

affirmative action : why?

Do you support the idea of affirmative action within the Party, but are uncertain as to how it can be applied? We have tried to answer some of the questions you may have regarding

RESOLUTION 14.33: AFFIRMATIVE ACTION PROGRAM

1. We adopted an affirmative action resolution at our last convention, as part of "Policies for Equality". Why another affirmative action resolution?

***Our affirmative action policy passed at the 1980 convention is part of a comprehensive employment strategy for women which, in turn, will form part of an NDP government's industrial strategy. It's why every working woman should be voting NDP. But although the participation rate of women in the labour force has steadily increased over the past two decades, our share of that vote has not! Even among organized labour, only 15.6% of female trade unionists identify with the NDP in this province (half the number of male trade unionists), and among the general electorate, it's only 13.1%!

What can we do about it?

***We can, and must, take action: affirmative action in the Party. We believe that the adoption of this resolution will set us on the road to reaching this important constituency of women which has eluded us for too long. That is why the resolution is concerned with the participation of women at all levels in our Party, as voters and members, as party officers and candidates for public office

2. Women are active in the Party now - why do they need any further encouragement or special consideration?

***It's true that women are active in nearly every riding across the province, but they are badly underrepresented in leadership and decision-making positions. For instance:

***In the 1981 provincial election, we ran only 24 women candidates, and elected only one.

***Less than 28% of provincial council delegates are women.
Less than 28% of council and executive committee members are women.
Just under 29% of riding presidents are women.

...cont.

(For further information re the statistics used in this fact sheet, please see the Background Paper for this resolution, which is available at the Women's Committee table.)

3. Let's be practical. How is it possible to implement equal representation?

***The resolution urges ridings to incorporate the goal of equal representation in their by-laws. Ridings could go a long way to reaching this goal by requiring that half their executive members-at-large be women, as well as half their provincial council delegates (where applicable) and half their convention delegates.

***Ridings may choose to alternate the other executive positions (president, secretary, etc.) between a man and a woman from year to year.

***The Party constitution could be amended to require that half the members-at-large on the provincial executive be women, and that half the members on party committees be women.

HOWEVER, the resolution does respect riding autonomy. It's up to each riding to decide whether or not it wishes to participate in the affirmative action program.

4. We've tried, but we just can't get women to run...

***What this resolution seeks to establish is a commitment to actively encourage women to run for positions of responsibility. A deliberate effort is required to overcome the effects of traditional role expectations on both men and women. A leadership skills program for women is also recommended.

***Another point: as previously noted, this resolution is concerned with increasing the number of women at the base of the Party's support as well, thereby expanding the pool of available women from which party officers and candidates will emerge.

5. If my riding adopts the affirmative action program, will we have to send good men away to fulfil the equal representation requirement?

***If there are fewer executive positions than there are good people available, so much the better! There is much important work to be done in the ridings in addition to serving on an executive.

6. My riding executive already has more women on it than men! Will affirmative action in this case mean we will have to drop women?

***You're in a minority, but we've still thought of you! The "at least 50%" recommendation allows for more than 50% female representation, without requiring it. But again, it's up to the individual riding to decide on whatever by-laws for equal representation it deems appropriate.

affirmative action : why not?!