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Canada

An Organization and Its Discontents: The National Action Committee on the Status of Women

Nancy Worsfold

A Thesis

in

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ABSTRACT

An Organization and Its Discontents:
The National Action Committee on the Status of Women

Nancy Worsfold

This thesis describes a participant-observation study of an organization and analyses the resultant observations with regards to questions of communications and organization. The researcher follows the National Action Committee on the Status of Women as it prepares and hosts its Annual General Meeting and Annual Lobby. These events are analyzed as communications tools within the feminist community and vehicles to speak to the public at large.

The thesis starts with survey of literature about social movement organizations and interest groups focusing on the different strategies available to affect the social, political, of personal changes an organization wishes to affect. The structure of an organization is identified as a key determinant of strategy. This is followed by an in depth description and analysis of the structure of NAC. Tensions are identified, especially between the organization as a lobby group and as a network group. This framework is then played out in the two chapters which analyze events organized by NAC: the Annual General Meeting and the Annual Lobby. The thesis concludes by making recommendations about the future of NAC and its role with the public and with the feminist movement.

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CHAPTER 1:

INTRODUCTION

"NAC is one of the most powerful institutions in Canadian politics."

- David Frum, Toronto Sun

The feminist movement has become an important part of the Canadian political scene and the Canadian imaginary. The movement has created a "group called women", if not a sisterhood; the "group" is one with which women can identify [Phillips, 1988; Cassel, 1977]. Armed with this collective solidarity, organizations in the feminist movement have pressured for, and often won, many different kinds of social change. To list a few accomplishments, Canadian women have won legal equality in the Charter of Rights, status equality for Native women, and some equal pay legislation; we have made allies in the trade unions and negotiated better working conditions and salaries, fought for and won maternity leave and some protection from sexual harassment; we have changed the delivery of social services to reflect the realities of women's lives, won funding for shelters, rape crisis centers and women's health centers; we have created a vibrant and growing academic discipline of women's studies and made a little headway into the academy as a whole; the list could go on and on.

This thesis will examine how a feminist organization has set about trying to create social change. A social movement

is an identity group, a community of those who share a common ideology and a social movement is also an aggregate of organizations. In its manifestation as an aggregate of organizations the feminist movement organizes, mobilizes, and struggles for change. Feminist organizations range widely in form, structure and purpose. A few examples: there are small collectives that run publications, or women's shelters, or just meet and talk, as consciousness raising groups; there are ad hoc coalitions which spring up to deal with very specific issues, like the election of pro-choice board members at a hospital; and there are large national and provincial organizations with offices, staff, membership and an institutional structure.

To examine some of the strategies and tactics used by social movement organizations I have chosen to concentrate on one organization for a case study based on participant-observation. A case study allows for the in-depth exploration of a single organization and specific activities of that organization. Rather than broad theories or pronouncements, this thesis will concentrate on a careful analysis of a single organization over a limited period of time. I chose as an organization, the National Action Committee on the Status of Women [NAC], and I chose two NAC events, their Annual General Meeting [AGM] and their Annual Lobby.

NAC is the largest and the most visible feminist organization in English Canada. NAC gets quite a lot of media

attention, and it seems to be considered by the government as an important voice of the women's movement. NAC is an interesting case to study because it is the object of a great deal of criticism both from outside the movement and from inside the women's movement. In fact, criticism of NAC is so common that the term "NAC-bashing" is as much a part of Canadian feminist jargon as "patriarchy" or "c.r." or "politically correct". Because NAC is under fire, some of the issues discussed in the thesis are under active review at NAC. This adds an extra dimension to the study. Despite its detractors, NAC is a stable and predictable organization. This is an important factor for the completion of a thesis. I knew I could count on NAC remaining in existence throughout my study and I could count on the AGM taking place in May.

Before I started my field work for this study, I read several books, including In The Field [Burgess, 1984] which warned me to constantly review my notes and rethink my original hypotheses in light of the data accumulated. Little did I suspect that not only did I have to revise my hypotheses, I had to completely rethink the subject matter of my thesis because my original assumptions had been so completely off base. I set out to do a study of NAC's media strategies and their relationship to the media. A study which would have centered around the presentation of NAC to the general public via two media events, the AGM and the Annual Lobby. I wanted to find a new approach to studying the

feminist movement. Almost all of the research about the feminist movement in Canada has focused on issue formation and the construction of ideological positions. Almost all organizational work focuses on mainstream organizations like corporations and public institutions. And almost all research about the relationship between social movements and the media concentrates on the prejudices and biases of the media. I wanted to reverse all those tendencies to study a social movement organization as a sophisticated organization capable of planning and controlling their public image. I was wrong. During the time I studied NAC, no attempts were made to plan or control their image in the media.

I had three reasons to believe that the National Action committee would be reasonably sophisticated about media relations. I have been involved with many feminist groups, some of which have been very, very conscious of image building. For two years I worked on a feminist newspaper, OtherWise, where audience and image were constant topics of debate. NAC publishes a great deal of material, I expected that they would have similar pre-occupations. Secondly, NAC is quite visible in the media, and from my experience in the mainstream media, widely considered the legitimate voice of the Canadian feminist movement. Finally, I believed that NAC would be concerned with media relations and image building because within the feminist community it is considered to be a "liberal" organization; liberal organizations, I believed,

are the most likely to engage in the political process and "play the game" by attempting to control their media image.

In addition to believing that NAC would be concerned with image building, I hoped it would be. The feminist movement is far less popular with Canadian women than are basic feminist ideals [Adamson et al., 1988]. I believe that it is important that feminists make feminism attractive to non-feminists. The National Action Committee makes no such attempts. In fact, NAC is quite unsophisticated about the media in general.

The following are a few examples of NAC's attitude towards the media. When I explained, to an executive member, that I was studying the AGM and press relations, she replied with the general agreement of several other executive members, "They only come to see us fight." While this is undoubtedly true, the media also goes to the meetings of the Liberals, the Conservatives, the Consumers' Association and the Steinbergs' family lawyers, just to see them fight. The media's love of conflict is by no means confined to the feminist movement and it is not completely beyond the control of the parties who are fighting. Secondly, when another executive member told me that she had done a great many media interviews during a NAC campaign, I asked her what she did to attempt to get good coverage. There was a pause and she replied, "that's more difficult isn't it." It appeared that she simply did not think about how to present herself or her opinions to maximize

positive coverage. Furthermore, when interviewing an ex-staff member I asked about media strategies, she replied, looking warily at my tape recorder that indeed she had tried to improve coverage, but she had had little power. In fact, not only was the NAC executive not interested in good media relations, some, she believed, were ideologically opposed to such attempts. The general attitude seemed to be that the media are patriarchal and against us. This is consistent with other studies:

> Journalists indicated that most women's organizations had relatively poor media relations: journalists felt they do not understand the constraints upon and time deadlines faced by reporters and that their suspicion of the media means that many groups do not recognize that often reporters (especially female journalists) are very sympathetic to their causes [Phillips, 1988: p. 33].

NAC's relationship to the press has not always been so uneasy. At the National Archives I found evidence that in the late seventies and early eighties NAC had a "Media Committee" which was concerned with NAC's image. For instance, the committee courted sympathetic journalists. I interviewed Moira Amour, who at one time had chaired the committee. She was not in the least hostile to the media, could name off many sympathetic journalists, and said quite frankly, that by the mid-seventies the media had stopped ridiculing feminists. Her positive attitude was completely different from that of the current executive.

I set out to study the National Action Committee and their

relationship to the media, but as that did not work out, I broadened the scope of the study to encompass a general look at NAC strategies. The notion of "strategies" is used in a general sense to encompass any attempts to influence public policy, legislation, public opinion, institutions, economic practices and so on, in ways which favour "improvements of the status of women" [NAC constitution, 1988], or to engender personal change or conversion. The strategies of influence of social movement organizations are strategies of social change which come from outside the locus of power. There exist, of course, government sponsored attempts to create social change, for example, the U.S. government waged a "war on poverty" [Moynihan, 1970].

Using tools from communications and organizational communications theories, political science and the theories of social movements I will take a practical look at concrete strategies of social change undertaken by NAC. That is, rather than entering into the feminist debates over political positions, this project will examine the processes by which a social movement organization attempts to instigate social change, how NAC attempts to have a hand in shaping the future.

Although this project is an academic project, which is being undertaken to fulfill the requirements of a Master's Degree in communications, it is hoped that as a reflection on social movement practice it will be useful to activists. There already exist handbooks for organizers and guides for

political action, but those kinds of tools do not invite a serious contemplation of the efficacy of the various strategies suggested. Although neither a history nor a handbook, the recent Feminist Organizing for Change: The Contemporary Women's Movement in Canada, [Adamson et al., 1988] could have explored some of these issues. Unfortunately, it argues for an intensely engaged and involved socialist feminist politic without ever querying the continuing effectiveness of the traditional strategies of the left and the exhausting demands they seem to make of movement adherents. I found three papers which discuss the strategies and tactics of the Canadian feminist movement, all unpublished. One is a history [Vickers, 1988], another is a case study of the women's constitutional lobby [Burt, 1983] and the third looks at networks and efficacy, [Phillips, 1988]. I have incorporated some of the material from these excellent papers into this thesis. A survey of the literature about social movements and social movement strategies will follow in the next chapter.

To help situate NAC's strategies in their context, a brief description and history is in order.

History of NAC

The National Action Committee on the Status of Women was born at the "Strategy for Change" conference in 1972. The

conference was organized by the leaders of various national women's organizations. Many of those involved had lobbied for the Royal Commission on the Status of Women in 1966. The Commission had been called in 1967 and completed in 1970, but the women's rights activists were afraid that the Commission was being shelved and the recommendations forgotten. NAC was created to monitor the implementation of the recommendations and to pressure the government into action. Although many of the Royal Commission's recommendations were related to provincial legislation, NAC's mandate was clearly federal. The lobbying of provincial governments has been the province of provincial coalitions.

The founding conference of the National Action Committee was a major meeting of traditional women's rights activists and the new women's liberationists. The push for the Royal Commission and for the formation of NAC had come from service groups like the Y.W.C.A. and the National Chapter of the I.O.D.E.; the surviving suffrage organizations like the National Council of Women; and the associations of women's clubs such as the Business and Professional Women Clubs and the University Women's Clubs. The conference turned out to be partly a confrontation and partly a coming together of the traditional women's rights groups who had organized the conference, with the women's liberationists with names like "New Feminists" and "Toronto Women's Liberation Movement". As described by Jill Vickers, "the founding conference with

groups represented ranging from the Communist Party to the I.O.D.E. was euphoric, it was exhilarating, it was confusing, it was horrendous. But somehow priorities were agreed upon and an umbrella structure emerged" [Vickers, 1988: p. 24]. Vickers further states that the umbrella structure of NAC has facilitated in Canada a unity in the feminist community which neither the Europeans nor the Americans have enjoyed.

NAC was formed as a coalition of groups. NAC membership is not open to individuals but only to groups. The logic of this being that "only in joint action can we be sure that the Report will not gather dust on some Parliamentary shelf" [Laura Sabia, cited in Adamson et al., 1988: p. 52]. Laura Sabia was the prime mover behind the creation of the Royal Commission, and the creation of NAC, and was the first president of NAC from 1972 to 1974.

Although NAC's original purpose was to lobby for the implementation of the Royal Commission recommendations, the body of policy which NAC has developed goes far beyond that. Every year, at the Annual General Meeting policy resolutions are voted upon, in a manner very similar to an N.D.P. or union convention. Originally policy resolutions were developed in workshops at the AGM and then voted on by the whole assembly. This was changed because, among other things, the workshops were too easily dominated by individuals who were particularly well versed on a given subject. Now, policy resolutions are submitted by member groups to NAC committees, and the NAC

executive, published in a resolutions booklet, and voted upon by the assembly at the Annual General Meeting. The tradition of holding workshops has persisted but they now have no policy making function. The 1989 Annual General Meeting is the subject of chapter four.

Since 1975 the NAC annual general meeting has culminated in a "Lobby" with the three federal caucuses. All of the members of parliament are invited to meet with NAC in an hour long session with each party. Questions are posed by NAC delegates to the various members of the caucuses who attend. It is an open public meeting with the media in attendance. This annual event is controversial within NAC and is the subject of the fifth chapter.

The National Action Committee has grown spectacularly since its inception. In the words of Lorna Marsden, president from 1975-1977, during the seventies, "although intended as a national organization, for all intents and purposes NAC was a group of Toronto women" [cited in Appelle, 1987: p. 49]. From 1972 to 1977 NAC quadrupled from 30 groups to 120 groups. With Lynn MacDonald as president, 1979-1981, the National Action Committee expanded and solidified. The executive expanded to create positions for regional representatives and thus reinforced the legitimacy of the claim to being a national organization. Policy committees were established as the breadth of women's issues widened and became more complex. The NAC Trust was founded as a tax deductible charity which

could support some of NAC's activities. And finally a new category of membership was created, "Friends of NAC" for individuals who would, for a fee, receive all NAC mailings, be invited to NAC meetings but not have the right to a vote [Appelle, 1987]. This category is both a fundraising tool and a way of broadening the base of NAC supporters.

By 1986 NAC included 458 groups and at the time of the 1989 Annual Meeting about 600 groups had paid up their membership. Not surprisingly, as the membership has grown, it has become increasingly difficult to make policy. For instance, NAC has no pornography committee as pornography has been an extremely divisive issue in the Canadian feminist community. A previous NAC staff member was unable to get the various key spokeswomen to agree to meet at all [Murray, interview].

It would take a whole thesis to catalogue the work of the National Action Committee. The NAC Constitution lays out a very broad spectrum of possible activities:

> The Purposes and objectives of NAC shall be to initiate and work for improvements in the status of women by:
>
> 1. actions designed to change legislation, attitudes, customs and practices;
>
> 2. evaluating and advocating changes to benefit women, including measures proposed by the Royal Commission on the Status of Women, and those adopted by NAC;
>
> 3. encouraging the formation of, and communication and cooperation among, organizations interested in improving the status of women in Canada;

> 4. exchanging information with member organizations and other interested persons or groups, and providing information to the public about the current status of women and recommended changes for improvement
> [NAC Constitution, 1988; p. 1].

Thus NAC is a lobby group, a research group, a network group, and a public information group. A huge mandate for any organization. The concrete actions taken on by the National Action Committee are described in the following quotation from a 1980 promotional pamphlet:

> WHAT DOES NAC DO?
>
> * Promotes reform in laws and public policies through
> * developing feminist positions
> * presenting briefs to government, legislators, commissions
> * lobbying Members of Parliament
> * Informs the public about women's concerns through
> * Status of Women News
> * open meetings on issues
> * enhanced media coverage
> * Fosters cooperation among women's organizations by:
> * sharing information
> * organizing conferences
> * building a national network

NAC has embarked upon these various tasks for many different issues over the years, from Indian rights for Indian women to increased funding for women's shelters to a campaign against free trade. The campaigns of NAC, its successes and failures, are indistinguishable from those of the feminist movement in Canada. Even on issues where NAC was not very active, it has played a key role. For instance, internal turmoil and debate between Quebecoise and English-

Canadian feminists prevented NAC from taking an active role in the 1981 constitutional debate. In the words of a member of the Ad Hoc Committee of Canadian Women on the Constitution (and past NAC executive member):

> NAC could have been on another planet but the people who were most active could do that role because of NAC connections.... If NAC had not existed, Ad Hoc could not have functioned [Rosemary Billings, cited in Appelle, 1987: p. 45].

Early on the National Action Committee was firmly non-partisan and had presidents who belonged to each of the three main federal parties. The issues broached were those which are most clearly "women's" issues - affirmative action, abortion, family property rights and so on. In recent years, perhaps since the election of the Progressive Conservatives in 1984, NAC has become increasingly active on partisan issues, like free trade, consistently taking left wing positions. Political scientist Jill Vickers believes that NAC has moved from a politics of women's issues to a global politic which takes women into account.

Just as NAC was born in a conflict between white gloved club women and "braless" radicals, NAC continues in turmoil and in strife. Descriptions of annual meetings over the years have inevitably referred to conflict and debate. But throughout, NAC continues to increase its membership and has become a Canadian institution. Political commentator Charlotte Gray wrote in a popular magazine:

NAC's rifts ... are like those that periodically

> agitate such national institutions as the Liberal Party and the United Church. With so many different concerns and points of view jostling for attention under NAC's umbrella, conflict has erupted regularly.... Nevertheless, the long-term commitment of its members to Canada's feminist flagship somehow kee- it afloat [Gray, Chatelaine, 1988].

The factional fighting in NAC is not a major part of this thesis, but it is key to understanding some of the debates. The following section will sketch out those factions and position myself in relation to those factions.

FEMINIST FACTIONS

The different factions of feminism have been described philosophically [Jaggar, 1979], historically [Banks, 1981] and practically [Adamson et al., 1988]. These different descriptions all agree that there are three major streams of feminist thought; liberal, radical, and socialist. The following are very brief sketches of each version of feminism.

Liberal feminists generally just call themselves feminists, but are occasionally referred to as bourgeois feminists by the others. Liberal feminists believe in reforming society and reforming government. Although the liberals are the least extreme, they are often the most visible in the press and the most active in lobbying the government. A discourse of equality and of rights is central to liberal platforms.

Radical feminists generally root their political beliefs

in an analysis of the differing life experiences of women and men. Radicals are most active in issues of violence against women, pornography, women's health, and women's culture. Radical feminists are most concerned with the lived experience of violence and oppression, and the lived experience of motherhood and nurturing. Their philosophical roots can be traced back to the nineteenth century "maternal" feminists who based their demands for the vote on the moral superiority of women.

Socialist feminists base their activism in a reinterpretation of Marx, which includes an analysis of the position of women. Socialist feminists tend to be most active on employment and day care issues, and in union and solidarity work. Although both liberals and radicals have their theorists, it seems that socialist feminists are the most active academics and writers. They have generated an extensive literature on women.

NAC was founded by liberal feminists, several of whom were allied with the Liberal or Progressive Conservative parties. Recently NAC has become more allied with the left and with the trade union movement [Cohen, Broadside, 1989]. There is a clear left faction in NAC and in the NAC executive. At the Annual Meeting a "left caucus" meets. The radicals and the liberals seem to be less explicitly organized. There may have been a clearer radical group when Lorraine Greaves was on the executive and involved with NAC's "Organizational Review."

Some women in NAC have been trying to re-organize NAC to allow for greater participation and democracy; to create a feminist process. This will be examined in detail in chapter three.

There is another faction in NAC of visible minority women, centered around the Immigrant Women and Visible Minority's Committee. The executive member whom I dealt with most was Rabab Naqvi, the chair of the AGM committee. Although a member of the Immigrant Women and Visible Minority's Committee, she seemed at odds with certain actions taken so I never completely understood the role of this group.

Personally, like many feminists, I do not consider myself to be either a radical feminist or socialist feminist and I don't feel comfortable being allied with the liberal feminists. I have worked extensively with radical groups. I was a member of the Toronto Rape Crisis Centre Collective for a year and a half and was a crisis worker in a shelter for homeless women for two years. Rather than making me a committed radical, these experiences have led me to question feminist orthodoxies about family violence. I was a founding member of a feminist newspaper, OtherWise, and very involved in its production for two years. The collective generally identified itself with socialist feminism. Since I believe that the most effective tactics are reformist, I cannot call myself a socialist feminist. But, I am a social democrat and am active in my New Democratic Party riding association. As well as belonging to various associations, donating money, and

attending demonstrations, I have done volunteer work with a legal action fund and with a pro-choice group.

Now that I have put the researcher firmly into the picture, I will discuss my research method.

RESEARCH METHOD

The principle research method employed in this study was participant observation. I attended the meetings of the AGM Local Planning committee, the AGM Policy Committee, and the NAC executive. I interviewed, formally, several women involved, I hung around the office a bit, and I spent social time with various women involved with NAC. At the interviews and meetings I took extensive notes, and I have sketchier notes from my time in the office and socially. In addition, I looked through a great deal of documentation and archival material both at the NAC office in Toronto and at the National Archives in Ottawa.

Although I was an outsider to the National Action Committee, I am in no way an outsider to the feminist movement in Canada. My role as participant observer was coloured by the unusual position of a researcher who is a part of the sub-group studied. In fact, all studies of the feminist movement that I have come across (Joan Cassel, A Group Called Women, and theses by Christine Appelle, Joan Richardson and Heather Jon Maroney) have been completed by women who considered

themselves to be feminists and who have participated in the movement which they studied. As a feminist studying a feminist organization I was in a position to understand some things better than an non-feminist would have. At the same time, some things seemed normal (and thus unremarkable) which would have appeared surprising to a complete outsider. The data amassed in any participant observation study is limited and shaped by the observer. I believe that there are two key factors which shaped this study. First, I am a committed feminist and experienced activist. I care about the National Action Committee and I care about the effectiveness of their strategies. Second, this was my first foray into participant observation. The research process was very much a learning process for me.

My position as a researcher was very different from, for instance, the middle class researcher studying a working class sub-culture, or the white anthropologist studying a native culture. The power dynamics inherent in a great deal of participant observation was quite different during this study. Most of the time I either felt that I was treated as an equal, or as a young student whom NAC was helping out. For example, during meetings I was invited to share NAC's coffee breaks and catered lunches. My offers to pay were refused.

To look at this project from a different point of view: organizational studies are often by managers about management. I have attempted to combine the approaches of a management

oriented organizational study and a cultural description. The limitations of Organizational theory are described by Weick:

> Organization theory has often been stifled because it has worked on problems that managers thought were problems and has studied them using managerial concepts rather than psychological or sociological ones. The only way in which understanding can be advanced is if the symbols used by practitioners are removed [Weick, 1969: p. 22].

I have turned around Weick's criticism of organizational work so that I, a feminist, have studied the problems of a feminist movement organization, but not in terms of feminist issues or ideology, but from an academic stand point. I brought tools from organizational theory, social movement theory and communications theory to analyze my observations.

My role as a researcher varied greatly between committees, and to a lesser extent over time. At first, the executive was friendly, if a little condescending, and by the end some were a little wary, and maybe a little tired, of me. The local planning committee was extremely welcoming and interested in my research. I just received a report from the conference co-ordinator, accompanied by an invitation to the wedding of another member of the committee which is to be held in her back yard. I became quite close to the chair of the AGM Policy Committee and drove her to and from Ottawa several times. But, my role in the AGM Policy Committee was very vague and most never seemed to know who I was or what I was doing there.

I was given more or less full access to all meetings and

files. But, to keep my presence welcome I exchanged some services, that is, I gave lifts, took minutes, and did some translation. On the continuum from observer to participant as described by Robert Burgess [1984], I was a "participant-as-observer." I was known to the group as an observer but I participated, albeit marginally, in the activities at hand. While observing activities, I took extensive field notes. The hand written notes were typed up and elaborated as soon as possible after the observed event. These notes were reviewed regularly and observations added.

I observed two weekend long meetings of the NAC Executive, in February and April in Toronto and a meeting in May immediately previous to the AGM. I attended six meetings of the Local Planning Committee in Ottawa. In addition, I attended one meeting of a dissenting Ottawa NAC caucus. I spent some time in the National NAC office in Toronto. The two weeks leading up to the Annual General Meeting I spent in Ottawa acting as an assistant to the conference co-ordinator. I did semi-formal interviews which I supplemented with an unquantifiable amount of time spent having coffee and chatting.

At the Annual General Meeting and the Annual Lobby I was a participant who was also observing and taking notes. I translated two workshops, in exchange for which NAC paid for my residence room. I shared the room with a woman from the Local Organizing Committee. During the AGM I had many

discussions with participants, some of whom I knew, some of whom were strangers. I considered that all that was said to me was research data, but not all of the women I spoke with knew that I was doing research. Over the weekend I took an enormous amount of notes!

In addition to my participant-observation I did two kinds of documentary research. I looked at internally generated documents of the organization: minutes of past meetings, budgets, agendas, pamphlets, the NAC Constitution, policy indexes and so on. And secondly, I looked at the print media coverage of the two events studied, that is, the Annual General Meeting and the Annual Lobby.

