

Pamphlet

New Democrats

Speaking up for New Brunswick

1987



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PLATFORM '87

SPEAKING OUT FOR NEW BRUNSWICK

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PLATFORM '87

SPEAKING OUT FOR NEW BRUNSWICK

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SPEAKING OUT FOR NEW BRUSWICK

The choice in this election is between the old parties and something new. A lot of people are tired of politics as usual in New Brunswick with the Liberals and Conservatives. They want more people to speak up for ordinary men and women.

Electing more New Democrats on October 13th is our best guarantee of better government. It will mean more people in the Legislature to speak up - day in and day out - for fairness, for open and honest government, and for a better future for the average family.

For more than ten years now, support for the New Democrats has continued to grow. As election day approaches, we are confident that on October 13, more New Brunswickers than ever before will say: "This time - New Democrats".

I. FAIR TAXES

In recent years our tax system has been getting more and more unfair. Since 1982 provincial taxes on the average family have gone up by over \$2500, while taxes on corporations have actually gone down.

In this election only one party is talking about fair taxes - the New Democrats. Our Fair Tax Plan provides:

1. A Tax Break For Tenants

Right now the property tax on apartments is twice as high as it is on owner - occupied homes. New Democrats believe that this is unfair to tenants. Our Fair Tax Plan calls for a rebate to tenants for the extra property tax. The rebate will be \$25.00 a month on the average apartment and will be paid directly to the tenant by cheque every three months.

2. A Helping Hand for Seniors

Rising property taxes are creating a burden for many of our senior citizens. New Democrats believe that we should offer a helping hand so that seniors can continue to live in their own homes with dignity and respect. Under our Fair Tax Plan the property tax exemption for low income seniors will double from \$200. to \$400.

3. No Income Tax For Those Below \$8,000

There are 42,000 New Brunswickers making less than \$8,000 a year who are now paying provincial income tax. New Democrats believe that it's unfair for the government to be taking money from people who have so little to live on. Our Fair Tax Plan provides that no one making less than \$8,000 a year be required to pay provincial income tax.

4. A Provincial Minimum Tax

Seventy-one New Brunswickers making a total of nearly \$10 million do not pay a cent in income tax. Liberal and Conservative governments in Ottawa and Fredericton have created a maze of tax loopholes for their rich friends. Our Fair Tax Plan establishes a minimum tax of 10% on people earning over \$50,000 a year. It is time that wealthy New Brunswickers who have been avoiding taxes paid their fair share.

5. Minimum Tax On Corporations

There are a large number of profitable companies in New Brunswick that are not paying corporate income tax. The total profits of those companies are approaching \$200 million dollars a year. New Democrats do not believe that large corporations should be getting a free ride at the expense of other taxpayers. Our Fair Tax Plan establishes a 10% minimum tax on large, profitable corporations.

6. Corporate Assets Tax

Many provincial governments have introduced a corporate assets tax to ensure that the banks and other corporations pay a fairer share of the tax burden. Our Fair Tax Plan calls for a corporate assets tax in New Brunswick similar to the one established by the New Democratic government in Manitoba.

7. Sales Tax Cuts

New Democrats believe that action must be taken now to reduce New Brunswick's high sales tax. Over the term of the next government, our Fair Tax Plan calls for:

- * the removal of the sales tax on building material,
- * the elimination of the sales tax on labour,
- * the elimination of the sales tax on basic restaurant meals under \$5.00.

The sales tax on basic restaurant meals will be removed immediately. The tax on building materials and labour will be phased out, with an immediate reduction from 11% to 8%.

8. Responsible Tax Reform

New Democrats are committed to financial responsibility. Our sales tax cuts will create new jobs in the construction industry, the hospitality industry, and in maintenance and repairs. Our income tax changes will provide a needed break for over 40,000 low income New Brunswickers. Our property tax reforms will ensure a fair deal for tenants and seniors.

