attend all-candidates meetings in your riding. You can find out when meetings are held by calling your candidate's office. If you belong to an organization in your community, think about organizing an all-candidates meeting.

You can send your report card to the NAC office.

SHARE YOUR INFORMATION

Since it often takes a few votes to determine the outcome of an election, don't forget to share your information with other women in your riding. Copy your report cards and distribute them to friends, co-workers, members of your family. If you belong to an organization organize a social event to talk about the issues. A local women's organization may be interested in helping you make the information more widely available.



CANDIDATE REPORT CARD: WOMEN'S ISSUES

Candidate's Name _____

Riding _____

Party Affiliation _____ ☎ _____

Scoring Key: 1=Not supportive, 2=Barely supportive,
3=Fairly supportive, 4=Very Supportive

THE ISSUES

Child care	1 <input type="checkbox"/>	2 <input type="checkbox"/>	3 <input type="checkbox"/>	4 <input type="checkbox"/>
Economic Equality	1 <input type="checkbox"/>	2 <input type="checkbox"/>	3 <input type="checkbox"/>	4 <input type="checkbox"/>
Social Programmes	1 <input type="checkbox"/>	2 <input type="checkbox"/>	3 <input type="checkbox"/>	4 <input type="checkbox"/>
Violence	1 <input type="checkbox"/>	2 <input type="checkbox"/>	3 <input type="checkbox"/>	4 <input type="checkbox"/>
Health	1 <input type="checkbox"/>	2 <input type="checkbox"/>	3 <input type="checkbox"/>	4 <input type="checkbox"/>
Human Rights	1 <input type="checkbox"/>	2 <input type="checkbox"/>	3 <input type="checkbox"/>	4 <input type="checkbox"/>
Electoral Reform	1 <input type="checkbox"/>	2 <input type="checkbox"/>	3 <input type="checkbox"/>	4 <input type="checkbox"/>

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Is the candidate known for supporting women's issues?

Yes ☐ No ☐

In public addresses does the candidate discuss women's issues?

Yes ☐ No ☐

Is the candidate anti-choice or otherwise hostile to feminism?

Yes ☐ No ☐

Is the candidate favoured or endorsed by local women's organizations?

Yes ☐ Which ones? _____ No ☐

Share your report card and send it to

NAC, 57 Mobile Drive, Toronto, Ontario M4A 1H5

QUESTIONS FOR THE CANDIDATES:

Child care: If elected will your party launch a national child care programme? If so what will be its elements?

Free Trade: If elected will your party oppose NAFTA and abrogate the Free Trade Agreement with the U.S.?

Employment Equity: Will your government support amendments to the Employment Equity Act to make achievement of numerical goals in hiring and promotion of women, visible minorities, people with disabilities and aboriginal people mandatory for employers covered by the Act?

Domestic Workers: Does your party support the removal of recent discriminatory policies concerning foreign domestic workers, and a policy to permit domestic workers to enter the country with the same rights as other immigrants?

Unemployment: What will your government do to create jobs and reduce the level of unemployment?

Child Support Tax: Does your party support removing the requirement on women paying taxes on child support payments?

Unpaid labour: Does your party support changes to the federal census to include statistics on women's unpaid labour in the home and volunteer work ?

Violence Against Women: What specific policies in the realm of legal, judicial, educational change does your party promote to end male violence against women? Does your party support adding gender persecution as a ground of refugee status? Does your party support increased federal funding to rape crisis centres, women's centres, and transition houses?

Social Programmes: Do you and your party support national social programmes, in particular restoring federal funding to social programmes and instituting federal standards?

Universality: Do you and your party favour the full restoration of universality of pensions and family allowance? Do you support universal social programmes?

Pensions: Does your party support a pension for homemakers?

Taxation: In view of the negative impact on the budgets of Canadians in general, particularly on women and lower-income Canadians, would your party support the withdrawal of the Goods and Services Tax (GST)? What would your timetable be for its withdrawal?

Unemployment Insurance: Will you and your party repeal Bills C-21 and Bill C-113 cutbacks to Unemployment Insurance?

Funding for Women's Groups: Would your party cancel the helicopter funding? Would you restore full funding to women's groups and core funding for groups now receiving project funding?

Abortion: Will your party assure women that should you form the government, you will not bring in legislation to put abortion? Are you personally pro-choice?

Breast Cancer: Does your party support additional funding to breast cancer research to be tied to projects with full survivor participation in planning and implementation, with some part of this funding to be targeted to lesbians?

NRTs: Will your government support a moratorium on further IVF clinics until the effectiveness of the procedure is determined? Does your party support a ban on commercial surrogacy?

AIDS: Does your party support federal standards for diagnosis, research and treatment of HIV/AIDS that ensure inclusion of women?

Electoral Reform: What measures would your party support in terms of legislative reform to ensure the election of more women to Parliament?