Because this project has used a variety of research methods, I have examined the National Action Committee and the events in question from as many angles as possible. I believe this provides for the most productive and complete analysis which I could possibly do. I systematically compared my observational data (fieldnotes) with the documentation produced by the organization itself. To avoid the pitfalls of a selective memory, I frequently reread my fieldnotes both during my field work and during the writing process.

This thesis is organized as follows. The next chapter is a survey of the literature about interest groups and social movement organizations and their strategies. The chapter looks at social movements in general and the feminist movement specifically. Chapter three is an extensive organizational

description of the National Action Committee. Chapters four and five are about the Annual General Meeting and the Annual Lobby respectively. Both chapters are analyses of NAC in action.

CHAPTER 2:

STRATEGIES OF INFLUENCE

In Canada there is a long history of groups and individuals who seek to influence public policy without actually exercising power. Many different kinds of groups influence the government without being a part of it. If Canada was built by the railroad; it was built on agreements between government and groups of businessmen. Except in cases of scandalous conflict of interest, the relationship between elected representatives, civil servants, and the representatives of special interests is kept out of the public eye. Academic studies of interest group behavior in Canada tend to start with the proviso that there has not been much research or theorizing; research did not even start until the nineteen sixties [Pross, 1975; Thorburn, 1985]. Similarly, Canadian social movements have not been the object of a great deal of academic study, but, on the other hand, their activity is generally open and publicly oriented. Social movements are rarely hidden from the public eye, but their influence in government is not always clear.

To develop a framework for looking at the National Action Committee and their strategies, I will first explore the literature on interest groups and their strategies and then the literature on social movements and their strategies.

The terms "social movement organization" and "interest group" are neither synonyms nor antonyms; in fact, each term describes different facets of an organization. The term "Social movement organization" refers to community within which a group is situated, its motivating forces and its position in the polity. The term "interest group" refers to a specific kind of activity in which a group engages. Thus, social movement organizations which engage in interest group activity are both social movement organizations and interest groups. But, not all groups which engage in interest group activity are a part of a social movement. And finally, not all social movement organizations act as interest groups.

INTEREST GROUPS

The terms "interest group", "pressure group" and "lobby group" are generally used interchangeably. A clear, concise definition is offered by Pross; "Pressure groups are organizations whose members act together to influence public policy in order to promote their common interest" [Pross, 1975b: p. 2]. He then creates a typology of interest groups based on their organizational structure: institutionalized groups, mature groups, fledgling groups and issue-oriented groups [Pross, 1975b: pp. 9-18]. He claims that a group's "organizational characteristics determine the capacity of pressure groups to develop the coherence and continuity

necessary for negotiating with government over a period of time" [Pross, 1975b: p. 9]. In short he claims that the more institutionalized a group is, the greater its chance of being able to influence government policy.

Pross's definition casts a very wide net and includes a very wide spectrum of interests. Landes uses essentially the same definition of an interest group, but he typifies them in terms of the interest represented instead of organizational characteristics. For Landes interest groups include: "special-interest groups", generally producer groups like the Brewers' of Canada or the Canadian Association of Broadcasters; "public-interest groups" like Greenpeace or the Consumers' Association; "single-issue groups", which generally concentrate on philosophical not economic issues, like Campaign Life or Against Cruise Testing; and "political action committees", which have not yet taken hold in Canada but who select candidates to support or oppose with some success in the U.S.A. [Landes, 1987].

The most highly organized groups are those with money to support permanent staff, office space, equipment, and so on. If interest groups are dependent on their constituent group for funds, then those who represent moneyed interests, that is, special interest groups, are the best equipped to deal with the government. "Thus, interest group politics are not neutral in their effects; they help the advantaged over the disadvantaged, the rich over the poor, the organized over the

unorganized" [Landes, 1987: p. 354].

The actual activity of trying to influence government policy is generally called lobbying. I will define "lobbying" as an active attempt to intervene in the government policy process by means of persuasive communication. None of the works about interest groups which I examined explicitly defined lobbying. My field work gave me no single definition of lobbying because different women involved in NAC have widely different ideas of what it is to lobby. By definition, interest groups are groups which lobby, and some, but not all social movement organizations lobby.

There are two very different ways of communicating with the government; media-oriented tactics and access-oriented tactics [Pross, 1975b]. Media-oriented tactics seek to sway public opinion and compel the government to make a policy decision or pass legislation which a group favours. Such tactics may include anything from protest marches and guerilla theatre to advocacy advertising and elaborate news management. Access-oriented strategies seek to sway the opinions of the individuals involved in the policy process. Tactics include: formal presentations to committees, commissions and advisory boards, regular personal contact with bureaucrats and politicians, staff exchange (the revolving door), and of course, campaign contributions in money and in kind. Perhaps the ideal outcome of an interest-group/ policy-maker relationship is an intimate exchange of information wherein

the policy maker depends on the interest group for both data and advice when elaborating policy.

The Canadian federal parliament system tends to favour access oriented lobbyists because that system is relatively closed; that is, party discipline is tight, and unlike in the United States, cabinet/administrative power is always allied with power in the commons and furthermore the senate is not a politically significant force [Pross, 1975b; Landes, 1987]. The policy process is dominated by the bureaucracy and the cabinet, institutions which can be described as closed because they are disciplined, hierarchical systems. Also, in as much as a party is united there is little or no friction among the sitting policy makers except in a minority government. So, the government is relatively free of challenges while it makes policy decisions. There is an increasingly adversarial relationship between the federal and provincial governments which may prove to be fertile ground for third party intervention. Similiarly, there may be leverage points in conflicts between the bureaucrats and cabinet.

Pressure groups must accommodate the policy system in which they operate; "the structure and behavior of pressure groups are functions of the political systems in which they are located" [Pross, 1975b: p. 5]. Although this is clearly true for some groups, it would perhaps be more accurate to propose that interest groups must accommodate the policy system <u>to be effective</u>. Pross describes the effect of the

closed Canadian policy system on interest group behavior:

> The Canadian policy system, then, tends to favour elite groups, making functional accommodative, consensus-seeking techniques of political communication, rather than conflict-oriented techniques that are directed towards the achievement of objectives through arousing public opinion. The effect this has on pressure group behavior is not hard to imagine. Generally the operation of the policy system indicates that we should expect to find that those groups that have maintained close connections with one or other of the principle policy structures and because they have avoided jeopardizing the intimacy of those connections through appealing either to Parliament or to the public at large.
>
> Effective interaction with the Canadian policy system then, depends on the cultivation of access to those public decision makers having influence in the policy area of greatest concern to the pressure group, and a willingness to accept short-term defeats of specific proposals in the interests of continuing favorable relations over the long run [Pross, 1975b: p. 19].

In other words, because the policy process is a closed system, organizations must attempt to influence that process from the inside. Groups which seek to sway the policy system must do so from the inside. The system favours cooperative groups over confrontational groups. Landes goes so far as to say that "appeals to the court of public opinion are usually admissions of political weakness, not political strength" [Landes, 1987: p. 355]. Although it may be true that insider influence is paramount on many policy issues, that cannot be true in all cases. As described by Babe and Winn, policy issues which are in the public eye are not as easily decided by access-oriented lobby groups:

> Small influential interest groups exercise their maximum influence on issues which do not involve high public salience. Once an issue becomes salient on a public agenda, pressure group influence tends to be supplanted by calculations of national interest [Babe and Winn, 1984].

Free trade is a good example of this process; access-oriented lobbyists succeeded in putting the issue on the P.C.'s agenda, but it took a general election to cement the deal once it became an issue of popular debate in Canada.

History. A quick history of insider lobbying will allow me to expand upon the tactics and techniques of access-oriented lobbying. From confederation until the nineteen fifties there was an ongoing relationship between the captains of industry and the leaders of government. This relationship broke down in the sixties as government became increasingly complex and politicians further removed from the details of policy making. As the relationship began to break down, an industry of sophisticated "government relations consultants" or lobbyists, grew up to fill in the gaps. The industry was established by former politicians and former high level civil servants [Sawatsky, 1987] many of whom had well established ties in both politics and the civil service.

The government has also responded to the increasing complexity of the policy process and the perceived lobbying power of special interest groups. The policy process has been opened up since Pross's 1975 book: there are more committees

which have more power; white papers are issued more and more frequently to stimulate debate among interested parties; a series of conflict of interest scandals promoted legislation regulating lobbying to be introduced; the ever increasing role of television has facilitated the growth of public interest groups; and finally, the government has been directly financing public interest groups [Thorburn, 1987; Sawatsky, 1987]. All of this seems to have produced mixed results:

> Overall, a consequence of the recent changes in the policy-making environment of pressure groups seems to be an opening up of the process to greater public debate, though this has not necessarily been translated into policy outputs [Thorburn, 1987: p. 15].

Parliamentary reform and the opening up of the policy system may have favoured the moneyed, institutionalized special interest groups because of the increased resources necessary to lobby the entire system. The lobbyists need to be in contact with more levels of bureaucracy and politicians, which takes time and money. Groups have to present more sophisticated briefs to more committees, more often and to respond more quickly to more government reports. It is possible that parliamentary reforms which were intended to make the policy process more democratic have favoured those moneyed interests whose power the reforms attempted to curb.

While the academics dryly describe the access-oriented tactics of formal presentations, regular personal contact, staff exchange and campaign contributions, corporate how-to

book Lobbying in Canada - Ways and Means, adds shape and colour to intricacies of influencing government. The following is a rundown of suggestions for the corporate lobbyist: first and foremost, the lobbyist must be highly knowledgeable about the structures of government and the bureaucracy, about the interest which he or she is representing and about the politicians and bureaucrats themselves. This is the key to establishing an effective information exchange. Lobbying should start with the bureaucrats and move on to the politicians if that is unsuccessful. Lobbying always should be directed to many different levels of government from municipal to federal and as many different departments as is necessary. Lobbyists must always be honest; a minister embarrassed by false or incomplete information rarely forgives. All demands should be framed in terms of the public interest. Friendly relations should be cultivated, but cocktails and lavish entertaining are not always useful; reliable, timely information is more consistently useful. Be wary of the media, politicians are highly sensitive to it. The use of the "old boy's network" and "rainmakers" is very risky, especially in the long run. Exchanges of personnel can be highly useful; hiring ex-public servants can be a way of gaining access to a great deal of information, and "lending" the government executives is a useful way of sensitizing the bureaucracy to the needs of business. And of course, discreet exchanges like, tickets to

ball games and summer jobs for the kids or free media, like photo opportunities at ribbon cutting ceremonies and retirement banquets can never hurt a cause. The book emphasizes that politicians and bureaucrats are not motivated in their work by lofty moral concepts of the public interest, but by self interest, the key to that being the pleasure of exercising power and applying one's concept of public interest; a fine distinction but an important one. Politicians are always interested in increasing their personal power and in being re-elected [Sarpkaya, 1987].

At the risk of restating the obvious, the successful corporate lobbyist needs extensive resources and a sophisticated understanding of governmental processes. Both Pross and Sarpkaya agree that there is a mutually beneficial and continual process of information exchange between the policy makers and the interest groups. For an interest group to maintain a privileged position within that exchange it must be able to supply reliable, complete, usable information, promptly. Obviously this kind of cosy relationship is more easily cultivated by groups with substantial resources.

Social Movement Organizations

Obviously, since a "social movement organization" is an organization which is a part of a social movement it is essential to define a "social movement". Although some social

movement organizations are interest groups, a social movement is not the same thing as an interest community, that is, the day care movement is not the same thing as parents of young children. And a social movement is not just an identity group, like "preppies", or a wave of public opinion, like the concern about the homeless, or a fad, like "Trekkies". The most useful definition of a social movement which I found was in Stewart, Smith and Denton:

> A social movement is an organized, uninstitutionalized, and significantly large collectivity that is created to bring about or to resist a program for change in societal norms and values, operates primarily through persuasive strategies, and is countered by an established order.

Thus a social movement is a "collectivity", a community based on common beliefs. But that community is more than a wave of public opinion. At least some adherents have organized together to create "social movement organizations" [SMOs]. Furthermore, a social movement is not a part of the "established order"; by definition it must contest. Official government policies of social change, like the "Just say NO" campaign, may be sparked off by pressure from a social movement, but are not social movements in and of themselves.

The strategies and tactics which individuals and organizations can use to act on their beliefs are far more varied than those used for lobbying the government. Some social movements, like the "New Age" movement, seek to change individuals, not government policy. That movement is very

different from, for instance, the "Eight Hour Day" movement (at the turn of the century) which, though a part of the general labour movement, sought a specific legislative change. Different movements seem to benefit from opposite tactics: Gitlin claims that the recruitment for the Anti-Vietnam war movement was assisted by publicity [Gitlin, 1980], but a study shows that the right wing John Birch Society grew rapidly from 1966-1981, a period in which it was nearly invisible and generally assumed by the public to be in decline [Stewart et al., 1984: pp. 105-120]. Since social movements are so varied, it is impossible to make an exhaustive list of possible tactics as is the case with access-oriented lobbying tactics.

Academic works about social movements often begin with the proviso that not much has been written. Until the 1960s studies of social movements focused on collective behaviour and the irrationality of protest. In the 1950s an influential work by Eric Hoffer characterized movement activists as "frustrated", "disaffected", and "rejected" fitting into one of eleven categories which included misfits, minorities, outcasts, the impotent (in body or mind), the inordinately selfish and, of course, sinners [Killain, 1964]. During the sixties numerous studies proved this hypothesis incorrect [Simons and Mechling, 1981]. Furthermore, some sociologists came to identify with the causes espoused by the movements, so the notion of protest as irrational had to be cast aside. Since the 1970s literature about social movements has moved

away from studies of deviance and collective behavior to studies of social movements as aggregations of organizations [Simons and Mechling, 1981].

Strategies and Tactics. Although there is a body of literature about social movements, very little has been written specifically about social movement tactics. "It is a common assumption among students of social movements that a movement's strategy is largely determined by its ideology" [Freemen, 1979b: p. 167]. Case studies mention but rarely focus on strategy except in the case of a failure, as in the ERA [Mansbridge, 1986], or a startling success, like the equality rights in the Canadian Charter [Burt, 1983; Kome, 1983]. I found one descriptive paper which assessed the network of National women's groups in Canada and their strategies [Phillips, 1988]. Finally, I uncovered three papers which attempt to theorize about social movement strategies. I will use these as a basis to analyze strategies of the National Action Committee. The papers are: Jo Freeman (1979a), "Resource Mobilization and Strategy: A Model for Analyzing Social Movement Organization Actions", Robert Lauer, (1976a) "Ideology and Strategies of Change: The Case of American Libertarians", and Simons and Mechling (1981), "The Rhetoric of Political Movements"

Freeman's model is by far the most complete, and thus useful, of the three. In elaborating her theory, I will enrich it with ideas from Lauer and Simons and Meechling.

Lauer argues that strategic choices are based on ideology and Simons and Meechling describe the rhetorical "cross-pressures" on SMOs. Both of these approaches are easily incorporated into Freeman's model.

Freeman argues that the strategic choices of a SMO are determined by four interlocking factors: first, the resources which the organization can realistically mobilize; second, the limits upon those resources; third, the SMO's structure and internal environment; and fourth, their expectations about potential targets and the actual environment within which it must operate. I will now elaborate her model and then leave the "resource management" perspective and look at strategies and tactics in terms of organizational culture.

Resources. The resources available to an organization should not be confused with simple monetary resources. Tangible resources, like money or office space or photocopying services are important but are not an absolute determinant of the possibilities of a movement. Blacks in the U.S., for example, built a powerful civil rights movement with meagre tangible resources. Human resources are key to a movement, especially adherents' time and commitment. Some movements have access to the specialized skills of lawyers, organizers, or leaders.

The human resources of a movement bring along another valuable resource - connections and networks. Movements

profit from access to pre-existing networks: in the nineteen sixties, feminists in the U.S. profited from the existing radical community and anti-war movement; and currently the pro-life movement profits from its access to the Catholic church [McCarthy, 1987]. Access to decision makers, to powerful people can be key to success; for instance, many groups who seek to protect historical landmarks succeed not because of a mass base, but because their members have access to powerful people [Pross, 1975a]. Finally, an important resource of SMOs is status; the venerable voice of the Y.W.C.A. is heard on feminist issues when others are not, and research presented by the respected Pollution Probe carries a weight which other organizations do not [Chant, 1975].

Most of the resources of a social movement come from what Zald and McCarthy have defined as the adherents of a movement (as opposed to the more restrictive term "member"). The adherents of a movement can be divided into the beneficiary constituents, those who would benefit directly from the success of the movement; and the conscience constituency, those who would not directly benefit but who are ideologically committed to the cause. Another important source of resources is what Freeman calls co-optable non-constituency institutions. That is, institutions which can be used to further the ends of a movement. For example, the courts were used extensively to further the civil rights movement after favourable legislation had been passed. The Canadian feminist

movement is very dependent on direct funding from the government. The use of government funds as a "co-optable resource" is an unusual situation which will be examined later.

Constraints on Resources. Freeman lists the constraints on resources as values, past experiences, reference groups, expectations, and relations with target groups. Since human resources are the most important resource of an SMO, the most important constraint on that resource is the limit of the activities and actions which movement adherents are willing to undertake. In other words, activists' activities are governed by questions of values, expectations, and past experience. I believe that these are best dealt with under the rubric of organizational culture, so I will leave them aside for a moment.

An organization's reference groups and relations with target groups are clearly determinants of strategy; they define boundaries for the organization. The reference groups for an SMO have an ideological and practical effect on choices of action. I have worked for two different shelters for homeless women. Both shelter organizations were keenly interested in housing issues, but they acted differently on very similar beliefs because their respective reference groups were different. One shelter identified with the feminist movement and left wing pro-housing movement. They took part

in demonstrations and coalitions. They built new housing resources in co-operation with other groups. The other shelter was sponsored by a coalition of church groups. The volunteer board would not have dreamed of participating in a demonstration to further their cause, neither were they interested in establishing any other housing resources. But, on the other hand, they did a lot to sensitize the church communities about housing issues and very actively lobbied the church bureaucracies and the government.

None of Freeman's categories of constraints on resources quite describes the kinds of very tangible constraints which government funders put on grants. The Canadian feminist movement is more dependent on government funding than any other feminist movement in the world [Appelle, 1987]. Government funding comes with explicit and implicit constraints. NAC, for instance, is not allowed to hire a professional lobbyist with their grant money.

Structure. A key deciding factor in the way a social movement organization deploys its resources is the structure of the organization itself. This theory, developed by Zald and Ash (1966), address a mixture of ideological and practical concerns. For instance, on a practical level the collective, small group structure developed in consciousness raising groups, limits political action to those actions which can be accomplished with no major division of labour and no

leadership, actions such as local educational or service projects [Freeman, 1979b].

A movement which requires a close-knit exclusive cell, a revolutionary Marxist group like the Red Brigade, is useful for disciplined terrorist action but not conducive to building coalitions. On the other hand, a loosely knit, inclusive group, like the recent coalition of Canadian church and human rights groups who opposed capital punishment, can create extensive ties and networks. The extent to which an SMO is isolated or is interacting will play a role in the kind of strategies chosen. It is often argued [Mansbridge, 1986; Phillips, 1988] that in politics there is great strength in weak ties. Weak ties usually allow for the creation of broadly based alliances, where as strong ties usually restrict a group to a given community.

The structure of a social movement organization may allow for the bulk of a group's resources being used for their political action strategies, or the bulk of those resources may be directed towards group maintenance. In the case of an inward looking SMO, like a commune or a consciousness raising group, it may fit well with the ideology of a group to concentrate resources on group maintenance. But, most social movement organizations as they mature and institutionalize, despite their ideology, are forced to spend more and more of their resources on group maintenance [Stewart et al., 1984; Zald and Ash, 1966]. For instance, the time consuming tasks

of membership renewal and newsletters take over from political action.

Questions of organizational structure are central to the feminist movement. Feminists have experimented with collective and consensus based organizations. Key structural questions have been democracy, participation and conflict resolution. Feminists have tried to create structures which allow for "power to" or "power with" rather than "power over". The question of centralized or decentralized power is often very troubling: feminists who are ideologically committed to decentralized models of power often find themselves in organizations which, de facto, are highly centralized because they depend on a handful of highly committed volunteers.

External Environment. The final factor which influences strategic choices are activists' expectations about potential targets and the environment in which the SMO must function. Freeman identifies three key factors: "(1) the structure of available opportunities for action, (2) social control measures that might be taken, and (3) the effect on bystander publics" [Freeman, 1979a: p. 185].

Obviously, different political environments create very different opportunities for action. A group of Black women in Soweto have a very different set of possibilities than the Congress of Black Women of Canada. Obviously directly intervening with the state requires key resources like members

who possess a sophisticated understanding of the state or some access to it or both. SMOs may choose to lobby the federal, provincial or municipal government - on an issue such as housing which crosses jurisdictions - depending upon their expectations about the respective governments. Groups who are alienated from the state may use tactics like public demonstrations; some may wish to demonstrate their numbers and thereby gain enough credibility to gain access to the state. Others may contest the legitimacy of the state and refuse to engage directly with it.

Social movement organizations, especially those which use civil disobedience, must weigh the value of an action against the cost to participants. In some countries the cost of social movement participation is death. In Canada it can mean police surveillance, arrest, or social stigmatization. Movement organizations must choose actions which keep up an acceptable level of membership while remaining true to ideology.

Bystander publics can be an important tool for a social movement. Public sympathy may be an end in and of itself, or it may be used to prod the government. It can can determine the fate of a movement. For instance, the recent successes of the disabled movement have never been matched by the psychiatric inmates movement. This is at least in part because bystander publics have been more sympathetic to the disabled than to the "Mad Movement". But, I believe Freeman

is mistaken when she asserts that social movement organizations weigh the effects on bystander publics before chosing a strategy. Some SMOs are very sophisticated communicators and some are not.

The play between a group's relationship to reference groups and a group's relationship to its external environment is a key difference between interest groups and social movement groups. Pross claims that interest groups must adapt to the political system, but many social movement organizations obviously do not. Some organizations engage in strategies which avoid or ignore the political system. The Weathermen tried to start a revolution; some "hippies" and some separatist lesbian feminists created alternative communities which disengage as much as possible from the mainstream; and some small group strategies, most notably consciousness raising, aim at individual change. Interest groups by definition engage in the official political process, but social movements may choose not to.

CULTURE

The resource mobilization theory of social movements allows for a very instrumental account of social movements, social movement organizations and the strategies thereof. To look at social movements more descriptively or more organically, I will use the cultural model of organizational

theory. This section will serve the dual purpose of describing the organizational culture model and establishing a basic description of feminist culture.

"Organizations are mini-societies that have their own distinctive patterns of culture and subculture" [Morgan, 1986: p. 121]. The organizational theory which examines organizational culture is most often used to describe large corporations or public institutions, but it is very pertinent to the study of social movement organizations and to social movements as a whole. When an organization's "culture" is described, culture is used in a very broad sense including "systems of knowledge, ideology, values, laws, and day-to-day ritual" [Morgan, 1986: p. 112]. The culture of a social movement, and of a social movement organization, determines how a movement will use its resources and as will be seen later, is a significant factor in organizational structure. After examining general questions of culture I will look at two concepts closely related to culture; ideology and routinization.

A social movement as a whole shares a kind of a culture. The feminist movement, although ideologically divided, shares many beliefs, much history, and some patterns of behaviour. For instance, the idea that the "personal is political" is pervasive in the feminist movement and is reflected in more than political action: feminists bring their children to meetings, discuss their personal lives as a political act, and

expect personal support from the movement which goes beyond questions of "politics". Each individual social movement organization has its own particular culture within the broader culture of the movement. When I was a member of the OtherWise [feminist newspaper] collective, we thought we were the hip, young kids on the block, actively challenging the feminist establishment. When I was a member of the Toronto Rape Crisis Centre collective, we were the real feminists, the most politically correct, out on the edge, constantly in touch with the worst manifestation of patriarchy. The groups were different but both were collectives whose members shared many assumptions about the world.

Although new analyses of race, class and sexuality have brought it into question, a key cultural motif in the feminist movement is Sisterhood. [Adamson et al., 1988; Cassel, 1977]. The notion of sisterhood is both a key instrument of social change and the greatest reward for participation in the feminist movement. For a movement of women to exist, women must feel a common identity, a solidarity, with other women. Some even argue that, "the greatest impact of the women's movement has been to create a collective identity among a large segment of women" [Phillips, 1988]. Furthermore, a positive experience of sisterhood has served as an important mechanism to recruit and keep activists.

All feminists agree that there are differences between the way men and women are in the world. Beyond the painfully

obvious differences in social position and earning power, men and women behave differently. Although not all agree that those differences are inherent or biologically based in motherhood, those differences colour all feminist thought. Within some parts of the feminist movement, especially the "radical" or "cultural" branches, there is a belief that men have their ways of thinking and acting and women have different ways of thinking and acting. Women are said to be kinder, gentler and more community oriented, and men given to hierarchy, alienation and power hunger. As described in a feminist political action handbook:

> These theorists describe the male system as institutionalized, self-perpetuation, party-oriented, individualistic, and rather rigid. Participants are apt to be motivated as much by personal ambition as by public interest. In contrast, the female system is local, goal-oriented, voluntary, collective, and flexible enough to allow for participants domestic emergencies. People usually get involved for the sake of solving an immediate problem; when the work is finished, they may drop out or go on to another project [Kome, 1989: p. 27].

In other words, women's organizing is small-time, low budget, short-sighted, and removed from any major locus of power, not because women are oppressed, but because women are "nicer" than men. Thus a feminist culture which values the so called "female" virtues may lead to social movement organizations which choose strategies which do not challenge the power structure, do not seek real power because the activists' community favours non-confrontational, small-scale tactics.

These kinds of ideas are most prevalent in the faction of the feminist movement referred to as "radical" feminist.

The cultures of social movements and social movement organizations must grapple with, if not resolve, two key contradictions: myth versus reality, and the moral versus the political [Simons and Meechling, 1981]. For example, the feminist mythology of collectives has to be resolved with the reality of the experience in working in a collective. Structurelessness can be tyrannical: it allows for a separation of power and responsibility, that is, powerful individuals can impose their will on the collective without the responsibility which is usually attached to leadership. Choices must be made, which either reinforce the myth or the reality. For example, a feminist publication, Broadside, operated as a collective but one collective member was the full-time editor.

The "moral versus the political" is the delicate balance between effectiveness and ideological purity. Mansbridge claims that the desire to win the ERA at times over ruled ideological purity. In some states, pro-ERA demonstrations not only prohibited banners referring to lesbians and socialists organizers even imposed a dress code! In other aspects of the ERA fight, ideology over ruled effectiveness. ERA activists continually asserted that the ERA would allow army women into combat roles, even though Mansbridge estimates that the courts would probably not have done so [Mansbridge,

1986].

Ideology. Ideology, that is the complex of political and social beliefs of a group, is clearly a key determinant of organizational culture. The following examples illustrate how it effects strategic choices. Confronted with the same issue, different groups will choose different strategies, depending on their ideology. For instance, when rape was named as a feminist issue in Canada, groups responded differently. Some groups, notably the national groups, lobbied to have the laws reformed and the police re-educated. This demonstrates a willingness to reform the system and at least a rudimentary knowledge of the political system; the strategy entails a willingness of the group to grapple with the powers that be. Others, set up services for rape victims. This strategy is within the charitable/service oriented tradition of women's organizing. It allows members to be involved in care-giving, and, other than grant applications, avoid contact with the political system. The strategy is immediate, concrete and woman-centered. Finally a radical group held demonstrations and civil disobedience "actions", like postering Toronto with signs saying that men will be subject to a 7pm curfew. This strategy involved no contact outside of the movement, it allowed for doing fun and daring things with other right-on women [all these examples are from personal experience].

Routinization. The routines of an organization are an important part of that organization's culture. Habit and past experience are particularly strong determinants of many decisions in SMOs because activists are almost all volunteers or over-worked-under-paid staffers. Even in an ideal environment, new ideas and new strategies are harder to implement than previously used strategies. In the cash poor environment of most SMOs, where much labour is voluntary, it is even harder. SMOs, like moving bodies, are subject to inertia. There is a tendency to repeat actions and events organized in the past. Freeman claims that demonstrations are fresh and creative at first, but their effects wear off over time. But groups get accustomed to organizing demonstrations as has been illustrated recently by the Pro-choice movement's response to the Chantal Daigle case - demonstrations were held across Canada. Unfortunately, since abortion has become a widely debated issue, demonstrations communicate less about public opinion than does a Gallup poll especially to the politicians.

This brief sketch of the feminist movement's culture will be an extremely important background when I examine the culture of the National Action Committee. I have only looked at culture in terms of social movements, and not in terms of interest groups because I believe that it is far more enlightening to examine the culture of NAC in relation to the feminist movement than in relation to other interest groups.

Furthermore, there is an identifiable culture in the feminist movement, but interest groups, as described by Pross and Landes are so disparate that I doubt there is a common culture.

The strategies chosen by social movement organizations are determined by four key instrumental factors: resources, constraints on those resources, SMO structure, and the external environment. Furthermore, strategies can be seen as both a part of and an outcome of the social movement's and the social movement organization's culture. The kind of field work which I did with the National Action Committee will allow me to focus on its structure and its culture, with a brief look at resources and their constraints. I will analyze how NAC's structure and organizational culture determine NAC's choices of strategy. I will look at two major NAC events; the annual general meeting and the annual lobby of the members of parliament. The first event will be examined as an example of the organization in action, an example of NAC in action within the Canadian feminist movement. The AGM is not primarily an interest group function. The second event, the Lobby, is primarily an interest group action of a social movement organization. It will be examined as an example of NAC in action trying to influence the government and the general public.

CHAPTER 3:

THE STRUCTURE OF NAC

The structure of an organization is an important factor in determining what strategies that group will use to affect change. Pross's interest group theory suggests that an organization will conform itself to the political structure; Freeman's social movement theory suggests that ideological factors will determine structure. Both agree that the structure of the organization has an impact on the strategies chosen and the efficacity of those strategies. The following chapter will describe the National Action Committee's structure and then examine the effect of that structure on NAC's strategies thus affirming Freeman's notion. The information is taken from my observational field work; interviews and discussions with women involved; and from NAC documents.

To give a complete picture of the National Action Committee I have broken down the chapter into the following sections: the formal organizational structure; membership, insiders and outsiders; staff in a voluntary organization; NAC activists; NAC activities; organizational culture; "Organizational Review"; and the structural tension between NAC as a lobby group and NAC as an umbrella group. But, before entering into the formal structure, I will relate the story of my first contacts with NAC. I hope this description is not as mysterious to you as the experience was for me!

When negotiating access to the organization I approached

Anne Betz, the woman whom NAC had hired to organize their Annual General Meeting. The trajectory taken by my request gave me my first taste of the NAC hierarchy. First, Betz read my letter to the Local Organizing Committee of the AGM, the committee was enthusiastic about my project from the beginning and remained welcoming and encouraging to the end. Once the Local Organizing Committee had agreed to work with me, the request was passed on to Rabab Naqvi, secretary of the Board of Executives and chair of the AGM Policy Committee. Naqvi told me on the telephone that she personally would endorse my project, but needed the consent of the AGM Policy Committee. The AGM Policy Committee agreed to give me access to the organization but never seemed to have grasped exactly what I was doing or who I was, perhaps because the membership of the committee changed drastically from meeting to meeting.

Three points are clear from this description of my negotiation for access. First, the staff have little or no decision making power in the organization. Although Betz could have blocked my project if she had not wished to have someone observe her work, she could not officially deny me access and could not approve of my access to her work. Secondly, leadership roles, like the chairing of a committee entail responsibility -that is, Naqvi was expected to read my request and take responsibility for presenting it to her committee - but the work taken on in a leadership role is rewarded by little official decision making power. Thirdly,

within the organization there is a hierarchical committee structure.

FORMAL ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE

The National Action Committee has a parliamentary structure, not unlike that of a trade union or of the New Democratic Party. At the AGM the Executive, the central body of the organization is elected. There are twenty-five members of the Executive; thirteen regional representatives, a president, treasurer, secretary, three vice-presidents, five members at large, and until 1989, the past-president. At the 1989 AGM it was decided that the past-president will be replaced by an additional member-at-large. The term of office was only one year until the 1989 AGM at which time it was decided that starting the following year, half of the Executive would be elected each year for a two year term. [Appendix # 1 is an organizational chart by the Organizational Review Committee and Appendix # 2 is a list of committees.]

The NAC Constitutions gives very wide "Duties and Powers" to the Executive Committee:

> (a) The Executive Committee shall conduct the business of NAC in all respects with a view to implementing the purposes and objectives as stated in the Constitution, and in accordance with NAC policy as approved by Annual Meeting [NAC Constitution, 1988: p. 7].

Furthermore, the Executive is empowered to hire staff, pay

expenses, borrow money, and so on. Hence the Executive controls the resources of the organization.

Unlike political parties or unions, which have individual members, individuals cannot be full voting members of NAC. NAC membership is restricted to groups. Each group, regardless of the size of its membership, has one vote at the AGM both on policy matters and in the election of the Executive. The Executive, on the other hand, is an Executive of individuals. Although an Executive member must be sponsored by a member organization to run for office, when on the Executive she is on the Executive as an individual not as the representative of an organization.

Policy is set at the AGM by means of policy resolutions. Between the AGMs the Executive is obliged to follow the policy set at the Annual Meeting; but in cases where there is no clear NAC policy, the Executive can create new policy. The policy resolutions voted for at the AGMs are either internal, organizational policy or more commonly, political policy statements. For instance, at the 1989 AGM fifty eight resolutions were presented. One internal, organizational resolution was a resolution to find a new site for the AGM. A political resolution suggested that NAC "launch a national campaign to oppose the government's initiatives toward a broad extension of the national sales tax" [NAC Resolutions, 1989: p. 20].

Once the assembly at the Annual General Meeting has set

the crganization's policy, political work on issues is delegated from the Executive to the issue or policy committees. There are currently approximately twenty issue committees ranging from health to foreign policy. Although some of the committees are established, active and stable, others seem to exist in name only. The committees are co-chaired by a member of the Executive and a woman who is not on the Executive. Committee membership is made up of a combination of NAC Executive members and anyone else who is interested. Obviously members of committees are drawn from the feminist community. Officially, women must apply to become members of a committee and membership must be approved by the Executive Committee as a whole. During the time I observed the Executive meetings, membership approval appeared to be automatic.

In my research I found no official guidelines to committee activity, beyond that the committees must conform to the NAC Constitution and to policy passed at the AGM. But the committee chairs are required to report activities to the Executive as a whole. It was unclear to me how exhaustively the committee chairs are officially expected to report activities. I saw no evidence of any concerted effort to co-ordinate the work of the different committees, no effort to plan the issue committee work as a whole. Although there must be informal communication and cooperation between the committees, no formal mechanism co-ordinates NAC's work on

issues. It is unlikely that different committees will actually contradict each other, but some committees may overlap. Furthermore, each committee calls on the government to make its issue a priority.

The bulk of the administrative work of running the organization is done by the staff. Administration is guided by various standing committees: Finance, Membership, Editorial, Annual Meeting, Personnel, Resolutions, and as of the 1989 AGM, Fundraising and Media and Public Relations. These committees are also chaired by an Executive member, and as far as I could tell, draw their membership exclusively from the Executive Committee. (This conclusion comes from my observational data and from the fact that NAC advertises in their publications for members of the issues committees, but not for members of the administrative committees.) The only administrative committee with membership outside of the Executive is the Personnel Committee. It is made up of staff representatives and Executive members. The staff were not required to be on any other committees even though the bulk of the administrative work is actually carried out by the staff.

MEMBERSHIP: INSIDERS AND OUTSIDERS

Although I was told once or twice that "NAC is its membership", this is very far from the case. The NAC

community can be described as two separate layers: the insiders and the outsiders.

Outsiders. The vast majority of the three million women who are members of NAC member groups have absolutely no involvement whatsoever with NAC. I seriously doubt that many members of the Public Service Alliance or the Y.W.C.A. even know that they are members of NAC. Furthermore, many groups who are members of NAC have a very marginal involvement in NAC.

To qualify for membership of NAC, a group must include at least 10 members, work for advancement of the status of women and subscribe to the "purposes and objectives" of NAC; once a group has applied and paid its membership fees, acceptance is more or less routine. The members receive NAC publications and may choose to send a delegate to the AGM. I cannot assess what NAC membership means to the member groups, or if they read NAC publications. But, in 1987-88 when the Organizational Review sent questionnaires to NAC groups, only 16% replied. When I was highly involved in a NAC group, NAC was not of any great importance and we did not examine the mailings in any detail. I believe this is not uncommon.

Although member groups set NAC policy at the AGM, the groups are not obliged in any way to work towards the goals set at the AGM. Member groups are not bound to adhere to the policy passed at the Annual General Meeting and many member

groups hold positions diametrically opposed to those adopted at the NAC AGM. The policy resolutions are distributed to groups ahead of time so that in theory the member groups will have considered all of the proposals and will send a delegate to represent their groups' positions. It is not clear how many of the groups actually do discuss the proposals. At the 1989 AGM it appeared that some groups' delegates were voting as much for themselves as for their groups.

Although individuals may not be voting members of NAC, since 1981 there has been a category of membership for individuals, called "Friends of NAC". Friends of NAC make a minimum financial contribution to NAC of $35 and receive copies of NAC publications. There are currently about 900 Friends of NAC.

Insiders. The inner circle of NAC, the true working core of the organization, is the Executive Committee, the issue committees, and the staff. All power at NAC is concentrated in the hands of the 25 member Executive. The Executive chair both the administrative committees and the issue committees. Most of the committees meet at the same time as the Executive meets, in Toronto. Thus, it seems that there is a core of Toronto insiders who are extensively involved with NAC committee work. In 1988 NAC adopted the practice of having non-Executive co-chairs for committees, which may have expanded the circle of insiders. There have been attempts in

the last few years to expand the committees regionally. This is handled either by basing committees outside of Toronto or by communicating by teleconference or by mail. A successful expereiment with regionalization is the "Training" subcommittee of the Employment, which is based on the prairies.

The NAC Executive, the NAC staff, and the NAC committees are the organization proper. These structures undertake all NAC business and take on all NAC responsibility. But, within the NAC insiders I observed clear levels of involvement. Various Executive members were more powerful than others and different committees were more autonomous or better funded than others. It appeared that committees chaired by personally powerful members of the Executive enjoyed a relative autonomy to initiate action and take stands within the bounds of official NAC policy. Committees chaired by less powerful members simply did not. During my observation of executive meetings, the committee chairs reported on their activities. On one hand, two different committee chairs asked permission of the Executive just to write letters of support. And on the other hand, the powerful committee chairs reported back on major actions planned and briefs presented, seemingly oblivious to any need for approval of the executive as a whole.

My observations led me to believe that currently at NAC the Executive members who are the powerful inside-insiders are

those who are aligned with the socialist feminists. There are no formal or explicit alliances in the Executive and the committee structure, thus the internal implicit power structure is quite hidden. An Executive member from one of the western provinces told me that it took her two years to work out what was happening at the Executive meetings and to start building her own alliances.

STAFF IN A VOLUNTARY ASSOCIATION

During my observational work there were four full time and two part time workers at NAC. In the Toronto office there were two part time clerical workers; a full time office manager; a membership coordinator; and an executive coordinator. The Ottawa office was staffed by a liaison officer. For the AGM two women were hired on contract; a conference organizer in Ottawa and a woman in Toronto who was responsible for preparing the printed materials.

The staff's role in the organization is somewhat ambiguous. The staff are central to the organization and undertake most of the day-to-day work of running the organization. They are the interface between NAC and the public. Similarly, the staff are the main NAC contact between the inside structure of NAC and the member group outsiders. But, the staff have very little power. They are not allowed to speak to the press or to politicians and do not seem to be

delegated much responsibility, although their work loads are enormous. For instance: the membership coordinator cannot make decisions about membership applications and renewals. During an Executive meeting it was presented as a revelation to the fundraising committee and the executive that the fundraising committee could leave the preparation of a grant application to the executive coordinator.

Unfortunately, NAC has a long history of troubled relations between the Executive and the staff, the most dismal chapter having happened at the 1988 AGM. In 1988 the staff tried to unionize, and although the Executive did not try to block unionization completely, they opposed the inclusion of all of the staff in the bargaining unit. This matter was fought bitterly and brought before the Ontario Labour Relations Board. The struggle around unionization, coupled with pre-existing tensions lead the entire staff, but one, to resign publicly at the 1988 AGM. It became a wry joke that NAC fights for the rights of all women workers, except their own. In the words of a disappointed ex-Executive member:

> NAC hired a feminist, hardworking, reliable staff, gave them too much work, too little information or control, certainly too little salaries, then treated these women with total disrespect. And that is putting it mildly.... The pen cannot express the anger, frustration and disillusionment I feel at being a witness to, and by association and lack of action, a part of, the treatment of these women who are the single most important group holding NAC together [Beth Brehaut, The Womanist, Sept. 1988].

The current staff seemed uncomfortable discussing staff -

Executive relations, probably because the final contract was negotiated while I was doing my research. The following is an anecdote from an ex-member of the NAC staff which I believe underlines many of the most problematic aspects of staff-Executive relations from the point of view of the organization as a whole.

Sandra (a pseudonym) worked for four years as a part time employee of NAC, assigned specifically to fund raising. The task of fund raising was undertaken by a committee, who took on the responsibility of organizing fund raising campaigns. They did not hire a professional fund raiser to assure continuity, planning or to take on some of the responsibility. The responsibility for fund raising remained on the shoulders of a volunteer committee, with all the inevitable problems of continuity and commitment inherent in voluntary work.

The fund raising consisted mainly, but not exclusively, of direct mail advertising. The materials were produced on contract by a direct mail company, and Sandra's role was to process the incoming donations. Just as the current NAC receptionist has a master's degree, Sandra was grossly over qualified for clerical work; at the time she was a doctoral candidate and a member of the board of executives of another national feminist organization. As a feminist and as a serious, hard worker, Sandra took her responsibilities to heart. She would attend the meetings of the fund raising committee and present reports she wrote specifying which

direct mail campaigns gave a reasonable return and which did not. She was never asked to compile these reports, not paid to do it, and most incredibly, never thanked.

This illustrates three key factors in the organization's relationship with its staff. Firstly, there is a tendency to assign responsibility to volunteers rather than to staff. Volunteers supervise staff, staff does not supervise volunteers. Although professionals may be hired to fulfill a specific task, as in the case of having the direct mail material prepared by professionals, the responsibility for a major portion of work, such as fund raising, rests with a volunteer committee. Secondly, although most of the staff positions at NAC appear to be largely, if not entirely, clerical and secretarial, the organization attracts and hires highly educated feminists. Perhaps, because of the nature of the work assigned to the staff, they are rarely used to the full extent of their resources. And finally, because Executive and committee members are not required to have any management experience, the volunteers often do not know how to create an encouraging or rewarding atmosphere for the organization's workers.

NAC ACTIVISTS

The National Action Committee is a voluntary organization. It is voluntary in many ways which go far beyond the simple

requirement of a voluntary board of directors necessary for "non-profit" status. Almost all key tasks are done by volunteers and very little decision making power is left to the paid staff. The bulk of the responsibility for the running of the organization is taken on by the members of the Executive. Executive members are expected to attend weekend long meetings four times to eight times a year. In addition, Executive members all take on at least one committee, and the regional representatives are expected to hold regional meetings and be in contact with member groups. From a NAC document:

> At the present time Executive members are expected to be: managers, public speakers, community organizers, chairpersons for committees, well-informed on a wide variety of issues and have the ability to develop and manage a budget for a region or committee. This creates a heavy workload and can lead to frustration, disappointment and burnout [NAC Organizational Review: The Next Steps, 1988: p. 22].

Not surprisingly, the enormous commitment required of Executive members creates problems. On one hand there are Executive members who are not able to spare the time and money necessary to complete their obligations - a situation which is highly unsatisfactory for the individual and for the organization. And on the other hand, because so much responsibility is given to volunteers, those volunteer Executive members who are able to take on more than others acquire an enormous amount of power in the organization. Through my observation and a vast accumulation of snide

comments from women who I doubt would wish to be quoted, it became very apparent that those women most given to dedicating large amounts of time over the years are those of the extreme left. (This observation was recently confirmed by an article by a key left wing member of the Executive who claimed that at NAC there is an, "increasing membership on the Executive from more left-oriented women, trade unionists and women from minority groups" [Broadside, 08/89: p. 6]). It is not surprising that the women who dedicate the most time will eventually acquire the most influence. This is consistent with the findings of Jane Mansbridge who studied the Pro-ERA movement in the United States:

> Because the ERA movement had little coercive power and few immediate individual benefits at its disposal, it had to rely on ideological incentives to recruit and maintain activists. This meant that the people staffing the organizations that promoted the ERA were not a cross-section of those who favored it. They differed in one major respect - they believed in, and wanted to bring about, major changes in the roles of men and women in America..... the ERA organizations had to attract their membership primarily with moral and ideological incentives... activists were brought into the fray by their sense of injustice rather than by any individual rewards. [Mansbridge, 1986: p. 121]

The active volunteers at NAC, like those who fought for the ERA, are more politically radical than the average member of a NAC member group. Although there are certainly many small NAC member groups with members more radical than the NAC Executive, the membership of the large groups (which substantiate NAC's claim that it represents 3 million women)

like the Y.W.C.A. or of C.U.P.E. or the Federation of Business and Professional Women's clubs, are generally far from socialist feminist.

NAC ACTIVITIES

Thus far, I have established the formal organizational structure of NAC, explored the membership structures, looked at the insiders and outsiders of NAC, described the position of the staff, and drawn a few conclusions about NAC activists. Now I will shift the focus to the concrete activities of NAC. It should be kept in mind that the NAC Constitution, as quoted in the introduction, sets out four main purposes for NAC: lobbying, researching, networking, and educating the public. To provide a context for describing the actual activities of NAC I will first describe the resources available to NAC. Secondly I will examine NAC's place in the lifecycle of a social movement; as will become clear, the bulk of NAC's resources are spent on organizational maintenance. Only then will I look at the political work of NAC, the work which actually involves strategies and tactics of influence. I will first look at NAC's activities within the feminist movement and then NAC's work on issues.

Resources. Although an indepth examination of the resources available to the National Action Committee is beyond

the scope of this thesis, a brief description of NAC's resources will serve to put the organization and their activities in context. NAC's 1989 Annual Report indicate that for the year ending March 31, 1989, NAC had total revenues of $825,658. Although it is impossible, from the budgets available, to assess exactly how much is spent on what, because the categories are not very exact, a rough division shows that about 55% is spent on maintaining the organization, about 29% on networking and developing NAC itself and the feminist movement, and about 16% on lobbying and outwardly directed political action. Three quarters of NAC's 1989 budget came from the federal Women's Program. Although there are clearly a myriad of implicit constraints on that money, one significant explicit constraint is that NAC may not pay a lobbyist with the money. This spring, NAC learned that their operating grant was to be slashed by 50% over three years, (perhaps because the organization ignored implicit constraints!) NAC has access to certain services and privileges because of the connections of, among others, the Executive. Meeting rooms, for instance, are available for free to the organization.

The National Action Committee has built up a considerable prestige in the women's community and on the Canadian political scene in general. Although NAC is not solely responsible, the feminist movement has had considerable success in Canada and much of that is attributed to NAC. NAC

is well known in the media, and constantly sought out for comment on issues. Perhaps because of its status, NAC attracts highly qualified, educated, connected women to its Executive. Past presidents include Grace Hartman, who was the leader of the largest public service union; Lorna Marsden, now a senator; Doris Anderson, long time editor of Chatelaine, and current columnist; Lynn MacDonald, who subsequently became an M.P.; and Chaviva Hosek who became an Ontario cabinet minister.