Court Challenges: Will you and your party reinstate the Court Challenges Programme to give women and other equality seekers access to the use of our equality rights?

Lesbian and Gay Rights: Do you support same sex spousal benefits for lesbian and gay couples? Will you oppose attempts to define "family" as exclusively heterosexual?

Training: Would your party reinstate the funds cut from the Canada Jobs Strategy and assure funding for training programmes including language programmes for immigrant and visible minority women?

RU486: Will your party support the acceptance of RU486 for testing in Canada?



The NAC Voters' Guide is a concise summary of the key issues affecting women in Canada today.

This is the first book to be published by The National Action Committee on the Status of Women and the first of its kind in Canada.

Relevant information is provided to assist voters in making independent and informed choices in the federal election expected this year. The record and positions of each of the major parties along with policy alternatives are included, making this book not only an excellent overview of the issues but also a specific aid to understanding what a future government may do.



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The NAC Voters' Guide

The NAC Voters' Guide
by Huguette Léger and
Judy Rebick.
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Women.
June 1993. 132 pages.

reviewed by Trish Elliott

The coming federal election will be a watershed for women. Items like the national childcare program will either rightfully reclaim a place on the public agenda or be buried for many years to come. The National Action Committee on the Status of Women (NAC) is concerned that critical women's issues will be lost in a campaign focussed on image and style. To combat this danger, Canada's largest and most vocal feminist organization has published a voters' guide designed to help focus debate on substantive issues.

Although authored by Huguette Léger and Judy Rebick, *The NAC Voters' Guide* represents the collective efforts of women's groups from across Canada to define and address the issues. The section on new reproductive technologies (NRTs), for example, is based on long hours of debate, study and consensus-seeking among a diverse group of women. NRTs are about more than infertility, the guide states. In fact, NRTs represent dramatic change in human reproduction, with special repercussions for disabled women, poor women and women of colour.

The guide's format is straightforward. Sixteen key issues are laid out in brief but highly informative narratives, followed by a synopsis of the political parties' official stand on the issues. The narrative sections contain capsule histories and statistical background on the issues, as well as NAC's position. Information on such key topics as violence against women, unpaid labour and taxation provide a useful

desktop reference that can be referred to long after the election is over. A legislative summary at the back of the guide, which looks at legislation related to women's issues in the past five years, also extends the guide's usefulness beyond the election campaign.

In keeping with the watershed theme, two of the strongest sections are about the impact of free trade and the continuing attack on Canada's social programs. The free trade section brings the issue home to women with details on how trade agreements affect office work, home-based work and part-time work. One likely consequence of the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) will be increased "telework" - doing office work at home by using new technologies. "Employers claim that teleworking gives women more freedom, more time and can help solve childcare problems. The reality is that telework, like home work, opens the road to increased exploitation and isolation of women," Léger and Rebick warn. The guide illustrates how agreements like NAFTA accelerate economic and social adjustment programs that drive women into poverty and high-tech slavery. Léger and Rebick point to conditions in Mexico: "Women working in the maquiladoras (where free trade applies) face appalling conditions that include mandatory pregnancy testing, three month contracts, lack of health and safety regulations, wages that begin as low as 55 cents per hour and continued sexual harassment on the job."

The section on social programs outlines dramatic but insidious changes to our social fabric in such areas as medicare, housing, family allowance and Unemployment Insurance. The guide pokes holes in the argument that Canada can no longer afford universal social programs. Canada spends less on social programs than most industrialized nations, the authors argue. "If

we believe that universal social programs are the right of Canadians, then a more progressive tax system and putting Canadians back to work can certainly pay for them," say the authors.

The party position statements contained in the guide are derived from NAC's 1992 lobby on Parliament Hill. Each year NAC presents the parties with written questions. The official statements are unfortunately the guide's weak link. Neither the Bloc Québécois nor the Reform Party responded to NAC's questions. There is no mention of the National Party. As for responses to the three major parties, it is apparent that NAC's lobby day was carried off without the publication of this guide in mind. This is NAC's first attempt at producing a voters' guide, so one might expect they will be better prepared next election. In the meantime some key questions, such as whether changes to Unemployment Insurance should be repealed, were not asked.

However this does not defeat the guide's usefulness: it was not intended to be a static record of official statements. *The NAC Voters' Guide* was designed to help women draw out and challenge their local candidates. The guide performs this task very well by suggesting questions for candidates. Its pocket-size format is handy for tucking into a purse or jacket pocket to take to all-candidates meetings. In addition, there is a candidate report card to fill out and share with NAC and local women's organizations.

Importantly, *The NAC Voters' Guide* is affordable and readily available. In Saskatchewan the guide can be purchased from the Saskatchewan Action Committee for five dollars, no GST. For a few cents more (a few cents more for the government, that is) it can be purchased in book stores for \$4.95 plus tax.