Because of its very wide membership, NAC has access to many different, extensive networks. Obviously NAC has access to the Canadian network of women's and feminist groups many of whom are members of NAC. In addition, many large unions belong to NAC, as do the women's committees of several major churches; as do the women's committees of all the major political parties. Although NAC's connections are extremely wide because of its huge membership, a study of the feminist network indicated that NAC did not use many of those connections extensively [Philips, 1988]. This tendency to under use the possibilities of its membership has been under active study at NAC.

NAC has at its disposal a great deal of volunteer labour. Many of the volunteers bring with them valuable skills and experience which can be used by NAC. For example, the AGM was organized by two committees of about ten volunteers each, and was run by those volunteers and thirty others brought in to

help with specific tasks over the weekend. The volunteers provided skilled work in translation, organization and setting up microphones.

Compared to most feminist organizations, NAC is very, very rich. It has money, status, access to networks and committed volunteers. But, NAC insiders complain frequently about the scarcity of resources at NAC. I believe that money and volunteer time appears to be spread thinly at NAC because NAC tries to do a great deal. Not only is NAC both a lobby and a network, but it also has twenty issue committees all competing for volunteer time, staff time, and committee budgets.

In conclusion, because the National Action Committee has a wide scope of resources, it has a wide scope of possible actions. It is not limited to obscurity or powerlessness by its lack of resources. The impression among NAC insiders that NAC's resources are scarce is, compared to other feminist organizations, simply untrue. Furthermore, NAC outsiders told me that it angered them to hear NAC insiders claim that resources were scarce. But, relative to the amount of work which NAC takes on, NAC's resources are, in fact, spread quite thin.

Social Movement Lifecycles and Organizational Maintenance. Stewart, Smith and Denton describe five stages in the life of a social movement: genesis, social unrest,

enthusiastic mobilization, maintenance and termination. The feminist movement in Canada as a whole and NAC as an organization is in the maintenance stage. This stage is characterized by the increasing demands of organizational maintenance and of group solidarity maintenance:

> The agitator must change or leave because the social movement during this stage requires a statesman or administrator who can appeal to disparate elements of the movement, maintain organizations and deal with institutional leaders.... While leaders expend some persuasion trying to transform perceptions of history and society, to prescribe courses of action, and to mobilize for action, their primary persuasive function is to sustain the movement.... Incessant fund raising is required to support organizations, property, and publications. Any of these tasks - fund raising, recruiting, publications - may become ends in themselves [Stewart et al., 1984: p. 44-45].

Not surprisingly, NAC fits into this description. The Canadian feminist movement as a whole is in a maintenance stage. There is a strong infrastructure of organizations, but it is no longer a mass based popular movement in a stage of enthusiastic mobilization. Although women's issues remain very pertinent to society, feminism has fallen in popularity and has even been called the "new f-word" [Gray, Saturday Night, 1989].

NAC is involved in incessant fundraising and publishing. Completing the routine organizational maintenance of NAC is almost overwhelming for staff and volunteers. The tasks include: processing membership applications and renewals, direct mail fundraising, grant applications, holding the AGM

(and until 1989 a mid year meeting), publishing "Feminist Action/Action Feministe" seven times a year, writing committee reports and annual reports, preparing financial statements, negotiating between the staff union and the Executive, holding weekend long Executive meetings, not to mention book keeping, payroll and cleaning the offices. Over the years, NAC has become an institution and the maintenance needs of that institution are substantial.

A very clear example of the primacy of organizational maintenance can be culled from the agendas of Executive meetings. I observed two weekend long Executive meetings, which each included at least 22 hours of meetings. On the agenda for each weekend two hours was allotted for the various policy committees to meet. At the February meeting there was an hour and a half discussion of "Where do we go from here?" At the April meeting two and three quarter hours were allotted to discussion of the policy committee work and the AGM lobby. The rest of the time was spent on matters which can only be called the perpetuation of the organization, that is, administrative matters, financial problems, the preparation of the annual report, the AGM and so on. The twenty-five member Executive is brought together from across Canada, at great expense, but they spend the bulk of their time dealing with administrative decisions which could probably be delegated to either the committees or the staff.

This institutionalization must not be seen as entirely

negative. Women's struggle for liberation and equality will take generations and thus we need institutions [Vickers, 1988]. A very positive side of NAC's institutionalization is the fact that even though NAC does not actively recruit membership, membership continues to grow.

NAC's Political Activity: 1) Within the Feminist Movement. The NAC Constitution requires that NAC encourage "the formation of, and communication and cooperation among, organizations interested in improving the status of women in Canada" and that NAC "exchange information with member organizations and other interested persons or groups" [NAC Constitution, 1988: p. 1]. The NAC Annual General Meeting is a major event in the feminist movement, bringing together feminists from across the country for a weekend in Ottawa. This event will be examined in depth in the following chapter. Other than the AGM, NAC's major information exchange activities are centered around their publications.

NAC publishes Feminist Action/Action Feministe seven times a year. Until 1989 FAF was published in magazine form. It is currently a newsprint tabloid. It is a compilation of committee and regional reports, press releases and a few special items. Like all major NAC material, it is published in both French and English. In addition, NAC publishes "Action Bulletins", one or two page requests for action on the part of NAC member groups and Friends of NAC.

Ideally all of the reports and briefs produced by the issue committees are available to the public and to member groups. In practice this is not the case. In all my research I never found an order form or a list of studies to facilitate the distribution of such documents. Furthermore, when I requested that the NAC office send me copies of documents, although I was assured the document would be sent, nothing ever came. As there is no system or clear procedure for distributing documents, it seems that documents simply do not get distributed.

NAC has had a very high turnover of staff for many years and the entire staff resigned in 1988. The lack of continuity must have contributed to the inefficiency of the NAC operation. For instance, in 1981 a resolution was passed at the AGM requesting that NAC provide its member groups with the names and addresses of other member groups in their region. This is certainly no longer done. In fact, when an Ottawa group wanted to get in touch with all other Ottawa member groups they found the NAC staff unable to provide them with a list. They had to build up a list themselves. This kind of internal inefficiency severely curtails NAC's ability to facilitate activity by or networking between member groups.

NAC's Political Activity: 2) With the Politicians and the Public. Over the years NAC has become increasingly unwilling to engage in access-oriented lobbying. Lorna Marsden, a past-

president of NAC, describes the kind of strategic choices made in the late seventies by NAC when working for pay equity:

> The important point of a social movement is to get a concept accepted.... Any attempt to draw into the detailed debate a mass movement with demonstrations, the private sector with its enormous resources and vested interests, or particular industrial occupational groups will only decimate attempts to discuss such a complex issue as equal pay for work of equal value, and lead to failure [Marsden, 1980: p. 258].

Thus, according to Marsden, public campaigns are useful for public education and for gaining the acceptance of a concept, but backroom negotiation is still very necessary. During my field work at NAC I found absolutely no evidence of this kind of strategic thinking in operation. When Marsden was president of NAC, the Executive was smaller, and the feminist movement was more public and prominent. Obviously in that period the Executive of NAC was more willing to engage in the political system. This probably was because the Liberals were in power, and there were Liberals on the NAC Executive. And because NAC was a moderate group relative to the then flourishing movement of radical liberationists.

The National Action Committee's 1989 Annual Report had a painfully short section entitled "Lobbying", I quote it now in full:

> NAC has continued to lobby parliamentarians during the year. We have met with women parliamentarians; we participated in a pre-budget consultation with the Minister of State; we continued our lobbying not to recriminalize abortion and to implement a progressive child care system. (See Committee reports for more information.) [NAC Annual Report, 1989: p. 3]

The Committee reports indicate that the only insider access-oriented lobbying for the year consisted of 1) a brief presented to the Standing Committee on Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development; 2) with other groups, participating in a review of the Ontario courts; 3) with other groups participating in a lobby of the federal MPs on abortion; and 4) the "Pensions, Taxation and Poverty Committee" undertook presentations and meetings with politicians. In other words, with the exception of the "Pensions, Taxation and Poverty Committee" NAC took very little initiative with the government. NAC appeared at public hearings and consulted when invited, but their only initiative was the disastrous meeting with women parliamentarians.

The lack of access-oriented lobbying is very puzzling; the feminist community tends to believe that it is NAC's specialty. As recently as 1988 it was written: "NAC places its emphasis on lobbying and behind-the-scenes contact with political leaders rather than on mass action" [Antonyshyn et al., 1988: p. 139]. Furthermore, Joan Riggs, a consultant who did a study of NAC for NAC claimed that the member groups of NAC believe that NAC is "in there, up on the hill meeting with people and presenting women's views." But, she said snidely, NAC does not lobby. Their idea of lobbying is issuing a press release. They don't understand the difference between public opinion and political power [Riggs, interview]. Similarly,

Mary Lou Murray, who was NAC's parliamentary liaison for five years, told me that while she worked for NAC their access-oriented lobbying steadily decreased. Furthermore, the Executive treated her as someone who had sold out because she tried to teach them about the Ottawa parliamentary process.

I believe that there are two main reasons for NAC's decreasing use of insider lobbying. First and foremost, is ideology. Zald and Ash predict that as a social movement loses public sympathy and falls from the public eye, organizations of that movement tend to become more radical, less reformist, to keep the faith, as it were. Although the feminist community is large and vibrant, it is no longer the same as it was in the hey day of "women's liberation". As described above, those willing to commit the time and energy to the movement tend to be the most left wing members. Thus, the Executive of NAC appears to be currently dominated by left wing women who are alienated from the political structure. For example, the "meeting with women parliamentarians" mentioned in the annual report was discussed at an Executive meeting I observed. The meeting had been a failure, very few of the women had shown up. But the Executive, after acknowledging that, went to discuss the necessity of impressing upon women MPs that the women of Canada are their constituency. While this is a fine idea, the politicians were discussed as if they were selfless servants of the public good. They ignored the evidence of their slipping credibility

as the voice of Canadian women and the increasingly poor public image of feminism. NAC won't get very far with simple moral suasion, but many on the Executive appear too removed from the political process to recognize that.

The second, less obvious reason that NAC seems less and less willing to engage in insider lobbying is NAC's structure. NAC does not delegate power. The decision making process of the organization through the AGM has been described and is quite clear, but in practise the power to act on issues is very unclear. During my field work it appeared that a committee chaired by a member of the Executive who is personally powerful has the autonomy to initiate action and take stands within the bounds of official NAC policy. Power is not distributed evenly, thus it is difficult for less powerful Executive members to speak in the name of NAC. Furthermore, it is expressly forbidden for the most obvious lobbyists, the staff, to speak to politicians in the name of NAC.

NAC's major campaign of 1988-1989 was a media-oriented intervention in the November 1988 federal election. NAC participated extensively in the Pro-Canada Network in the campaign against the Free Trade Agreement. In conjunction, thirty communities across Canada NAC organized "Women Vote! Days". The campaign was extensive. Unfortunately, as it was over before I started my field work, I cannot give any more detail than the fact that it all happened; it is not

extensively documented in the Annual Report.

To conclude this section about NAC's political activities, I was puzzled by the seeming contradictions in NAC's work. NAC focuses its attentions on media-oriented lobbying, but, as outlined in the introduction, NAC does not have a very sophisticated approach to media relations. NAC has mastered the basic technical aspects of media relations, but it does not concern itself with the presentation of information. In its media-oriented work NAC seems to have a similar approach as in its access-oriented work. During my field work I noticed a persistent underlying belief that the justness, the reasonableness of NAC positions is convincing enough. NAC appears uninterested in manipulating its audience or packaging its information, because, to NAC, their positions are so obviously right and true.

ORGANIZATIONAL CULTURE

The National Action Committee's organizational culture can only be described in terms of the insider's culture. Most of the membership is so marginally involved in NAC that it would be inappropriate to try to draw conclusions about the NAC outsider's culture. Thus NAC's culture can appropriately be described as the culture of the Executive, the committees, and the offices. [A cultural description of their Annual Meeting is in the following chapter.]

As described in the last chapter, the most important motif of feminist culture is sisterhood. The NAC insider's culture is sorely lacking in sisterhood. As we have already seen in the staff-Executive relations, NAC seems to be dominated by extreme distrust. For example, at an Executive meeting after voting unanimously for a given proposal, there was a dire warning that nobody had better campaign against the proposal at the AGM.

Executive meetings are long, at times very boring, and not very friendly. The formality of the meetings compared to any other feminist meeting I have ever attended was striking. Robert's rules are used rigorously. There are few jokes or friendly comments. A regional representative who attended one meeting and then quit wrote:

> The image of women silenced by a process which is the very antithesis of feminism left me feeling anxious and disillusioned.... If we don't have a structure and process which reflect feminist ideology, we might as well join the Rotary Club [Freeman, 1988: The Womanist].

Clearly, meetings of a 25 member Executive, many of whom don't know each other and most of whom live hundreds of kilometers apart, cannot be the friendly, sisterly meetings of a local collective. But the uncomfortable atmosphere at NAC goes beyond stiff and formal. The 1988 Organizational Review report described some of the problems:

> * Contradictory behaviour in the executive.
> * Some decisions are made through a process of backroom politics and intimidation instead of enabling all positions to be heard and informed decisions to be made.

* Information sharing is inconsistent and selective and largely outside of established and equally accessible communications channels.
* Lack of common basic courtesy.
[Organizational Review : The Next Steps, 1988: p. 23]

Some members of the Executive accept the unpleasant atmosphere as part of "politics" but that acceptance is at odds with the culture of the feminist movement as a whole. There have been efforts to improve relations in the Executive. Between 1985 and 1988 the NAC Executive hired three different facilitators, none of whom appear to have succeeded in improving the atmosphere of the Executive.

When I was at the NAC office, I found the atmosphere quite different. The staff often seemed fraught and overworked, but there clearly is a kind of solidarity in the staff. Perhaps because there is such a strong we-they, union-management dynamic at NAC, the staff appeared united. On the other hand, there were snide comments about getting rid of members of the Executive.

Decentralized power is another key cultural assumption of the feminist movement which NAC violates. The gap between a feminist collective and the formal hierarchical structure of NAC is almost irreconcilable. Those women in the feminist movement who have a strong ideological commitment to developing new organizational structures find NAC offensive. Furthermore, NAC's poor interpersonal relations simply prove the assertion that traditional hierarchical structures are

hopeless. Not surprisingly, NAC's structure has been challenged. NAC has been in a process of Organizational Review for the last three years.

ORGANIZATIONAL REVIEW

The "Organizational Review" process was put into action at the 1986 Annual general meeting. A committee was formed to look at the structure and operation of NAC and to recommend changes. The initial question which sparked off the process was that of membership. Some Executive members wanted to have a structure of individual membership with voting privileges. This question still has not been resolved. In 1986-1987 a committee conducted some preliminary investigation and consultation with member groups. At the 1987 AGM a report was tabled which started to name problems in the organization but did not make any recommendations. It was decided that the process would continue and that consultants would be hired to further the process. Two reports were commissioned, one for Quebec and one for the rest of Canada.

Having read most the documents from 1987, 1988 and 1989, and spoken with many of the women involved, including one of the consultants, I was struck by the differing purposes and meanings given to the Organizational Review. Firstly, the women involved in NAC are worried about its representativeness, in the sense that most of the women

actively involved are white, middle class, able bodied, and living in Ontario. There is concern that unless the organization can attract more diverse women, it cannot represent the women of Canada. Secondly, some women involved with NAC abhor the "competitive", "back-biting", unhealthy and thus unsisterly culture of the Executive. Thirdly, there were concerns about the role of the membership and the under use of their skills and expertise. Finally, but certainly not officially, I heard many comments about the inefficiency of NAC operations and questions about its political efficacy.

At the 1988 AGM the report from Quebec was presented and the "minimum requirements" of that report were adopted. Unfortunately, the NAC Toronto office's "1988 AGM" file drawer did not contain a copy of that document, and I was not able to obtain a copy.

The consultants hired to write the 1988 report for English Canada presented a comprehensive report. This report was loudly attacked at the 1988 AGM and was the basis for the rift that took place at the meeting. Notwithstanding the arguments caused, the "Key Recommendations" were accepted with only minor adjustments.

There can be no definitive version of what actually happened during the 1988 Annual General Meeting. My research turned up rumours of back room plots and blackmail, most foul. There may have been plots, there might have been blackmail, and there certainly were women weeping in the hallways.

Essentially, I believe that there was a power struggle within the NAC insiders over the Organizational Review. The power struggle played itself out in front of 600 women many of whom simply did not know what was going on. Eighty percent of all delegates to any AGM are first time delegates thus only the insiders and old hands knew what was going on. The outcome of the fiasco was that Lorraine Greaves, chair of the Organizational Review Committee and candidate for the presidency, withdrew from the election, the staff resigned, and several of the delegates I spoke with left the AGM with the feeling that NAC was falling apart and that the NAC Executive had been taken over by the far left.

Repeated examination of the report in question failed to uncover any basis for its incredibly acrimonious reception at the AGM. The report is politely critical of the way that the organization functions, but those criticisms were the basis for commissioning a report in the first place. The report makes few concrete suggestions for changes, rather, it pin points areas of concern. The seven key recommendations included; "Establish a process for setting annual priorities for NAC", "Develop a more effective approach to the lobby function", and "Clarify the management function of NAC. Develop clear job descriptions for staff, Executive and committee members". That the reaction should have been so strong to such vague, general recommendations indicates that the fight was indeed more of an internal power struggle than

a disagreement over the report.

The Organizational Review Committee in 1988-89 deliberately avoided issues which could have been contentious, in the hopes of avoiding another disastrous AGM. At the 1988 AGM a total of five and three quarter hours were allotted to the discussion of the Organizational Review, in 1989 only an hour and a half were allotted.

The 1989 Organizational Review Committee proposed fifteen resolutions, several of which were legal requirements, like the separation of the NAC Trust from NAC, or largely symbolic, such as adding categories like "age" to the list of ways in which NAC must not discriminate. Two major changes were proposed and accepted; firstly, the Executive term of office was increased from one year to two and the Executive position of past-president abolished. Secondly, the regions were given more autonomy in electing their representatives.

Two other changes were proposed by the committee but withdrawn after the April 1-2 Executive meeting. The two proposals which were withdrawn would have touched on the committee structure of the organization. One proposal was to change the six "members-at-large" on the Executive to elected committee chairs who would be responsible for given policy areas. The rationale provided in the committee's report for the withdrawal of this resolution is that such a change did not take into account the dual nature of many of the committees in NAC. That is, committees such as the Visible

Minorities and Immigrant Women's Committee or the Lesbian Committee deal with policy issues with regards to their constituency and act as advocates within NAC for their constituency. Lesbians, for instance, are not an issue, but a constituency with a given perspective on certain issues. Although this is clearly problematic, having observed the Executive meeting in question, the question seemed quite different at the time. The Executive could not agree on six policy categories, and could not agree which issue belonged in what category. The debate went on for a while and when no conclusion was reached it was proposed that the six committees be without definition. This was ruled out because too much meeting time would be taken every year defining the categories. So, the proposal was scrapped. The implicit dynamic seemed to be that the chairs of the larger, more powerful committees objected to the idea of answering to any supervision.

The second proposal submitted by the Organizational Review Committee but withdrawn by the executive was the creation of a permanent "Accessibility and Participation" committee to increase the participation of women who have not to date participated in large numbers at NAC, that is, low-income, visible minority, disabled or otherwise marginalized women. This proposal was in fact refused by the Visible Minority and Immigrant Women's committee who felt that it was lip-service to the demands which they had made. During the Organizational

Review plenary session of the AGM these disagreements were aired.

After reviewing many documents and observing the National Action Committee and conducting interviews, I came to two conclusions about the organization's structure and the Organizational Review process. Firstly, change is extremely difficult to implement in any organization, but those problems are intensified in a voluntary organization. Secondly, although there is no open disagreement about the purpose and function of NAC, there are very widely differing ideas of the organization's mission.

After working with many organizations in transition, organizational specialist David Kelleher concluded that organizational change was characterized by: "ambivalence, conflict, poor communications, confusion, blaming of senior management, and stress." Furthermore, he asserts that, "this pattern is seen in <u>all</u> organizations undergoing significant change. In other words, these symptoms are not the result of poor management, disloyalty or any individual capacities" [Kelleher, 1986: p. 14]. At the National Action Committee the notion that organizational change is difficult to implement seems completely absent.

For an organization to change, some one or some group within that organization must have the power to implement that change. At the 1988 AGM there existed the possibility that some one would have the power to implement organizational

change. That is, Lorraine Greaves, who had been the chair of the Organizational Review Committee could have been elected president. If elected one can only assume that she might have had the power to implement the changes agreed to at the same AGM. But, she withdrew from the election and a candidate was acclaimed who is generally perceived to be a part of the faction opposed to the Organizational Review.

For example, there seems to be a general agreement that it is important that NAC strengthen its regional structure. At the 1988 AGM this principle was approved by the membership, and it is a common theme in any discussion of the Organizational Review. But, the regional structure is "totally dependent on the regional representative and her ability to carry out a multi-faceted job with little or no direction or support" [NAC Organizational Review: The Next Steps, 1988: p. 15]. To give the regional representative more time to represent her region, the "Key Recommendations" accepted at the 1988 AGM specify that the regional representatives should no longer chair committees. This has been completely ignored: not only are the regional representatives chairs of committees, one of the co-chairs of the Organizational Review Committee itself is a regional representative! For whatever reasons, the regional representatives are unwilling or unable to give up their committees and thus have little time or energy left over to develop a regional base for NAC. Moreover, it appears that no one on the Organizational Review

Committee is in a powerful enough position to put into action their recommendations, even after the recommendations had been approved by the assembly at the AGM.

Change is difficult in any organization, but in NAC the current effort to change is sorely hampered by the lack of power of those who are prescribing the changes. NAC's voluntary base makes changes very difficult. In a corporation, a regional sales representative who refused to develop her regional base and spent all her time working with the head office could be disciplined and even fired. NAC cannot fire its volunteers, first of all because they are elected and thus represent the will of the membership and secondly, more realistically, because NAC elections are not vigorously contested and many of the Executive, especially the regional representatives, are acclaimed and difficult to replace.

A voluntary organization is by definition dependent on its volunteers, and on the willingness of those volunteers to work. Disgruntled delegates at the AGM told me that the Executive members do not follow the priorities or policies set by the assembly, but rather, when elected pursue their own issues and interests. Although this is a particularly jaundiced account of the actions of the Executive, it is not surprising that volunteers do not immediately change their political priorities to follow the will of the membership. The NAC policy index contains a number of resolutions which

were passed at Annual General Meetings but which clearly have not been followed.

I have outlined how NAC's blindness to the difficulty of organizational change makes organizational change even more difficult because no individual is empowered to enforce change. Now I will outline what I believe to be NAC's most serious organizational problem: its contradictory lobby and network functions. This problem also is invisible to the organization itself. The management of the National Action Committee is a monumental task. NAC is unwieldy because the function of the organization is unclear; indeed there seems to be no real agreement about what NAC is, or should be doing.

A LOBBY GROUP OR A NETWORK GROUP?

The National Action Committee tries to be both a lobby group and a social movement umbrella organization. The 1988 Organizational Review report describes the dual nature:

> NAC's primary function is lobbying the federal government, and it spends most of its time and resources doing that....SECONDARY FUNCTIONS: These remaining areas of work are secondary functions to NAC, in the sense that they have developed over the years to support and enable the primary function - lobbying. However, to member groups, these functions are often more important and are certainly more real to them in their daily work [NAC Organizational Review: The Next Steps, 1988: p. 7].

Joan Riggs, co-author of the above report, when interviewed, did not appear to believe that NAC's dual

function as lobby and network is problematic. She believes very strongly that the most important and most appropriate role for NAC is as a lobby group. She asserts that the networking needs of feminist groups are taken care of in provincial, local, and issue based coalitions. Although this may be true, the fact remains that it is the networking functions of NAC which are, as reported in her report, "more important and more real". The contradictions between being a lobby group and a social movement network, have been invisible to the NAC Organizational Review committee and the consultants whom they hired. There are two reasons for this: firstly, many people involved hold strong views about what NAC <u>should</u> be and subsequently believe that that is what NAC is. The consultant quoted above believes that NAC should be a lobby group and thus does not acknowledge the contradictions. Secondly, groups of people are notoriously bad at uncovering problems, they tend to look for solutions first:

> Groups look for solutions even before they are certain what the problem is. Since the main product of a problem-solving group is a solution, when such a group forms, its immediate action is to look for a solution.... Activities that are not directly related to producing solutions (e.g. planning, discussion, generating alternatives, withholding evaluation) are not likely to occur unless substantial efforts are made to override the group's solution-mindedness [Weick, 1969: p. 12].

In other words, the Organizational Review Committee, as a problem solving group, looked for solutions without looking first at the problems. This is not surprising given that the

committee was extremely expensive, it had members from across Canada and required simultaneous translation. In 1988-1989 alone the committee cost NAC $26,877. At that price it had to produce solutions.

While NAC clearly did start as a lobby group and subsequently developed other functions, it is far from evident that "most of its time and resources" are spent lobbying the federal government as is stated above in the Organizational Review report (nor are "most of its time and resources" spent serving its membership in any case.) As we have seen above, the bulk of NAC's resources are spent maintaining the organization. But, the fact remains that the resources left over for political work are split between two very different functions.

NAC's huge mandate creates conflicting organizational needs and conflicting demands on resources. Although there are clearly points of overlap in the functions of lobby organizations and social movement umbrella organizations, the fields of activity and intervention can be incompatible. Key areas of incompatibility include the appropriateness of different kinds of political behavior, the allocation of resources, the organizational structure and finally the conflicting needs of conforming to the imperatives of the political structure or of conforming to the imperatives of social movement.

Political Behaviour. Access oriented lobbying involves the creation of working relationships with politicians and bureaucrats, negotiation, tact, and although it is somewhat distasteful in a democracy, privacy or even secrecy. NAC, the social movement organization, on the other hand, uses loud public tactics. NAC is often involved in public demonstrations, issues press releases which are highly critical of the government and seems to stress a black and white, "us versus them" vision of women's interests versus the government's actions. For instance, NAC has been publicly critical, and at the past AGM Lobby publicly hostile and rude to the Minister responsible for the Status of Women, Barbara McDougall.

NAC's dual role as a social movement network organization and an interest/lobby group involve conflicting kinds of political behavior. Differing political behaviors are described by Mansbridge in Why We lost the ERA:

> Like nationalism and some forms of religious conversion, some kinds of political activity engender a transformation of self that requires reconfiguring the world into camps of enemies and friends. Running for office or campaigning for social legislation is likely to have this effect. Other kinds of political activity, like holding office, require people to break down such boundaries, or at least make them more subtle [Mansbridge, 1986: p. 179].

Like a politician holding office, the access-oriented lobbyist must be able to break down boundaries, make deals and bargain. In some ways the National Action Committee is or was in the

position of "holding office". It is well known, widely respected, generally acknowledged as the pinnacle organization of the Canadian feminist movement, a movement which has known great success. NAC has never adopted the behaviour of a group which is "holding office"; it continues to cast issues as black and white and uses public, confrontational actions.

Allocation of Resources. In her paper "Women and the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms: A Case Study of Women's Groups and Canadian Public Policy" Sandra Burt asserts that lobbying is not a common tactic of the Canadian women's movement:

> The ad hoc committee [on Women and the Constitution] might have followed the normal pattern of women's groups and disbanded after formulating its list of proposals, on the assumption that the justness of these proposals would lead to their adoption. However, an administrative assistant to one of the women Members of Parliament who was lending her support approached some of the ad hoc committee members and pointed out: ... "if you don't show up on Monday morning and show your face in every key office on the Hill, you will have done nothing [p. 13].
> In the past, information gathering, study, and formal submissions to government have dominated the tactical style of women's groups [p. 15]. [Burt, 1983]

In other words, women's groups tend to behave as social movement organizations rather than as lobby groups or interest groups. Jo Freeman defines the difference between a social movement and an interest group in terms of resources:

> A major distinguishing factor between a social movement and an organizing interest groups is the particular mix of resources each relies on.

> Interest groups tend to mobilize tangible resources, some of which are used to hire professional staff to translate the rest of the resources in to political pressure. Social movements are low in tangible resources, especially money, but high in people resources. Such resources are harder to convert into political pressure, let alone social change, in part because they are not very liquid, but for many activities they are more valuable [Freeman, 1979a: 172].

The National Action Committee hovers between these two types of organizations. Its annual eight hundred thousand dollar budget is enormous compared to most women's groups. The money is used to hire professional staff, but the staff are not professional lobbyists. In fact, the staff are forbidden to make presentations to politicians or to the press. Thus, like a social movement organization, NAC relies on volunteers. Although NAC is unusually rich in resources it does not use them as an interest group would. For instance, over two years the "Constitutional Accord Committee" used volunteer time for meetings and money for conference calls, simply to come to a consensus position on the Accord. This was clearly very positive for the feminist movement. It served to heal some wounds created by division over the Accord and it served to link women together. But, after a position was reached, it was merely presented to the politicians at the AGM Lobby. No further lobbying was done. The resources allocated to arrive at a consensus position on the Accord were essentially lost for the purposes of lobbying.

Organizational Structure. An organizational structure appropriate to a lobby group is not necessarily the same as an organizational structure appropriate to a network, and vice versa. The National Action Committee was clearly created to be a lobby group; it was a coalition of a small number of groups, who came together to ensure that the government would act upon the recommendations of the Royal Commission on the Status of Women. Since that time the membership base has grown enormously, and the needs and expectations of the membership have changed.

As noted earlier, it is now the "secondary" functions of NAC which appear more important and more real to the membership than its lobby function. These secondary functions are network functions: meetings and information sharing, publications, and the building of diversity and solidarity in the women's movement. The kind of organization needed to fulfill these kinds of functions is not necessarily the same as that of a lobby group. A lobby groups needs to appear to have the consensus of its membership, but a network needs to encourage diversity. A lobby group cries out for centralized decision making and clear lines of control; a network begs for decentralized power and structures which promote exchange among equals. A lobby group needs to build alliances in the government it wishes to lobby, a network group needs to build solidarity in the social movement community. For example, NAC's work as a network group sometimes undermines its work

as a lobby because some member groups disagree with a position taken, so NAC's credibility suffers. And, on the other hand, NAC's work as a lobby sometimes undermines its ability to be a network, because it is sometimes perceived to be too professional, too allied with the political structure.

The Imperatives of the Political Structure Versus the Imperatives of the Social Movement. Freeman pointed out that a social movement organization's reference groups are a determinant of strategy. The most fundamental choice of reference groups for NAC is the choice between conforming to the structure of the political system, as is appropriate to an interest group, or conforming to the structure of the social movement which is appropriate to a network group. During my fieldwork I was convinced that NAC has now chosen the latter, eventhough it has a reputation for the former.

My observation of Executive meetings led me to conclude that NAC is currently more concerned with its position in the Canadian left than its currency with the general population of women. In the discussion of policy and NAC's future direction, the fact that non-involved women are not very enthusiastic about feminism was broached, but I saw no action which followed that discussion. NAC appeared either unwilling or unable to act on the fact that feminism is increasingly unpopular with the politicians and with the general public. But, on the other hand, when the left wing magazine Canadian

Dimension published an article about the fight against free trade which ignored the contribution of the women's movement, action was instigated. A questionnaire was published in NAC's magazine Feminist Action with the intent of proving to those who ignored them that the women's movement had played a role. In other words, NAC will act to raise its profile in the left community, but will not act to raise its profile in general.

Pross predicted that interest groups conform to the political structure, but NAC does not. For example, NAC's head office is in Toronto, not in Ottawa. If NAC were to conform itself to the imperatives of lobbying, it would move its office to Ottawa, as has been proposed at more than one AGM. But, NAC keeps its head office in Toronto, because the largest number of member groups and the largest number of Executive members are in Southern Ontario. Thus the choice of location for the head office is dominated by the needs of a network, not the needs of a lobby group.

I believe that NAC will soon have to choose between its two different functions because their resources have been cut drastically by the government. NAC's grant has been cut by 50% over three years. I doubt that it will be able to sustain two offices, thus one or the other function will be privileged. Although I cannot predict how NAC will cut its expenditures to match the drop in revenues, I hope that they will consider the two functions of NAC and choose one or the

other. Otherwise NAC will continue to do both tasks increasingly dysfunctionally.

This analysis of the problematic aspects of NAC concludes this section about NAC's structure. This survey has included the formal organizational structure, membership, staff, activists, activities, organizational culture, Organizational Review, and the problems of being both a lobby and a network. With all of this material in mind we will now proceed to an indepth look at two NAC activities, the Annual General Meeting, and the Annual Lobby. These events will be examined as examples of the organization in action.

CHAPTER 4:

THE ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

"Oh, you mean their Annual General Argument."

- Lorna Roth

Over the years there have been many acrimonious, explosive disagreements at the National Action Committee's Annual Meetings. Each dispute has acquired a legendary status, and is described with anger, amusement, and some confusion. There was the "Prostitution Committee" fiasco, the "Constitutional Crisis" when the Quebec delegation walked out, the "Wages for Housework" debate, and most recently, the 1988 "Org. Review Disaster."

My field work centered around the planning and execution of the 1989 Annual General Meeting, as previously described in the introduction. I have an enormous amount of data about the planning of the event and the event itself. First, I will describe the planning of the event. Secondly, I will describe the AGM itself. This chapter will develop and apply the themes of the two previous chapters. From there I will explain the intervention of a dissident group in the planning of the event. Finally I will look at the tensions between the lobby function and the umbrella function at the AGM.

I believe that the AGM is at the heart of the feminist community's discontent with NAC. It is the only time that

most member groups have any significant contact with the organization. The general consensus of the women I spoke with was that NAC Annual Meetings are no fun. I was told that at some point in the past, maybe when the Meeting was held in a hotel instead of at Carleton University, AGMs were exciting, fun and central to the Canadian feminist movement.

PLANNING

This year's Annual General Meeting was actually organized in a somewhat different fashion from previous years. Until 1989 the AGM was always organized by a committee which was centered around the executive and the national NAC office; in other words, a committee met in Toronto to organize a meeting in Ottawa. The responsibility for the planning of the event was given to a volunteer coordinator. About four years ago, NAC started hiring a professional organizer to take care of the practical side of the AGM. Anne Betz, a former member of the executive and long time participant in NAC, was hired in 1987 and again in 1989. The professional organizers have always been located in Ottawa. This year the responsibilities for organizing the conference were divided between two committees, the "Local Organizing Committee", which met in Ottawa, and the "AGM Policy Committee" which met in Toronto. I attended meetings of both committees, and in fact was often the only person who was well informed about the activities

and decisions of both committees. Although I was considered an observer, I participated actively in both committees by acting as a conduit for information and by taking minutes of some of the meetings.

The AGM Policy Committee and the Local Organizing Committee each had separate spheres of responsibility. The Policy Committee decided the theme, budget, speakers, workshop topics, rules for handling business and so on. The Local Organizing Committee was responsible for the more concrete questions of recruiting volunteers, registration, social events, welcoming activities and so on [NAC AGM Planning Guide, 1989]. Although the written description of the two committees seemed to ascribe to each committee separate spheres of responsibility, in practice the relationship was quite hierarchical. The Policy Committee clearly had more power; it could veto suggestions made by the Local Committee. In addition, all major decisions made by the AGM Policy Committee had to be approved by the executive as a whole.

The two committees had quite different attitudes towards the event. I believe this was due to the different responsibilities of the committees and to the individuals involved in each of the committees. The Local Organizing Committee consisted of twelve women, some of whom knew each other well. The meetings were held in the board room of the Canadian Advisory Council on the Status of Women and once at the board room of the community service where one of the

members worked. Both rooms were strictly functional and only big enough to hold a conference table and a coffee table. The meetings were friendly and informal, at times verging on rambunctious. Disagreements were expressed, at least twice, tempers flared quite openly and disagreements resolved. Several of the women had been involved in the planning of the NAC AGM for a number of years. None of the committee members were on the NAC Executive. The experienced volunteers tended to dominate the meetings with their concerns. The prevailing themes were the comfort of those who attend the AGM, the bewilderment of first time participants and the declining fun quotient of the AGM. Stories of past AGMs were frequently invoked

The AGM Policy Committee did not have a stable membership. Each meeting I attended was of approximately twelve women; one or two staff members (who left half way through), one or both of the committee co-chairs, one or two Toronto volunteers who were not members of the executive, and six or seven members of the executive. Although the meetings were more casual than the large executive meetings, and the atmosphere a little lighter, the general feeling was similar. The meetings were not amiable and the majority of the women appeared to be strangers. The committee chair, Rabab Naqvi, did the bulk of the work, with the two volunteers taking on specific tasks: organizing the workshops and working with the media. The executive members who attended did not take on tasks, but were

there to make decisions.

Just as the AGM Policy Meetings were cool and rather formal, the AGM which they planned seemed cool and rather formal. Far more importance was accorded to the agenda for the business meetings than, for instance, the Saturday banquet. The Policy Committee spent an enormous amount of time discussing the technical/business side of the AGM and never discussed the delegate experience of the meeting. At one point they even considered cancelling the banquet to make way for more official NAC business.

Communication between the two committees was never mentioned at the Policy Committee, but was mentioned several times at the Local Committee meetings and was the subject of some private complaining. The AGM Policy Committee, which was essentially an executive committee, seemed to have an uneasy relationship with communication with the Local Organizing Committee, which was essentially made up of non-executive members. This was consistent with the general attitude towards the membership displayed at the executive meetings. For instance, the Local Committee firmly told the executive member chairing the Policy Committee, Rabab Naqvi, that delegates to the AGM were often dissatisfied with the level of executive visibility at the AGM. It was suggested that the executive "press some flesh" and mix more with the rest of the delegates. Naqvi carefully took the suggestion both to the AGM Policy Committee and to the executive as a whole. At the

executive meeting the response to the need for more executive visibility was greeted with the dismissive suggestion that they all wear dunce caps or lampshades, and was not further discussed. At the AGM the executive were in fact not very visible. I did not see the executive circulate at the Friday cocktail party, although a few members sat at a table which was set up a little out of the way. I saw no executive members at the Saturday night dance (but I did have a few beers so that is not 100% reliable.)

Two major themes dominated the planning and execution of the 1989 Annual General Meeting. The first and foremost was tradition, and the secondary theme was a terrible fear of repeating the 1988 fiasco. That tradition should dominate the planning of an event is predicted by Stewart, Smith and Denton, for a social movement in the maintenance stage:

> Bureaucratic necessities, however, siphon off much of the old spontaneity, excitement, and esprit de corps that made the movement vibrant and attractive. What was improvised during an emergency or passionate moment in an earlier, exciting stage now becomes a sacred precedent and wisdom of the past that cannot be altered [Stewart et al., 1984: p. 45].

Perhaps the most obvious example of the AGM's dependence on tradition is the way in which the agenda for the weekend was created. The previous year's agenda was simply entered into a computer and readjusted slightly to fit the needs of this year's meeting. It was the basis and the model for the 1989

agenda. Although there were changes and adjustments, those changes were made in relation to what had passed before and not in relation to an active idea of what this year's AGM should or should not be.

THE ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

The National Action Committee's 1989 Annual General Meeting was attended by approximately 450 women; just over half were delegates representing member groups, and the rest were observers. The AGM lasted four days; previous years' meetings had started on a Friday afternoon, but this year's meeting started Friday morning to accommodate the "Quadrant sessions", (which will be discussed later). Traditionally Friday is devoted to workshops, with a key note speaker and a cocktail party in the evening. Saturday and Sunday are dominated by business meetings of the entire assembly, broken up by a dance on Saturday night. The weekend culminates in a "Lobby" on Parliament Hill on the Monday morning. This year's agenda varied only slightly to allow for the inclusion of "Quadrant" sessions and slightly different priorities [see 1989 agenda appendix # 3].

The Annual General Meeting was held on the campus of Carleton University. The Carleton campus is semi-suburban, spacious, pleasant, and reasonably attractive. Unfortunately, its attractions as a campus are its detractions as a

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The Annual General Meeting was held on the campus of Carleton University. The Carleton campus is semi-suburban, spacious, pleasant, and reasonably attractive. Unfortunately, its attractions as a campus are its detractions as a

conference site. Most of the women attending the AGM stayed in the residence, which was criticized as institutional, uncomfortable, insecure, and over-priced. NAC provided box lunches on Friday and Saturday, and there were official banquets Saturday evening and Sunday lunch. Otherwise, food was difficult to obtain, as many facilities were closed. The large business sessions were held in a cafeteria in the Student Centre; other meetings and workshops were scattered in classrooms in other buildings. Delegates had to move from building to building to sleep, eat or attend meetings. There was no focal point of social interaction, as the delegates were often scattered. There were three other conferences being held on the campus that weekend.

My actual experience of the Annual General Meeting was not very positive. The weekend was, of course, a working weekend for me given that I was taking extensive notes and doing formal and informal interviews. My data collection was very satisfactory, I found many women willing to talk to me and I was satisfied with my ability to maintain my concentration for note taking. And yet, I was constantly uneasy. Even though it was the culmination of my field work, and even though I had many friends and acquaintances to chat with, I was a bit bored. In addition, I found the endless meetings incredibly tiring. At the AGM I was more or less an "insider", I knew all of the Local Organizing Committee and was quite friendly with many of the committee members, I was acquainted with most

of the executive and three old friends were attending as delegates. I shared a residence room with one of the Local Committee (which NAC paid for because I translated two workshops for them). Although I had friends to talk to and familiar faces around me, I still felt intensely alienated. The atmosphere over the weekend was never welcoming or enjoyable. I repeatedly checked out my impressions with those around me, and was consistently told that no one was having much fun.

In sorting through my data, my thoughts, and my conclusions about the AGM I have tried very hard to ferret out what made the weekend so dull and alienating. I believe that it was the combination of many details. I will expand on three problems, Firstly the presentation of information, secondly the lack of participatory entertainment, and finally, the expression or resolution of conflict.

Presentation of Information. The meetings are, of course, the chief vehicle used for presenting information. The Policy Committee scheduled twenty two hours of meetings (excluding breaks) over a three day period. Of that time approximately two thirds was spent with the entire assembly in the large meeting hall. No attempt was made to decorate the room; there was nothing to proclaim that the meeting was a meeting of the National Action Committee. No collective spirit was engendered by banners or posters. No concession was made to

frivolity. In a bare cafeteria on uncomfortable wooden chairs sat 450 women, looking at a bare stage with a table, a podium and microphones. Delegates were expected to sit through hours and hours of unadorned discussion, and to be able to concentrate enough on the discussion to vote wisely.

Although the executive and the Policy Committee discussed at length the apportioning of time on the agenda, discussing in detail how long a discussion is needed on each topic, no one in any of the meetings I attended ever mentioned the presentation of material, the attention of the audience, or the comprehensibility of the presentations. For example, there was a hour and a half on the agenda for the "Organizational Review", to discuss the report and take straw votes on the resolutions (the resolutions were officially voted the following day.) The first half of the time was spent reading the report aloud, while the audience followed along with copies of the report which had been distributed in the conference package. It was as if a paper was being read at the "Learned Society", except, instead of a classroom of thirty people, it was a cafeteria of four hundred and fifty. In short, the "presentation" was horrendous, not because those involved were stupid or lazy, but because the <u>presentation</u> of data is simply never in question at NAC.

Just as the meetings were not considered in terms of presentation and audience, the written materials were discussed as technical, formal documents. All those attending

the AGM received a thick folder of materials to read. A professional, Rachel, was hired to prepare the documents. She coordinated the typesetting, translation, proofing, and printing of all the documents. The actual contents of the material was the responsibility of the executive. Rachel tried to improve the materials. She redesigned some of the forms which had been used in previous years and asked for latitude in creating mailing packages. At a meeting a new staff member commented that for years she had been receiving the NAC AGM invitation package without immediately realizing what it was. So the staff did try to improve the presentation of the material, but it remained very plain and utilitarian. AGM delegates received a 30 page resolutions book with nothing but type, an absolutely plain, 41 page, Annual Report, and a 58 page AGM book with nothing but text and a couple of photos included with the resumes of the candidates. Although the covers were attractive, the contents were incredibly monotonous. I believe this is the result of the executive's total lack of interest in presentation and the lack of authority and decision-making power afforded to the staff. The staff seemed interested in improving the look of the materials, but they had very little latitude. Because style and presentation never seem to concern the executive, the $12,000 spent on printed materials was spent on dull, technical documents.

Entertainment. There were not very many jokes told at the 1989 NAC AGM. Friday's keynote speaker was Rosamaria Ruiz. Her speech was an hour and a half treatise on the post world war two world economy, patterns of capital and exploitation. It was the most clear, understandable description of macro-economic trends which I had ever heard. And it was a depressing, sobering, socialist vision of the world. There was no entertainment or even speeches at the Saturday banquet. The weekend's only concession to frivolity was the poorly attended dance which followed. Finally, the President gave a speech at Sunday lunch, while everyone was still eating. The emotional high point of the weekend came after the president's speech when Ruiz thanked NAC for inviting her and expressed her solidarity with the Innu women who had attended the AGM. It was a very touching moment. The only one in the entire weekend.

I was told that in years gone by NAC AGMs have been the site of much silliness and fun. I was told of a skit by the Newfoundland delegation which had the audience in stitches. Years ago, NAC would make a mock award to the politician who had made the most sexist comment of the year. But all of that has gone. There was no light entertainment. The only acknowledgement that the AGM was held on Mother's Day was a comment in the president's speech. It is not surprising that women I spoke with said the AGM was dull.

Conflict Resolution. There is no vehicle for the expression or resolution of conflict at NAC in general or at the AGM in particular. As I have already outlined, there are at least three major ideological divisions in the feminist movement. In my experience with feminist groups, ideological differences have been resolved and compromises reasonably amiable. At NAC this doesn't appear to happen. In small groups differences can be resolved on a personal level, but at a meeting as large as the AGM that clearly cannot happen. Those who oppose the vote of the majority have no way of making peace with their adversaries and no cfficial vehicle to contain their anger or disappointment. This may be normal for large organizations, such as political parties, but feminists have great expectations of the feminist movement.

I believe that the regulations governing the executive elections may contribute to the problem of unresolved conflict. This is a hypothetical example, because the entire executive was acclaimed at the 1989 AGM. There is no campaigning allowed in the elections. Candidates have a biography printed in the AGM conference kit, and make a two or three minute speech. Nothing else is permissible. This prohibition engenders backroom campaigning and clandestine deals. I was told tales by disgruntled participants of bullying, backstabbing and blackmail. The prohibition of campaigning limits the expression of dissent and the building of alliances so that conflict becomes hidden and festers.

Organizational specialists maintain that conflict is part of organizational life and suggest:

> 1. Encourage "good" conflict -- conflict in which both (or all) sides feel that they can raise their issues and have them taken seriously.
> 2. Allow groups to organize to embody that conflict. Some structure of groups or parties is necessary for a resolution which will win acceptance in the system [Kelleher, 1989: p. 14].

Perhaps an explicit framework and forum for conflict during the election of the executive would allow the organizational culture to improve. It would provide an open vehicle for alliances and dissent. But, on the other hand, this would be in conflict with general feminist cultural assumptions:

> One of the hallmarks of the grass roots feminist movement has been the attention paid to the development of empathetic validation of other women's experience as the basis for political action....[Open conflict] implies an acceptance of the male model of political organization, and the assumption that women can't do better [Greaves, 1988, in The Womanist].

Thus, the feminist movement, or at least a good part of it, is philosophically opposed to the kind of open, controlled conflict which might improve relations at NAC.

Participation. The AGM is dominated by long business meetings of the entire assembly. Reports and budgets are presented, speeches made, and most of all, resolutions are debated and voted. The resolutions debates at the NAC's Annual Meetings are an attempt at the greatest possible

democracy. All NAC member groups and committees can submit resolutions. The resolutions are then mailed to NAC groups 30 days before the meeting. Everyone who attends the AGM, observers and delegates, can enter the resolutions debates. And finally, all the delegates vote, by raising their voting cards, in the assembly. Although the process is theoretically very open, during the debates at the 1989 AGM it appeared to me that the same women spoke several times and most women never approached the microphones at all.

Although the resolutions process is an attempt at democracy in the organization, the rest of the events at the AGM are purely one way communication. On Saturday afternoon delegates could attend any one of twenty-one "issue" workshops, organized by the NAC issue committees. Traditionally on the Friday there have been "skills" workshops, on Lobbying, dealing with the press, and so on, but this year there were "Solidarity Workshops". There were two of these, one on working with other groups for social change and the other on the role of the women's movement in the fight against racism. These were organized by the Policy Committee. A third workshop was organized by the Local Organizing Committee as an introduction for first time delegates. All workshops were organized by NAC insiders; NAC committees told the NAC membership about a given issue. They choose the speakers and the moderators. It is not surprising that at a NAC Meeting all events are organized and controlled by NAC

insiders. But, on the other hand, if NAC's stated commitment to democratizing the organization is to give fruit, perhaps NAC needs a mechanism whereby NAC member groups can address other member groups. There was no time in the AGM agenda for a member group to present its expertise or opinions to other groups, unless the group had a member who was also a NAC insider. Communications were organized to go from NAC to the members groups, with delegates giving a little feedback. NAC has not been very imaginative in creating dialog with its member groups or in fostering communication between the member groups.

After the 1988 AGM, across Canada several local NAC groups were formed by member groups concerned by the poor communications and the terrible fights at that AGM. One such committee formed in Ottawa. The Ottawa committee wanted to improve the AGM and the resolutions processes. Thus, they proposed changes in the resolutions process because they felt that it was not democratic enough. The next section will explore that group's initiative.

THE OTTAWA COMMITTEE IN SUPPORT OF NAC

After the 1988 Annual Meeting some of the women who attended feared for the very survival of NAC. An Ottawa member group called the Ottawa Women's Lobby [OWL] convened a meeting inviting all the NAC member groups from the Ottawa

region. This caucus of Ottawa NAC groups is now called the "Ottawa Committee in Support of NAC", but it was originally the "Ad Hoc Committee for the Survival of NAC". I attended one of their meetings, spoke with several active members and examined the minutes from their meetings and other documents. The committee included representatives of between thirty-five to forty groups. The past-president of NAC, and until the 1989 AGM, member of the NAC executive, Louise Dulude, was a part of the group, as was Anne Betz, the 1989 AGM organizer, and several members of the AGM Local Organizing Committee.

From August 1988 until the 1989 Annual General Meeting the group met about once a month. The committee sent a letter to the NAC executive expressing their concerns and subsequently met with the Southern Ontario representative of the executive. Committee members expressed a certain dissatisfaction about that meeting to me. The minutes summarize the responses to their concerns. The following is an extract:

> Point 2: NAC must seek ways to focus its policies so they relate in more general ways to Canadian women. Policy positions which reflect a particular political orientation should be avoided.
> * needs to understand more clearly what was meant by "particular political orientation", agrees that NAC must remain non-partisan.
> Point 3: All NAC lobbying efforts should be approached in the most positive way possible--negativity is not always a plus.
> * agrees, wants specific examples of what led to the group making such a point [Minutes, 4/10/89].

This kind of exchange seems more like a hostile Commons debate or a union negotiation than an exchange between members of a

feminist organization and their representative. The representative then suggested that the committee submit a short article for the next NAC publication. Although this was submitted, it was never published. The committee was not to be discouraged, as many members have a deep commitment to NAC, so they forged ahead with their work and are currently planning a fund raising party for NAC!

The Ottawa Committee in support of NAC developed a system to improve the resolutions process. The process then in place was for copies of resolutions to be sent to member groups 30 days before the AGM. The groups were expected to decide on their positions and send a delegate to the AGM to defend her group's positions and vote on behalf of the group. All of that process took place in the large assembly. Some of their concerns about it are taken here from various meetings' minutes:

> * crux of the problem is that shyer women do not want to speak in front of 600 people [Minutes, 4/10/88].
>
> * must find ways to allow all women to participate--it is particularly important that doubly disadvantaged women be empowered to voice their points of view [Minutes, 4/10/88].
>
> * many NAC groups are small, have no staff, and are unable to respond quickly [Minutes, 4/10/88].
>
> * people don't feel they are heard [Minutes, 1/11/88].
>
> * people are intimidated by the process [Minutes, 1/11/88].

They proposed a system of small group discussions. It was

hoped that more women would feel comfortable participating and the discussion would be less acrimonious and more meaningful. At these sessions each resolution would be debated and then a straw vote would be taken. The straw votes would then be used as a guide for the official debate and voting in the large assembly. They proposed that the plenary sessions only be held on the Sunday, after the elections are finished, to avoid electioneering on the floor of the assembly. Furthermore, they proposed that resolutions be sent out to groups 60 rather than 30 days before the AGM.

This proposal was presented to the Organizational Review Committee, where it was heard along with other groups' proposals. It was accepted with modifications, the most serious of which being that the executive decided to hold four mini-plenaries -"Quadrants" - rather than more intimate small groups envisaged by the Ottawa group. As most of their proposal did not require any changes to the constitution, it was adopted for the 1989 AGM. The group submitted a resolution to the AGM which proposed sending out the resolutions 60 instead of 30 days before the AGM. It was defeated.

At the AGM the Quadrants ran very smoothly. As not all AGM participants attended, each Quadrant contained about 50 women. The discussion in the Quadrant which I attended was probably the most productive I heard all weekend. The group was small enough that I got a sense of who many of the individuals were and what kind of political positions they

held. Furthermore, the chairing of the meeting was much more relaxed and friendly than in the large plenary. As a result, many more resolutions were passed in the large plenaries at the 1989 AGM than in previous years. The Quadrants discussions and the straw votes facilitated the debate. The assembly was told the results of the straw vote; thus there was little time wasted on resolutions which had received either 80% for or 80% against in the Quadrants. Those who participated in the Quadrant sessions seem to have appreciated the initiative -as was indicated by thanks and applause in the Sunday plenary. But I believe that many NAC insiders, that is the executive and the committees, were hostile to the idea of the Quadrants. Of the thirty eight resolutions debated in the Quadrants (only policy resolutions were debated) sixteen came from NAC executive committees. The NAC committees were sorely underrepresented at the Quadrants. At the Quadrant I attended, there was only one executive member and she arrived half way through. The largest number of resolutions from a committee, six, came from the Employment Committee; there was not a single member of that committee in <u>any</u> of the Quadrants to present or explain their resolutions. Dissatisfaction about the lack of participation from the committees was expressed from the floor of the assembly.

When the Ottawa Committee was developing the Quadrant process, they predicted that it would have detractors. For example, "those whose chief objective is to control the fate

of their resolution by controlling the debate or the parliamentary process will find a more decentralized and informal process not to be to their liking" [Minutes, 1/11/88]. If the executive and the policy committees had been accustomed to controlling the resolutions process at the AGM, it is unlikely that they would want any part of the Quadrant process as they could not easily dominate it. The executive and the policy committees are expected to carry out the policy established at the Annual meeting; thus it is not surprising that they wish to control the policy they will have to implement.

The 1988 Organization Review recommendations which were accepted at the AGM included the democratization of the organization and the creation of a more responsive, accountable leadership. The adoption of the Ottawa group's proposal is an excellent example of a positive executive response to concerns and suggestions of a caucus of member groups. Their proposal was given a fair hearing and implemented. But, rather than showing other member groups how effectively the executive responded to member group input, the executive simply humiliated itself. Rather than advertising their response to the Ottawa group, the executive took credit for the innovation. The Annual Report implies that it was the AGM Policy Committee which developed the idea:

> The [AGM policy] committee has put in a tremendous amount of time seeking way of building a positive process at this year's AGM. .... We are hoping that the Quadrant session, a new procedure of taking

> straw votes, and an opportunity to make friendly amendments, will streamline the plenary session and provide an opportunity for those unfamiliar with the formal process [NAC Annual Report 1988-89].

Although the Report does not explicitly take credit, it certainly implies that it was their initiative. In the plenary when the Quadrant process was praised, the executive members on the podium did not give credit to the Ottawa group; instead they thanked the delegate for her praise. There was a pause, and then the chair moved on to other business. An executive member, who was not on the podium went to a microphone on the floor and interrupted the proceeding to give credit to the Ottawa group for the innovation. The moment was extremely uncomfortable. In retrospect, it is apparent that no one except women from Ottawa or executive and committee members could possibly have known that the Quadrants were anything but an executive initiative.

The executive turned a situation which could have been an example of how well they were fulfilling their mandate to democratize NAC, into a situation in which they appeared to insult a group of women by stealing credit. This kind of poor judgement in public relations is partly just thoughtlessness and partly a result of the relationship between member groups and the executive. The attitude expressed towards the membership during executive meetings was either one of fear and trepidation coupled with an expectation of hostility from the members, or an attitude of disdain, implying that the

memberships' resolutions and demands get in the way of the real business of running the organization. The first time I noted this adversarial relationship in my field notes was during the February 4th executive meeting, the very first I attended. It was a persistent attitude. For example, the need for the executive to be united on various issues and not let the membership divide them was mentioned repeatedly and very defensively.

Given the NAC organizational culture, as described in the last chapter, it is not surprising that tensions in the executive and the committees spill over into the relationship between the executive and the membership. In NAC's fraught organizational context, the initiative of the Ottawa Committee must have seemed to be an attack. So, the executive tried to hide away the Ottawa groups' initiative. In a smoother context, the intervention of the Ottawa groups might have been welcomed as a valiant, voluntary effort to improve the AGM. A more friendly relationship might have led the executive to publicize their openness to suggestions which would have created a favourable impression on the rest of the membership and made the Ottawa Committee happy. Instead, the circle of distrust was simply reinforced: the executive felt attacked by a proposal from the outside, and the membership believes that the executive is not open to its proposals.

The problems which surface at the AGM are expressions of the problems in the organization as a whole. Those problems

are not restricted to a troubled organizational culture. Many of the dissatisfactions of participants at the AGM cannot just be described in terms of the culture of NAC; some of the problems are better expressed in terms of organizational structure. The AGM is a prime example of the conflicting needs of the lobby and umbrella functions of NAC. The following section will examine that question in depth.

LOBBY GROUP OR UMBRELLA GROUP?

The NAC AGM has played a role in creating and strengthening the feminist movement in Canada. The NAC AGM is a time when feminists from across the country can meet, especially since NAC covers a large portion of the travel expenses. Although NAC creates a large meeting of activists, NAC then gives the activists no time to talk to each other. The official agenda covers almost every minute from 9 a.m. until 10 or 11 p.m. from Friday until Sunday. The social events are clearly not a priority and exchange is difficult especially given the drawbacks of the site. All of the delegates' energies are focused towards NAC business, that is, the business of hearing Annual reports, debating resolutions and attending workshops to listen to women chosen by the NAC Policy Committees. Neither the site nor the agenda lends itself to slipping out for a chat. If a delegate misses part of a session, she misses the chance to speak or vote on that

issue.

It is quite unusual for an annual meeting to fill three full days of large business meetings. Two other national feminist organizations can be contrasted. The Canadian Abortion Rights Action League also holds an AGM weekend, but the membership is only invited to a day long public meeting. All business is handled in the morning and there is a speaker in the afternoon. The Sunday is a day-long board meeting between the newly elected executive and the local chapter presidents. CARAL is essentially a lobby group, thus it is important for CARAL activists from across the country to meet and evaluate their year's work and to plan the coming year. Input from the membership - anyone who makes a financial contribution -is taken care of in one morning.

The Canadian Research Institute for the Advancement of Women is essentially a network group for feminist researchers. CRIAW hosts an annual conference, in a different city every year, on a different topic every year. The majority of the conference participants are usually women who are not CRIAW members. The conferences are designed to bring together women from different milieu: academics, community organizers, journalists, artists and so on, to encourage broadly based exchange. In the middle of the conference weekend CRIAW members have their annual general meeting of an hour and a half. The meeting is essentially a formality as the executive is elected by mail, so all members, not just those who attend

the AGM, can vote.

Although a survey of two is not compelling, it can safely be said that the National Action Committee's Annual Meeting is unusual. Because the NAC AGM has great significance in the Canadian feminist movement as a whole, the delegates are willing to put up with its epic length. On one hand, the policy positions taken by NAC almost become the official public position of the feminist movement because NAC is the single most visible group in English Canada. On the other hand, it is a time to network and exchange. But the thrust of the agenda favours the former and makes the latter an option only for the delegate who is willing to forgo sleep.

For NAC to be effective as a lobby group it must "externally appear to have the consensus voice of all groups, while internally managing and developing the diversity of voices of members" [NAC Organizational Review Report, 1988]. The appearance of cohesion and solidarity of the National Action Committee, with its claim to 3 million members, lends weight to lobbying efforts. In NAC's early years, although there were clearly disputes, it appears that consensus was easier to reach for two reasons. NAC had fewer members, and the view points of those members were less diverse. And secondly, at NAC's inception feminist issues were more basic. We had not yet won such things as equal pay laws, equitable family property laws, or accessible birth control.

For example, in 1975 a resolution was passed supporting

equal pension rights for women in the public service, the armed forces, the RCMP and for MPs. Simple equal pension rights must have been fairly easy to agree upon. But the issue has moved a long way since then; the 1989 AGM was subject to the spectacle of an economist and an accountant debating whether or not NAC should lobby for a "locked in vehicle" or an "open plan" for pension credits divided upon divorce. Legal equality has been won in Canada, but deciding what that equality is and the best ways to translate that equality into our lives is far more complex. In short, NAC is the victim of its own success. It has grown spectacularly, so consensus among its members is that much harder to reach. NAC has won many basic issues, so the issues have become more complex and more divisive.

If NAC's success has weakened its ability to lobby nowhere has that been more evident than at the Annual General Meeting. As membership has become wider and more representative of more diverse groups in society, there have been calls on NAC to better represent a wider range of issues. A resolution was passed in 1987 demanding that "NAC spokespeople keep in mind the importance of their representing all the diverse groups within NAC." Similar demands were made from the floor at the 1989 AGM. During my fieldwork many women told me of the need for NAC to represent women beyond the traditional beneficiaries of NAC lobbying -white, middle class, anglophone, working women with children. But, no one ever

admitted that the interests of that group are not necessarily the same as those of immigrant women, Black women, poor women, lesbians, or disabled women. As a lobby group, NAC must maintain the appearance that the interests of all its members are, if not the same, at least contiguous. At the AGM it becomes apparent that those interests are at times in conflict. What is perhaps most ironic, is that the Organization Review Committee, a committee which NAC spent $26,877 on last year, has as its mandate to expand NAC, make it more representative of all women in Canada and strengthen the regional structure. NAC is very deliberately doing the very thing which weakens its ability to reach a consensus and lobby.

A clear example of the differing interests of different groups of women is offered by the "locked in" versus "open" pension credits example. At the time I could not follow the debate, and I do not believe that the debaters openly acknowledged how divergent their positions actually were. After three months of pondering the pension credit example, I concluded that the economist was defending an idea of women as people who need to be protected upon divorce. If pensions credits are not put into a locked in vehicle, a divorcee may be forced to spend them before qualifying for welfare. This position protects poorer and marginally employed women. The accountant was defending the idea of an independent woman who is capable of directing her own finances and making informed

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financial decisions. This clearly favours more educated, better employed women. Neither was better defending the rights of "women" as a whole; they both were defending different images of women and different classes of women.

The National Action Committee is much more than a lobby group, as is evident at the AGM. In 1989, 450 women attended, only half of whom were official delegates of member groups, the rest were there to observe. The number of delegates was roughly the same as in previous years, but up until 1989 the observers generally brought the total up to about 700. In other words, many feminists attend the AGM as observers. They attend for an opportunity to contribute to the debate of the country's most visible feminist group and they attend to meet other feminists. This desire to network is sorely under exploited by the organizers of the AGM. The resolutions' debates may once have been unifying; consensus and solidarity must have been the result of agreeing on the principle of pensions for housewives. But the resolutions are no longer simple statements of principle, they are sophisticated, technical lobbying platforms.

The total cost of the 1988 AGM was $107,936. Although the figures are not available for 1989, it was approximately $120,000 or about 15% of the total annual budget of NAC. The delegates, or their respective groups, had to pay $135 to attend the AGM, plus accommodation, plus the first $100 of their travel expenses. Observers had to pay a $235

registration fee plus travel and accommodation. Although the prices are quite high, the registration fees cover less than half of the costs of producing the AGM. Thus NAC, NAC member groups and the observers all spend a lot of money to get together for the weekend. If this was to be a networking weekend, it would make more sense; but it is a lot of money just to decide on policy questions which could easily be taken care of in the mail. AGM clearly could be a meeting of the Canadian feminist movement, but the use of time over the weekend indicates that it is not. Money is spent on the AGM as if it were an important meeting of the feminist movement in Canada, and time is controlled as if it were a meeting of the steering committee of a lobby group.

The AGM coordinator told me that the results of the AGM evaluation form indicate year after year that the workshops are the participants' favourite part of the AGM. But, she explained, the resolutions take up so much time that workshops cannot be expanded. Even the co-chairs of the AGM Policy Committee seem to waiver as to the role of the AGM. In the invitation letter sent out to member groups and friends of NAC, the AGM is represented in terms of the business of NAC. The letter focuses on the work that NAC had done over the year and closes with a note about building solidarity. On the other hand, a letter signed by the same two in the material distributed to participants concentrated exclusively on the AGM as a time of exchange and a place to "continue to build

a strong women's movement and maintain a viable feminist organization."

I questioned both the co-chair of the Organizational Review Committee and the co-chair of the AGM Policy Committee about the contradictory deployment of resources in NAC. Neither woman had thought about the tensions between being a lobby group and an umbrella organization, and thus neither saw the use of time and money at the AGM as contradictory. I am unsure whether the discussion may have made either reconsider the problem.

NAC's contradictory structure as both a lobby group and an umbrella group creates situations, like the AGM, in which resources are allocated in a contradictory way. Although the NAC AGM is probably the most important annual event in the Canadian feminist movement, it does not fulfill that role very well. Member groups cannot easily share their expertise and experience unless they are directly involved in the NAC executive and committees. Many women who should meet and network, fall asleep before the 10 p.m. reception and leave the Saturday dance so that they can make the next morning's 9am meeting.

The AGM Policy Committee delegated all of the responsibility involving the delegates' comfort and enjoyment to the Local Organizing Committee, a committee with no budget and little power. In fact, little thought seems to have been given to the comfort or entertainment of the delegates at the

executive level. One of the members of the Local Organizing Committee repeatedly complained, with the agreement of the rest of the committee, that the executive did not understand the point of the AGM. She claimed that the AGM was a chance for feminists across the country to get together and network, and thus, she wanted more social time and more informal events on the agenda. The Policy committee seemed to conceive of the AGM principally as the formal requirement of the NAC constitution for an Annual General Meeting of the membership. The executive as a whole only discussed the formal aspects of the AGM.

There can be no single, true conception of what a NAC AGM is or should be. But there is a very wide gulf between the expectations of the delegates and the executive planning. The weekend is not very enjoyable and the resolutions debates spawn some incredibly acrimonious arguments. Because the 1989 AGM was planned in reference to past AGMs, the Policy Committee meetings did not discuss fundamental questions like what the AGM is, how the delegates experience the meeting, or how the weekend can be radically improved. I believe that it is essential for NAC to work on improving the AGM experience for the women who attend if NAC wishes to maintain its position in the Canadian Feminist movement. This will entail rethinking the basic objective of the AGM.

CHAPTER 5:

THE ANNUAL LOBBY

"Is that when they round up the politicians and yell at them?"

-Richard Worsfold

This chapter is an in depth analysis of the National Action Committee's AGM Lobby as a social movement strategy; a strategy which is both aimed at generating media publicity and at the politicians themselves. The Lobby, which takes place just after the AGM, has been an NAC tradition for the past fourteen years. It is one of NAC's major strategies; it generates a great deal of publicity and is the only time that the NAC membership meets with the politicians and the only time that most, but not all, of the executive meet with the politicians. Originally the lobby consisted of a series of small meetings, but it has evolved into a large public meeting between NAC delegates and Members of Parliament.

To facilitate the examination of the Lobby, I have divided this chapter into sections. To view the 1989 Lobby in an historical context, I will describe the 1987 and 1988 Lobbies. Then I will describe the planning and execution of the 1989 lobby, including the Progressive Conservatives' refusal to attend. Following this will be a section about the press coverage. Finally I will analyze the strategy and discuss the

internal opposition to the continued use of the Lobby. But, first I will briefly sketch out the form of the event.

Every year, on the Monday following the weekend long Annual General Meeting, the National Action Committee invites the three federal caucuses to meet with the delegates from the AGM. In a room on Parliament Hill, between two and three hundred women meet with those MPs who choose to attend. Although it would be impossible to assemble the statistics, approximately twenty Liberal M.P.s and approximately twenty P.C. M.P.s usually attend, and most of the N.D.P. caucus usually attends. An hour long Lobby session is scheduled with each party.

Each session consists of opening remarks by the NAC president, introductions by the politicians, and then a series of questions from the floor, to the politicians. On the Sunday evening of the AGM weekend, interested women attend a planning meeting to prepare the Lobby questions. This year the Executive had pre-selected topics, but apparently in previous years the choice of topics was debated that evening. Although there was a special debate in 1988, the standard format for the Lobby is a series of questions asked of the politicians by the women from NAC. Questions are read by AGM delegates and observers, with only a few of the questions asked by members of the executive. The meeting is usually chaired by the president of NAC. Each party is scheduled for an hour with the NAC delegates. This means that with the time

it takes for the politicians to come in and sit down and make introductions, each party has about three quarters of an hour for questions and answers. In 1989 there were thirteen questions planned, for a little under four minutes each.

The Lobby is an open public meeting, and the media are invited to attend. Following the Lobby, NAC holds a press conference in another room on Parliament Hill. The press conference is used as a platform to discuss both the Lobby and the results of the Annual General Meeting.

RECENT NAC LOBBIES

The Lobby has been tumultuous over the past few years. The last three NAC Lobbies have been accompanied by extra demonstrations and theatrical actions. The P.C. government appears to dislike the Lobby, but then the Liberals before them may have disliked it too. NAC seems to expect this and has a supply of buttons to give to the politicians bearing the slogan, "I Attended the NAC Lobby and Survived."

In 1987, Prime Minister Brian Mulroney scheduled an important debate on the constitution at the same time as the NAC Lobby, which had been scheduled six months in advance. In response to this slight, NAC undertook two very different tactics. According to bystander accounts, quite separate efforts were made on the part of different parts of the executive. The president of NAC called up her contacts, and

with the help of the then more friendly Barbara McDougall, Minister responsible for the Status of Women, was able to ensure that the Conservatives attended. In fact, although fewer Liberals and N.D.P. members attended than usual, a record number of P.C.s attended, 8 cabinet ministers and 24 caucus members.

On the other hand, the more theatrical members of NAC preferred very different tactics. On the Sunday before the Lobby there was a small demonstration outside of the Prime Minister's residence. During the Monday Commons debate 30 gagged women disrupted the proceedings and were removed by security guards. NAC's seeming inability to co-ordinate the private negotiations with McDougall and the plans for public demonstrations lead to almost universally negative newspaper coverage. The contradiction between the protest in the Commons and the number of Ministers attending the lobby did not go unremarked. Furthermore, the issues raised in the Lobby were ignored as all the coverage centered on the scuffle. An opinion piece <u>favouring</u> the tactic described it as follows:

> The noisy demonstration NAC members staged was embarrassing for many women watching. It was too close to the stereotype of shrieking feminists and it was anything but gracious [London Free Press, 20/05/87].

In the following year, 1988, even though the AGM was consumed with internal strife, the Lobby plans included another demonstration. After the Lobby was over a small

contingent of about 40 women staged a demonstration on Parliament Hill. As was explained to me by the then Ottawa liaison officer, Mary Lou Murray, the demonstration was not a NAC initiative but ended up being billed as a NAC action. The Executive had had an uneasy relationship with the group which wished to hold a demonstration, and thus could not easily ask that the demonstration be held another day. Although Murray claims that the NAC Executive never officially agreed to sponsor the demonstration, enough executive members were favourable to the idea that the group in question assumed their support. Not surprisingly, the demonstration was a confusing public statement as the demonstrators left a room full of politicians to go and demonstrate outside. Demonstrations are usually the tactic of groups who have no access and are attempting to build enough sympathy to achieve access [Freeman, 1979a].

Several women I spoke with had been angered by the contradictory public communication of the demonstration after the Lobby. But what really upset others I spoke with, was the actual Lobby itself. During the Lobby, NAC's most obvious ally in the Cabinet, Barbara McDougall, was subjected to rough and rude questioning coupled with boos and hisses from the assembled women. As described by Le Devoir, McDougall "a eu peine hier a placer un mots", (she couldn't get a word in edgewise.) Some of the women involved would like to have McDougall as an ally of the feminist movement not an

adversary. Another told me that no woman, whatever her political beliefs, should be subject to such treatment by feminists.

PLANNING AND EXECUTION OF THE 1989 LOBBY

The following description of the Lobby and the planning of the Lobby must be seen in light of my personal experience of the event. I attended the Lobby preparations session and was involved with the group which prepared a question about violence against women. I took part in the discussion, and as I was already taking notes, I wrote out the various versions of the question. At the Lobby itself I was again the note taker for the group. By Monday morning I was completely and absolutely exhausted. I had worked very hard all weekend, taking notes, interviewing, translating, listening, absorbing. Furthermore, as outlined in the last chapter, the AGM was not really much fun. I was dismayed at the Lobby itself. I could not see how being rude to politicians would help the feminist cause.

The executive met on Thursday, May 11th, just before the start of the Annual General Meeting for a marathon meeting of 8 hours. After approving the agenda and other formal business the meeting started with a discussion, led by president Lynn Kaye, of the fact that Barbara McDougall had sent NAC a letter

saying that the Tory cabinet would not attend and that they would agree to private meetings between cabinet ministers and members of the executive. (Although the P.C.s may have intended to say that no Tories would attend the Lobby, some members of the executive believed that one or two back benchers might break rank and attend. In fact, no one came.) I believe that this was the first that most of the executive had heard of this. When asked when the letter had arrived, Kaye replied at around the same time as the federal budget was released. It seemed that NAC had not done anything about the Tory refusal to attend the lobby because they had been busy responding to the budget. Kaye said that it was not "their role" to make a big decision and change the lobby, that that was a decision for the membership. Furthermore she stated that, "people don't want exclusive meetings", the membership wants to meet with the politicians. She then read out a letter she was going to send to McDougall re-inviting her, stressing the tradition of the Lobby and the fact that they are unwilling to have private meetings. The letter was changed slightly by the other executive members and then the meeting moved on to other topics.

The second half of the executive meeting was closed. At previous meetings I had been asked to leave during discussions of staff and money, but this time I was asked to leave for the discussion of press strategy. I was the only observer, so I found this odd, as it was my official subject of research.

I was told that press strategies need to be kept secret, something I found rather surprising given the endless public discussion of press strategies during the past election campaigns. A serious or effective media strategy needs to be designed weeks before an event, not after two press releases have already gone out. The NAC executive had simply not informed the women they had hired to handle public relations of the governments's decision. One outcome of this private executive meeting was a press release stating that the P.C.'s refusal had been "last minute". Not surprisingly, McDougall's office countered this accusation by producing a copy of their letter, dated April 21st, showing that their move had not been last minute. As in previous years, the press coverage of the Lobby focused on the dispute between the government and NAC, rather than on the issues in question.

Although it was said in the executive meeting that the future of the Lobby was a question for the membership, the assembly at the AGM was not given a chance to voice opinions. The matter was mentioned twice on Saturday. The first time was during the President's report, at which time she reiterated the claim made two days before telling the assembly that the "membership want to speak to the MPs". Later, on Saturday afternoon during the Organizational Review plenary, a woman came into the hall as if arriving from an emergency negotiation, and asked the assembly for a straw vote affirming the current format of the Lobby. The question the assembly

voted on was framed so that anyone voting against would have been voting for the government's move. No questions or comments were invited. Not surprisingly, no one voted against the motion, and only two abstained.

It was announced by an executive member that there was to be an "action" to counter the government's refusal to attend. The assembly was not told what it was and was asked to trust and go along with what was going on. At that point it was mentioned that there was to be a meeting of interested women, but it was not clear at the time when or where the meeting was (or I would have attended!) On Sunday, the assembly again voted on a change to the Lobby planning. This time a woman at the head table asked that the assembly add the question about lesbian rights to the list of questions and asked that no other topics be added. It was made clear that internal pressure, possibly from the Lesbian Committee, had forced the executive to add the question. Thus, again, insiders could force a vote to add a topic to the Lobby, but outsiders could not.

As was scheduled, and as is traditional at NAC AGM's, there was a Sunday evening session to prepare for the Lobby. First there was a group discussion of the Lobby format led by a small group of women all of whom were either identified with the left or with trade unions. The atmosphere was extremely cavalier. Everyone was exhausted and wanted to get on with the preparations. There was a jovial discussion about

having a demonstration after the Lobby on Parliament Hill, but the idea was left aside because there did not seem to be enough "energy" for that (not because of the kind of press it would generate). The women were asked to expect a surprise at the time when the Conservatives were scheduled to appear, and asked not to ask questions because that would "ruin it".

There was some dissent from the floor about the lack of input from the membership in the choice of question topics, but it was not vociferous. When the introductory discussion was over, the group broke into thirteen groups to write questions and choose spokeswomen. The small group sessions were led by members of the executive responsible for the given subject area. It was expected that the woman chosen to ask the question would not be an executive member, thus giving the membership a chance to "speak" to the politicians. After this was over, the group reassembled to practice the questions and receive feed back from the insider organizers about their questions.

On Monday morning, those who were still at the Carleton residence loaded into buses and cars and drove down to the parliament buildings. In a large, ornate room in the Centre Block approximately 200 women awaited their elected representatives.

The Liberals were scheduled for a session from 9:30am to 10:30am. Twenty-six M.P.s attended, including Leader John

Turner. After a little delay and introductions, the questions started at 9:50, leaving approximately three minutes for each question and answer. The question topics included: child care; taxes (proposed sales tax); unemployment insurance; native women's issues (housing and education); survival and defence (the Innu of Labrador); universality; abortion; violence against women; visible minority and immigrant women's rights (employment equity and job training); privatization; Meech Lake; free trade; and human rights for lesbians.

The assembly often booed answers, and occasionally cheered either the questioner, or even the politician. Most of the questions posed were matters of party policy, which is publicly known. This was pointed out by John Turner on the two issues upon which NAC and the Liberals disagree most sharply, Meech Lake and abortion.

The NAC women seemed to be expecting that the politicians would be less receptive to some of the questions than they were. The following exchange on the subject of universality underlines this:

> Nola Miller: ... In the April budget the government introduced a means test for old age security and family allowance that is a major assault on the principle of universality of social programs. There are rumours that the change of leadership in the Liberal Party may bring about an abandonment of a commitment to universality. Are you and your party committed to the defence and expansion of universal social programs?
>
> Sheila Copps: I can speak as the chairman of the Liberal social policy committee, we have discussed this issue most vigorously and it is the view of the Liberal Party that the Government of Canada has a

> social contract with our senior citizens, it has a social contract with our families and that the small amounts of money that are given to those two groups by way of old age security pension and by way of family allowances should not be given on the one hand and taken back on the other.... [The Conservatives] see it as a green light to go ahead with the further dismantling of the social fabric that as Liberals we have built.
>
> Mary Clancy: I think there is a further issue here too than the question of universality and that is the question of dignity.... I have seen myself elderly women who will not apply for the guaranteed income supplement because they think it is a handout....
>
> John Turner: May I add one rider to that. In 1986, in November, the Liberal Party once again in plenary session committed itself to the principle of universality. That principle stands until the party changes it. I do not anticipate, having travelled across this country as much as anybody and knowing as many Liberals as anybody, that the party would ever abandon that principle of universality because it goes to citizenship, it goes as Sheila Copps has said, to a right of contract... [1989 Lobby transcript]

Thus the questioner, on the basis of a "rumour" tried to question the Liberals commitment to universality, a principle created by the party itself. This allowed Liberals to make a ringing defence of universality to which NAC replied, "Next question now, please." Whether or not the rumour is true, the question was practically designed simultaneously to insult the party and to give the Liberals a platform to show how committed they are.

A similar exchange took place on the subject of equality rights for lesbians. Robert Kaplan told the questioner that he intended to introduce a private members bill on the

subject. No one cheered and the questioner did not thank him. Rather than receiving this generously, a member of the NAC executive objected that the politician specified recognizing homosexual relationships as family rather than as a spousal relationship, a point of law which he defended easily. Furthermore, after a question about violence against women Kaplan specifically asked for NAC's support on upcoming pornography legislation. The only reply was, "Can we move to the next question, please." His request was not even acknowledged. A questioner on free trade stated, "It is not clear to us where the Liberal Party stands." John Turner replied, "We believe in all modesty that we led the fight against free trade agreement for the last four years and we think most Canadians agree with that." Once again, the questioner appeared rude and the Liberals appeared to be beleaguered supporters of NAC's positions.

The session with the New Democrats was very well attended with 30 M.P.s, including Ed Broadbent, present. It got started quite late, so there was even less time for each question. In addition, because a debate had been called in the house, some M.P.s had to leave early. The Lobby started and finished with a warm speech of support and solidarity from Ed Broadbent. Although Broadbent tried to set a tone of friendly complicity, the questioners remained somewhat hostile, seemingly going out of their way not to make any allies. Similar to the session with the Liberals, the N.D.P. gave many

answers which were strongly in support of NAC policies but got little acknowledgement from NAC. On the other hand, some questions seemed needlessly hostile for example, the NAC question on Meech Lake forced Broadbent to restate the party's support for the deal to hisses from the crowd. He was cut off mid sentence by NAC's president, but he insisted on finishing by saying that the N.D.P. had asked for amendments with regards to Native Canadians and women. NAC's question on free trade was quite pointed:

> We must say we were disappointed in the level of N.D.P. opposition to free trade. Your party did not take the lead and initiative on this issue. Can you assure us that you will not in the future let your polling results override your stand on principle and your commitment to the women of Canada? [1989 Lobby transcript]

Although Dave Barrett's ringing rhetorical reply took the sting out of this question, I doubt it made NAC very popular with the party.

When the N.D.P. caucus left, the NAC president asked all the delegates to remain seated even though the Conservatives were not expected to come. The press appeared to be about to leave, but then the "action" started and they stayed another 15 minutes. A member of the executive pretended that she was a reporter for "National Feminist T.V." and announced that a new government had formed to replace the "government in hiding". A group of the NAC executive and NAC insiders took to the head table and were introduced as the new government to cheers from the crowd. There were ministers of Peace,

Justice and Equality, Equal Distribution of Wealth, and Well Being. The assembly was asked to pose their questions as they had to the previous caucuses. Predictably, the replies from the NAC executive cum provisional government were warmly received.

It was unclear exactly who was the intended audience for the charade. The politicians didn't see it. It was not well designed for television because it would have taken more than a two minute segment to explain it. Perhaps the intended audience was, in fact, the assembled women. I thought that the tactic would have been appropriate, even amusing, at an evening of feminist theatre but was out of place on Parliament Hill. An article in the Montreal Gazette described other feminists' reaction: "To many feminists these recent tactics, being used in the name of equality, are worse than ineffective - they're an embarrassment and a disservice to women" [The Gazette, June 17, 1989].

After the charade Lobby session was completed the executive gathered up the notes taken during the question and answer period and went off to a press conference. The Lobby finished at 12:30 and the press conference was scheduled for 1 p.m. thus there was little time to review the politicians answers. I assume that the press conference was scheduled immediately so that the journalists could make their deadlines. It was held in a room in the Centre Block of the Parliament Buildings. The room was quite small, so

unfortunately, I was not allowed to attend. The newspaper coverage indicated that the press conference concentrated on the formation of an anti-budget coalition between NAC and other progressive groups.

PRESS COVERAGE OF THE LOBBY AND THE AGM

At the AGM, during the Sunday evening planning meeting of the Lobby, an executive member said that the point of the Lobby was not to communicate with the politicians, but rather to use the Lobby as a vehicle to communicate with the Canadian public. Given this statement, and given that it is a very public event, I will now take a look at the press coverage.

I examined the coverage in the Montreal Gazette, the Ottawa Citizen, the Toronto Star, the Globe and Mail, the Winnipeg Free Press, the Vancouver Sun and the Halifax Chronicle. The Chronicle did not cover the AGM at all; the Sun, the Free Press and the Gazette all ran wire stories on Saturday which focused on McDougall's decision not to attend the Lobby; and the Citizen, the Star and the Globe had more extensive coverage. I decided to omit the french press because the Federation des Femmes de Quebec had pulled out of NAC immediately previous to the AGM. Although this is an important issue, it is outside the scope of this thesis.

The newspaper stories about the Lobby and the following press conference appeared in the papers on Tuesday, May 16.

The Ottawa Citizen story, with headline "Feminist group stages political comedy" was on the top of page A5. It briefly described the "government in hiding" and then explained that the Lobby had included questions asked of the Liberals and the N.D.P. and then reiterated the story of McDougall's refusal to attend. The Star's story, headlined "McDougall snub insults women feminists say" was very similar. The Globe's story focused on the press conference, and NAC's participation in a coalition against the budget. The story, headlined "Anti-budget campaign by women's group off to confused start", was quite disparaging. It described the press conference as "contradictory" because NAC would not specify who was endorsing a statement on the budget which was described as a "joint statement" and because members of other groups attended the press conference but would not officially sponsor the statement. The article finished by briefly describing the Lobby session and the "provisional government".

The articles are clearly not advocacy journalism, but neither are they hostile. The Citizen and the Star article both quote McDougall's reasoning for refusing to attend the Lobby and NAC's response, but neither sought out negative reactions from dissenting feminists or hostile comments from the Conservatives. Perhaps what is most significant about the articles is that none of them report the substance of the questions and answers of the Lobby. An examination of the coverage of the Lobby in 1988 and 1987 (from the NAC office

file) show that this is not new. The Lobby coverage for 1988 consisted of descriptions of the form of the event and restatements of the three parties' policies on abortion. The 1987 coverage focused on the protest in the House of Commons. No substantive coverage of the Lobby questions has appeared in the newspapers for at least three years. Thus, the newspaper coverage of the Lobby has not furthered the public debate on any feminist issues for the past three years (I did not research any further back). In fact, the coverage has portrayed the NAC women as stereotypic "women's libbers", strident and unappealing. Not surprisingly, the Lobby has been in question at NAC and in the feminist movement for quite a long time.

INTERNAL OPPOSITION TO THE LOBBY

In the NAC files in Toronto I uncovered a pair of memos about the Lobby dating back to 1985. The first is a memo from Chaviva Hosek, then president of NAC, outlining her objections to the Lobby and proposing an alternative format. The second is a memo from Samantha Sanderson, then a member of the executive, which states that there had been an extremely acrimonious fight over Hosek's memo, led by current president Lynn Kaye, and the proposal had been rejected (the substance of the debate will follow). Sanderson's memo proposes that a more impartial committee re-examine the proposal in detail.

Obviously nothing came of the proposal as the Lobby has remained the same. Soon after this incident, Hosek left NAC for the private sector and then ran for the Ontario Liberals. She is now considered to have "sold out". I was told that her "name is dirt" at NAC.

Mary Lou Murray, who was NAC's parliamentary liaison for five years, is adamantly opposed to the Lobby. She is not preoccupied by the press coverage but by the Lobby's effect on government relations. She told me that when she was with NAC, every year it would take her six months to repair the damage done to their government relations by the Lobby. It alienated even sympathetic politicians and made NAC appear to be unsophisticated at best, hopelessly out of touch at worst. She claims to have voiced her opinions many times, but she was told by the executive that they understood what she was saying but they disagreed with her. Executive members thought that she was completely co-opted because she lived in Ottawa [Murray].

Similarly, the Y.W.C.A. is officially opposed to the Lobby both because of the negative press coverage and because of its effects on government relations. As a member of NAC, the Y.W.C.A. has expressed this concern. NAC tends to view the Y.W.C.A. as a liberal or reformist organization and is not interested in its initiatives. (For example, at the AGM the chair of the Housing Committee, after asking for submissions to her newsletter, told a representative of the Y.W.C.A. that

she was not interested in an article about the Y.W.C.A.'s housing projects unless the article was solicited.)

Most recently, the Ottawa Committee in Support of NAC, the committee who developed the quadrant system, developed an alternative proposal for the Lobby. The proposal was put off until 1990. They were told that it was too late because the invitations had already been sent out. Since I had spent some time in the office, I knew that the invitations had not yet been finished by the clerk hired to do the job. (I did not relay this information to any of the parties involved; the executive member may have honestly believed that the invitations had been mailed.) The Ottawa Committee in Support of NAC is more or less seen to be aligned with Lorraine Greaves and the "radical" as opposed to "socialist" feminists who are currently in control of NAC.

These examples: Mary Lou Murray, ex-parliamentary liaison; the Y.W.C.A.; and the Ottawa Committee in Support of NAC; indicate that opposition to the Lobby strategy is mostly or entirely from "liberal" and "radical" feminists. I believe that the continued use of the Annual Lobby may be a result of factional disputes, not of any great belief that it advances the feminist cause. Many women involved with NAC have made their objections to the Lobby very clear, but the Lobby continues and seems to be defended by women on the left. The arguments for continuing the Lobby were outlined in Samantha Sanderson's 1985 memo:

> Substantive concerns included:
> (a) That we not lose the impact of a large group of women on the MPs;
> (b) That we not lose the impact on women of being part of a large united front;
> (c) That women have the opportunity to see a broad array of issues;
> (d) That women have the opportunity to see all the MPs;
> (e) That by dividing the group up by issues, we present a less powerful front;
> (f) That a change in our format is giving into pressure from the government.
> [The memo from Hosek had proposed small group discussions with MPs on specific issues.]

None of these arguments deny that the Lobby alienates politicians and results in bad press. Points (b), (c), and (d) argue that the Lobby should continue because it is a good or positive experience for those involved. Objections (a) and (e) refer to the "impact of a large group" and a "powerful front". These points seem to imagine the NAC delegates in an open struggle with the MPs.

In other words, the Lobby is conceived of as a "mass" confrontation with the state, a display of power by NAC and an opportunity for group solidarity. The image is one of revolutionary struggle, an image which those who favour the Lobby obviously believe to be more important than the negative effects of the Lobby. The Lobby makes sense as a strategy only if feminism is conceived of as a revolutionary struggle. If feminists wish to reform the state, the Lobby is counter productive.

Canadian society is clearly not in a "revolutionary" state, (I have even heard pronouncements from the Communist

Party of Canada to that effect!) thus I will suggest another explanation for the continued use of Annual Lobby in the face of internal opposition. It's satisfying. As described in Hosek's memo, it's "anger therapy." And it's validating. That NAC can round up so many politicians is a kind of proof of its power and credibility. In short, it seems likely that the members of the NAC executive who wish to continue with the Lobby don't want to "(f) ...[give] into pressure from the government" because they enjoy the Annual Lobby.

ANALYSIS OF THE ANNUAL LOBBY AS A SOCIAL MOVEMENT STRATEGY

The NAC Annual Lobby is an action which very directly impedes the stated goals of NAC. NAC's "Purposes and Objectives" include "actions designed to change legislation, attitudes, customs and practices." Clearly the Lobby alienates politicians and hampers attempts and legislative change, and by lending itself to a stereotypic portrayal of feminists, reinforces negative attitudes. Although it can be expected that social movement organizations will continue to use strategies, without continuing to evaluate their effectiveness, what is unusual about the Lobby is that there has been internal opposition to the strategy for years. Yet, it has continued. To evaluate at the Lobby as a strategy for social change I will look at comments from the 1988 Organizational Review report and explore the necessity of

opposition for a social movement. Then I will return to Freeman's resource mobilization theory. (Undoubtably the Annual Lobby was at one point in time a more useful strategy, but this study is concerned with the present.) But first, an example of the negative press coverage.

A scathing description of the 1987 Lobby in Saturday Night ended thus:

> In Epp's absence, Hnatyshyn undertakes an answer. He is cut off.
> "Do you want to hear what we are doing?" he asks. "We have run out of time."
> The chairperson announces that, in the few minutes remaining, NAC will entertain questions from the government members.
> One comes from Rob Nicholson, M.P. for Niagara Falls. "I understand that NAC has plans to hire a consultant. Will the consultant look at the ways and means of effective lobbying?"
> Chairperson: I will take that as a rhetorical question that does not need an answer. [Janet Enright, Saturday Night, November 1987]

In fact the consultants did look at the Lobby. Joan Riggs told me that the majority of the women she spoke with during her research described the Lobby nostalgically, but they opposed continuing with it. The 1988 Organizational Review report, written by the consultants, stated that there were two views of the Lobby:

> 1) it was very empowering to collectively face MP's, seeing women united when meeting the government was deeply moving and impressive,
> 2) it was a disaster: antiquated, facile, ineffective, alienated even supportive MP's, an embarrassment, must stop it, either change the lobby or admit we are doing window-dressing with no hope or intention of political change [NAC Organizational Review Report, 1989].

If the Lobby was "empowering" in the past, it may have been because the politicians' replies to NAC's questions were openly sexist. At the 1989 Lobby, the answers given by the Liberals and the N.D.P. displayed no overt sexism, and the coverage of the 1988 and 1987 Lobbies document no overtly sexist comments. Overt sexism from politicians, like the MPs who laughed at wife beating, has been extremely useful to the feminist movement. Not only is overt sexism a good lever for Lobbying, it is necessary for the movement:

> Some opposition is necessary to maintain movement viability. A solid opponent can do more to unify a group and heal its splits than any other factor. Many of the student sit-ins of the sixties would never have amounted to anything if the university authorities hadn't brought in the police. But even if the enemy is not so blatant, it is the perceived and not the real opposition that is important. Movements that neither perceive nor experience opposition find it difficult to maintain the degree of commitment necessary for a viable, active organization [Freeman, 1979a: p. 187].

If it was once "empowering" to see "women united" it may have been because the politicians appeared to be a true enemy. When the politicians opposed simple equality guarantees, it was easy to see an enemy and feel that one's efforts meant something. Similar to the quote in the 1988 Organizational Review report, I found the Lobby embarrassing. I felt NAC gave the politicians a forum to expound strong feminist policies, with no serious debate of their real commitment. At the 1989 Lobby it was impossible to cast the politicians as an enemy. In reality, the records of all of the parties

in Canada show a shaky commitment to feminism. But, the format of the Lobby allowed the politicians to answer short questions and appear supportive.

Again, NAC is the victim of its success. The parameters of the public debate on women's issues has shifted since the first Lobby in 1975. Politicians rarely make the overtly sexist statements now that they could have made in the seventies. Because the politicians have become at least superficially supportive of feminism, the Lobby no longer shows them up. Furthermore, as women's issues have entered mainstream political debate none of the parties are left without policy on significant feminist issues.

Both Freeman [1979a] and Stewart et al. [1984] point out that it is common for social movement organizations to continue using the tactics which have been effective in the past without realizing that the tactic is less effective in a new context. In short, NAC's continuing use of the Annual Lobby is a typical mistake made by a social movement organization. By referring to the Lobby as a mistake, I mean that I believe that alienating politicians and negative press coverage are undesirable, which, as far as I can tell, "allies" me with the factions at NAC who are currently not in power.

To return to the idea of social movement strategy as the result of resources, constraints on resources, social movement structure and expectations about targets; the Lobby is a

display of rich resources. Not only can NAC assemble two or three hundred women from across Canada, it has sufficient legitimacy and access to book a room on Parliament Hill and command the attention of the National media. Even though the politicians clearly do not enjoy the Lobby, until this year, NAC has been powerful enough to command a strong contingent of Members of Parliament from all three parties.

The confrontational style of the Lobby implies that NAC's "expectations about potential targets" are essentially negative. The questions asked at the Lobby are challenges to the politicians, in expectation that they will show themselves to be inadequate on feminist issues. At the 1989 Lobby, few of the questions were aimed at getting new commitments. The questions dealt with issues on which the party positions were simply a matter of public record. The Lobby format shows an unwillingness on the part of NAC to make alliances with politicians. In fact, the Lobby is most useful to NAC if the politicians are forced into explicitly sexist statements or forced to admit the gap between official policy and concrete action.

Clearly, the fact that NAC has alienated the Minister Responsible for the Status of Women is indicative of their lack of allies. Indeed, ex-staffer Murray claims that NAC is the only advocacy group to have no allies. This, of course is only half true; NAC may well have no allies in Parliament, but it has worked in coalition with other social movements in

organizations like the Pro-Canada network. Furthermore, NAC's nearly 600 member groups are clearly allies. NAC reference groups are the left and progressive communities, not the polity as a whole. Perhaps NAC continues with the Annual Lobby, in part, to maintain its status as a contender within the left community.

The continued use of the Lobby is also a result of NAC's organizational structure, specifically, the resolutions process and the lack of vehicles for explicit conflict. The AGM resolutions process impedes open debate about the Lobby because the resolutions are overwhelmingly statements of political policy, not strategies and tactics. The Lobby was not created as the result of a resolution and it probably won't be defeated by one. Moreover, there are no explicit, up front vehicles for factional dissent in NAC, so factional struggles are manifested in disputes over such things as the Lobby. As outlined above, opposition to the Lobby tends to come from radical and liberal feminists. Any debate of the Lobby is part of a power struggle between them and the leftists, not a debate of the pros and cons of continuing the strategy.

As previously noted, different kinds of political activity entail different kinds of political behavior. The NAC Lobby shows that NAC is still "campaigning for office", it is still casting the world into black and white, friend and enemy. On the other hand, the politicians seem to behave as if NAC has

arrived. They have submitted to the Lobby for years, and they have passed a great deal of legislation for which NAC campaigned. NAC does not seem to have adjusted to its power. The Canadian political scene has been changed by the feminist movement, but NAC does not seem to know it. NAC has access, NAC has resources, but rather than settling in to play the game, NAC has continued to behave as if it were outside of the corridors of power.

The Annual Lobby is not a very effective way to effect social change. It does not allow for constructive exchange with the politicians. Time is too short for serious discussion of any one issue. The style is too confrontational to create alliances with sympathetic politicians. In addition, the short questions and answers allowed the politicians to appear far more supportive of women's issues than their records merit. The Lobby does not communicate NAC's positions on issues to the public because the press coverage concentrates on the form, not the content of the Lobby. Within NAC there is serious opposition to the Lobby. If the Executive will now, as was promised, look at the proposals of the Ottawa Committee in Support of NAC, perhaps next year's event will be different.

CHAPTER 6:

CONCLUSIONS

The National Action Committee on the Status of Women has been subject to minute scrutiny by this study. In the context of an exploration of strategies of social change, I have looked at the structure of the organization, its membership, its staff, its activities. I have probed the conflicts between the organization's culture and the culture of the feminist movement; and the conflicts between the different functions of the organization. Using this organizational description as a background, I have examined in depth two events organized by NAC; their Annual General Meeting and the ensuing Annual Lobby. To conclude this study, I will first look at the future of the feminist movement in Canada. In light of my predictions, I will make some recommendations for the future of the National Action Committee.

THE FUTURE OF THE FEMINIST MOVEMENT

The feminist movement in Canada has been very successful in winning legal, social, and economic gains for women. During my fieldwork I began to seriously question whether the feminist movement would continue to make gains or whether the movement would be forced into an increasingly defensive role. The feminist movement seems to fit into Zald and Ash's [1966] category of a "movement becalmed." The feminist movement

remains pertinent to society, because, for example, women still face discrimination in the work force and violence at home. Yet, the feminist movement in Canada has been successful in winning many legal equalities and changing the way we look at women and men. There is an illusion of equality, so the media now claims that we are in a "post-feminist" stage.

Stewart et al. [1984] describe this stage as the "maintenance stage". They claim that movement organizations must either institutionalize or they will disappear, furthermore:

> The social movement looks for a triggering event that would give birth to a new phase of enthusiastic mobilization, make the cause fun again .... The hoped-for rebirth eludes most social movements, or it arrives too late [Stewart et al., 1984: p. 45].

Historically, the Canadian feminist movement has been reasonably successful at the "maintenance" stage. For instance, the National Council of Women, a pro-suffrage organization formed in the nineteenth century, has continued to lobby the government all through the twentieth century. The N.C.W. was a founding organization of NAC. It still has a large membership, mostly of church auxiliaries and other traditional women's groups. It runs service projects, lobbies the government by presenting briefs, and has an annual audience with the cabinet. This longevity stands in stark contrast to the American suffrage movement organizations, which played no role in the women's movement which emerged in

the nineteen sixties [Freeman, 1975].

The success of NAC and the Canadian feminist movement has precipitated an opposition. Groups like R.E.A.L. Women or Campaign Life have formed. The purpose of such groups is essentially to fight the social changes won by feminists. They have successfully forced NAC and the rest of the feminist movement into an increasingly defensive posture. Several recent campaigns of the feminist movement have been defensive, such as the opposition to the re-criminalization of abortion, or the opposition to the federal child care legislation (which was seen as a step backwards). The difficulties of recruiting new activists and interesting young women is a frequent topic of discussion. The movement must either retrench and institutionalize itself, "for the duration", or it will slowly peter out. The Canadian feminist movement has an extensive and impressive superstructure of organizations and activities, but unfortunately the stability of those organizations may be dependent upon continued government funding [Phillips, 1988]. The direction which NAC takes will be key to the direction of the Canadian movement because NAC is the largest and most visible organization of the movement.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE FUTURE OF NAC

The following recommendations are based on my research and on my personal commitment to feminism. I believe that the

following recommendations will both strengthen NAC and strengthen the feminist movement in Canada.

The National Action Committee must choose between its function as a lobby group and its function as a network. The organizational needs of the two functions will become increasingly irreconcilable in the future. NAC's concrete resources have been drastically reduced, their Secretary of State operating grant has been cut by 50% over three years. NAC will have to pare down its activities. I believe it is preferable to accomplish one function well rather than two functions poorly. Furthermore, feminist activities will become increasingly difficult because the feminist movement and the Conservative government (which will be in power for the next 3 years) are at logger heads. It is only the most moderate sounding feminist groups which will make any headway.

The National Action Committee should choose to be a network group and it should stop all of its access-oriented lobbying activities. NAC is well suited to networking because it has a very wide membership. It is that membership which makes it impossible for them to continue lobbying. NAC's membership base is expanding, the interests of women from different backgrounds and different social classes are clearly not the same. It is increasingly difficult for NAC to credibly present the "women's" position on an issue, when women's interests are divergent. On one hand, the interests of different groups of women are divergent and at times in

conflict, working mothers and mothers at home for instance. And, on the other hand, political consensus is getting more and more difficult to reach. For example, NAC has no real position on pornography because the feminist movement is too divided on the issue.

If NAC decided to stop its access-oriented lobbying activities and made this decision public, such a decision would have a minimal effect on the actual activities of NAC, but it would have a major impact on the Canadian feminist community. By officially withdrawing from lobbying, NAC would simply be confirming a trend in their activities. As described in chapter 3, in the section on "NAC Activities", NAC does very little lobbying. NAC's contact with the policy process has declined over the past few years. Only the committee on Pensions, Poverty and Taxation has regular contact with politicians and bureaucrats. NAC would simply cease attempts like the failed meeting with female M.P.s and would stop the Annual Lobby. To make explicit the decision not to lobby would force the feminist community to address the growing vacuum in the feminist political project. That is, there is very little access-oriented lobbying done by feminists in Canada. Since NAC been has slowly dropping that activity, no new group has taken its place in the policy process in Ottawa. If NAC made it clear that it was not doing any access-oriented lobbying, hopefully other groups would take on that role.

The National Action Committee has no allies in the current government. Therefore, it is difficult for NAC to engage in any productive access-oriented lobbying. Although this relationship was not the object of this study, one comment stands out. Shelly Potter, Barbara McDougall's special assistant, told me that NAC is becoming as marginal to the policy process as R.E.A.L. women, not because of what they are saying, but how they are saying it. In other words, NAC is so uninterested in "playing the game" of access-oriented lobbying that it has lost all credibility.

The NAC policy committees should not cease to exist. The committees have accumulated experience and knowledge which should not be lost. The committees should simply become autonomous groups, with no official ties to NAC. After the separation each committee would cease to be answerable to the executive and the AGM. Hopefully, the committees would then integrate themselves into the issue community and work with other groups already working in the area. For instance, the NAC Reproductive rights committee would work in coalition with CARAL and Planned Parenthood. As a network group, NAC would continue to <u>create</u> national committees on new issues where one does not exist. For example, NAC could create a national feminist group on pay equity. But, NAC would not retain any control of any group it organized.

As a network group, NAC would have to seriously re-think its communications and information distribution functions.

Rather than simply sending NAC material to NAC members, the periodic mailings to NAC groups would include materials prepared by NAC member groups which wish to communicate with other groups. NAC would also shift its focus from the production of papers and briefs to the distribution there of. NAC as a network group would distribute feminist research done by any of its groups. NAC as a network group would attempt to strengthen local and regional solidarity, by circulating lists of member groups and by holding regional meetings. Furthermore, NAC would perform this function at a national level, convening meetings and facilitating exchange between the various national groups (there are a good number of single issue national groups which are currently members of NAC.)

Although NAC should stop its access-oriented lobbying, it should develop a sophisticated public media-oriented political strategy. NAC must start to plan a serious public relations strategy, to bolster itself as a network group and to improve the public image of feminism in general. NAC should improve the relationship between the feminist movement and sympathetic women in the media. As discussed above, individual journalists often feel snubbed by feminists. NAC should woo them.

The Annual General Meeting is held in Ottawa to facilitate the Annual Lobby. If NAC ceased its access-oriented lobbying activities, it would stop the Annual Lobby. Thus, the AGM could be held in a different city every year. Over the years,

this would mean that more women would be able to attend at least one AGM. The AGM would be designed as a meeting of activists, a time for exchange and networking. For example, NAC could organize a series of workshops for activists working on the same issues in different parts of the country. The AGM could culminate in a public action; that action should be designed to attract support and entice new activists.

An important part of networking is the recruitment of new activists. This is partly a local, community task and partly a public, media oriented task. Clearly, the media work on individual issues should be done by the single issue groups, but NAC would still have a role to play. NAC, as a network organization, should develop a sophisticated media strategy which would be aimed at raising the public popularity of feminism and the women's movement with potential activists. This kind of activity would involve a major change in the attitudes of NAC executive members towards the media.

The liberation of women will be a multi-generational struggle. The Canadian feminist movement has built up an impressive infra-structure and NAC is an important part of it. NAC is an umbrella organization which is unique in the feminist world in its size and breadth. Although some fear for its survival, I believe NAC will continue to exist on the sheer strength of the commitment of NAC women.

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Julie Lee, "An Open Letter to the Women's Movement"
Joan Riggs and Lynne Tyler, "What is Feminist Process?"
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Judy Campbell, (past Executive Co-ordinator), April 4, 1989.

Marjorie Cohen, (long time NAC activist, vice-president and Chair of the Employment Committee), April 5, 1989.

Alice DeWolff, (long time NAC activist, current Executive Co-ordinator), April 18, 1989.

Robin LeDrew, (regional representative on Executive), May 11, 1989.

Anne McGrath, (regional representative on Executive, and co-chair of Organizational Review Committee) April 2,1989.

Mary Lou Murray, (ex-staff, NAC Parliament Liaison officer for 5 years), May 8, 1989.

Carmen Paquette, (consultant hired to co-ordinate press at the NAC AGM for the past four years), May 4, 1989.

Joan Riggs, (consultant hired to write 1988 Organizational Review Report, feminist and past NAC committee member) May 3, 1989.

Jill Vickers, (political science professor and NAC activist), March 17, 1989.

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May 15, "Coalition to ride the rails in fight against budget"
May 16, "Anti-budget campaign by women's group off to confused start"

The Montreal Gazette
May 16, "PC: spurn women's lobby session"

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MAY 12, "McDougall refuses to meet with women's group lobby"
May 13, "Minister 'snubbed' group month ago, letter shows"
May 14, "Women to board train for budget protest"
May 16, "Feminist group stages political comedy"

The Toronto Star
May 13, "Tories skipping women's group lobbying session"
May 16, "McDougall snub insults women feminists say"
May 17, "Women's group falls out of step" [Analysis]

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May 16, "Deaf ear greet feminists"

The Vancouver Sun
May 13, "McDougall pullout angers committee"

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May 16, Ann Rauhala A1 "Largest feminist association faces crisis" continued A2 "Feminist"
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The Globe and Mail
May 11, "Homemakers, hookers spark liveliest NAC debate"

The Hamilton Spectator
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The London Free Press
May 12, "Women disrupt debate in House"
May 20, "Women don't get attention by being 'ladies'"

The Ottawa Citizen
May 12, "Protesters disrupt constitution debate"

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November, 1987, Janet Enright, "NAC Cracks the Whip on the Hill"

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May 8, "Battle lines drawn for women's group"
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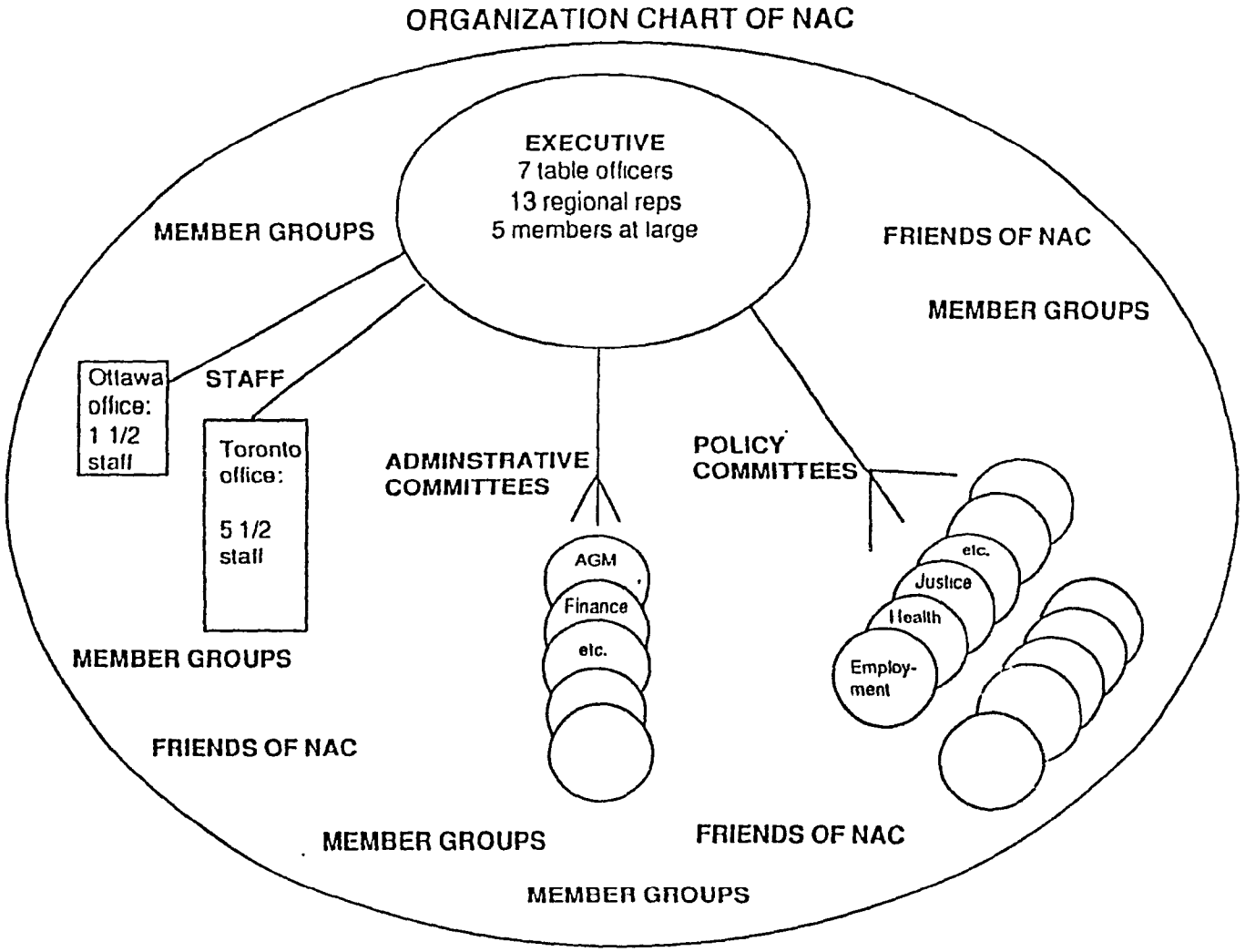
Appendix # 1

Organizational Chart of the

National Action Committee on the Status of Women

From: NAC Organizational Review: The Next Steps, April 1988

ORGANIZATION CHART



Appendix # 2

List of policy and administrative committees of the National Action Committee on the Status of Women

(This list is from the 1988-89 Annual Report, the committees vary.)

POLICY COMMITTEES

Child Care Committee

Committee in Support of Native Women

Constitutional Accord Committee

Employment and the Economy Committee

Foreign Policy Committee

Health Committee

Housing Committee

Justice Committee

Lesbian Issues Committee

Male Violence Against Women Committee

Pension, Taxation and Family Benefits Committee

Reproductive Rights Committee

Rural Women's Committee

Survival of the Planet Committee

Visible Minority and Immigrant Women's Committee

Women With disabilities Committee

ADMINISTRATIVE COMMITTEES

Annual General Meeting Committee

Fundraising Committee

Membership Committee

Personnel Committee

Publications Committee

Appendix # 3

National Action Committee 1989 Annual General Meeting Agenda

NATIONAL ACTION COMMITTEE ON THE STATUS OF WOMEN
1989 ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING, May 12-15, 1989

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AGENDA

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FRIDAY, May 12

9:00 - 11:30 — *Solidarity Workshops*

1. *You and the Success of NAC: A Workshop for First Time AGM Attendees*
   Dunton Tower 301 - 1st Timer Films 310
2. *Women Working with Other Groups for Social Change: Our Experiences*
   Dunton Tower 305 & 306
3. *Role of the Women's Movement in the Fight Against Racism in Canada*
   Dunton Tower 401 & 410

11:30 - 1:00 — LUNCH - Tory Building Foyer

1:00 - 4:30 — *Resolution Discussions*

1. Porter Hall
2. Tory Building
3. Herzberg 352
4. Herzberg 356

4:45 - 6:00 — *Regional Caucuses*

Newfoundland/Labrador	Dunton Tower 401
New Brunswick	Dunton Tower 408
Nova Scotia	Dunton Tower 304
Prince Edward Island	Dunton Tower 303
Quebec	Dunton Tower 310
Northern Ontario	Dunton Tower 405
Southern Ontario	Porter Hall (DT 301 if necessary)
Manitoba	Dunton Tower 309
Saskatchewan	Dunton Tower 410
Alberta	Dunton Tower 306
South Central B.C.	Dunton Tower 305
Northern B.C./Yukon	Dunton Tower 406
Northwest Territories	Dunton Tower 308

6:00 - 7:30 — *DINNER* (tickets available at Information desks)

7:45 - 10:00 — *PLENARY Rosamaria Ruiz from Bolivia;*
NAC's Salute to Studio D's 15th Anniversary - Rina Francelli - Porter Hall

10:00 - — *RECEPTION* - Peppermill

SATURDAY, May 13

9:00 - 10:30 — *Business Session* (Annual Reports) - Porter Hall

10:30 - 11:00 — COFFEE BREAK

11:00 - 12:30 — *1989-90 Executive Speeches* - Porter Hall

12:30 - 2:30 — LUNCH - Porter Hall Foyer - and Regional Caucuses

2:30 - 4:30 — *Issue Workshops and Roundtables*

1. *New Federal Childcare Agenda*
   Dunton Tower 409
2. *Meech Lake Roundtable*
   Porter Hall
3. *WEN-DO Women's Self-Defence*
   Dunton Tower 305
4. *Global Economic Changes: What it Means for Women and What We Can Do*
   Dunton Tower 410
5. *What's Happening to Our Jobs?*
   Dunton Tower 401
6. *New Developments in Employment Equity*
   Dunton Tower 408

SATURDAY, May 13
Issue Workshops and Roundtables cont'd:

7. *Feminist Review of Productive and Reproductive Technology* Dunton Tower 310

8. *Ecofeminism for Survival: Equality, Ecology, Environment* Dunton Tower 301

9. *Accessibility and Cross-Disabilities* Dunton Tower 303

10. *NAC's Health Committee: Where it's Going and How* Dunton Tower 302

11. *Building a National Network on Women and Housing* Dunton Tower 307

12. *Women's Dimensions in World Development* Dunton Tower 405

13. *Women in Conflict with the Law: Victim and Offender* Dunton Tower 404

14. *Working Together on Sexual Orientation Rights* Dunton Tower 406

15. *Pornography Committee Roundtable* Cancelled

16. *NAC's Male Violence Committee: Where it's Going and How* Dunton Tower 309

17. *Indian Women: Still Waiting for Justice* Dunton Tower 402

18. *Pro-Choice Roundtable: Actions we can take to make abortions accessible* Dunton Tower 306

19. *Fundraising* Dunton Tower 304

20. *Prostitution: AIDS, the Supreme Court and Bill C61* Dunton Tower 308

21. *Broadcasting: Status Report* Dunton Tower 407

22. *Why & How: Facing the Problem of Racism in the Women's Movement* Dunton Tower 403

4:30 - 6:00	***Organizational Review*** - Porter Hall
6:00 - 7:00	***Meeting*** of interested people to work out amendments to resolutions - Porter Hall
7:00 -	CASH BAR OPENS - Commons Lounge
7:30 - 9:00	DINNER - Green Dining Room, Commons Building
9:00 -	DANCE - Commons Lounge
9:00 -	CHAT (cash bar, music) - Oasis, Commons Building

SUNDAY, May 14

7:30 - 9:00	Breakfast - Commons Dining Room
9:30 - 10:30	***Business Session*** (Resolutions) - Porter Hall
10:30 - 10:45	COFFEE BREAK
11:00 - 12:30	***Business Session*** (cont'd) - Porter Hall
12:30 - 2:00	LUNCH - Commons Dining Room
2:15 - 3:45	***Business Session*** (cont'd) - Porter Hall
3:45 - 4:00	COFFEE BREAK
4:00 - 5:30	***Business Session*** (cont'd) - Porter Hall
5:30 - 7:30	DINNER (tickets available at Information desks)
7:30 on	***Lobby Preparations*** - Porter Hall

MONDAY, May 15

7:15 on	Breakfast in Commons Dining Room
8:00 - 8:30	Buses loading outside Commons Building
9:00 - 1:30	Annual NAC Lobby of federal caucuses House of Commons, West Block
2:00 - 3:00	Question Period, House of Commons
3:00 - 5:00	Constituent's lobby of individual MPs