These tax cuts will be largely financed by higher taxes on wealthy New Brunswickers who are avoiding income tax, and on corporations that are not paying their fair share.

The New Democrats Fair Tax Plan will mean a fairer tax system for all of us, with no increase in the provincial debt.

II. SERVICES FOR PEOPLE

New Democrats are committed to making government work for people; that is what public service is all about.

1. Quality Health Care

New Democrats believe that quality health care for all our citizens is a top priority. It was a New Democratic government, under Premier Tommy Douglas, that first introduced medicare in Canada - nearly ten years before we got medicare in New Brunswick. People know they can count on New Democrats to protect medicare against those who want to impose user fees and extra billing. In the new Legislature, New Democrats will work for:

a) A Family Health Plan

Prescription drugs are an expensive and often unexpected item in the family budget. While some people are covered by government and private drug plans, a majority of families are not. The New Democrats' Family Health Plan provides for immediate coverage for all preschool children and school-aged children with chronic illnesses requiring regular medication. The Family Health Plan will be extended later to cover all children in the province.

b) Community Health Centres

New Democrats believe the health care system must be oriented first and foremost to the needs of individuals and their families. This means bringing health services to people where they live, in their own communities and neighbourhoods. The New Democrats are calling for ten Community Health Centres to be established, particularly in northern communities:

- * to look after everyday medical needs,
- * to offer programmes in preventative medicine,
- * to provide health education.

Each community Health Centre will have a staff of doctors, nurses and a dental technician.

c) Mobile Services Unit

At present, many specialized services are only available in the major cities. New Democrats are proposing a Mobile Services Unit, based in Moncton, which will travel to various parts of the province.

d) Neo-Natal clinic

New Democrats will work for a neo-natal clinic, to be established in Bathurst.

e) Air Ambulance

New Democrats want the government aircraft converted to an air ambulance to help people in remote areas get the emergency medical care they need.

2. Education

New Democrats know that education is the key to the personal development of our children, to the growth of our economy, and to a strong democracy.

a) Kindergarten and Daycare

Almost every province in Canada has a public kindergarten programme. If other parts of the country can do it, New Brunswick can too. It is unfair that so many New Brunswick children - those whose parents cannot afford private kindergarten - are denied the benefits of a kindergarten programme.

Only the New Democrats are committed to public kindergarten; we will work hard to achieve it during the term of the new Legislature. New Democrats will also press for expanded daycare services for preschool children, and better after-school programmes.

b) Reducing the High Cost Of University

New Democrats are committed to reducing the social and economic barriers to higher education. Our party is calling for a freeze on university tuition fees (which are now higher than almost any other province), with corresponding increases in grants to the universities. In addition, we are proposing to expand the student bursary programme by \$1 million a year to help those most in need.

c) Adult Literacy

Literacy is essential for participating fully in our modern society: yet thousands of New Brunswickers lack this basic skill. New Democrats will make adult literacy a priority, and we will employ young people under our Youth Employment Programme for this purpose.

d) Curriculum Reform

New Democrats will work for the following objectives in curriculum reform:

- *to strengthen the basics -- reading, writing and mathematics -- by using a wider range of teaching methods to fit the needs of individual students;

- *to expose students to a wider variety of optional subjects;

- *to review course materials to ensure a recognition and respect for working people, the trade union movement, and women. Sex-biased materials will be replaced;

- *to extend second language training so every student in New Brunswick may have the opportunity to become bilingual;

- *to support quality teaching, and provide special recognition for excellent teachers.

Our commitment is to quality education at every level.

3. Public Auto Insurance

At present, we have public auto insurance in Manitoba, Saskatchewan and British Columbia. In each province it was brought in by a New Democratic government. Since then more Conservative governments have come and gone, but none of them has gone back to privately run auto insurance. The reason is simple: public auto insurance works. New Democrats are proposing the same kind of public auto insurance for New Brunswick drivers. Our plan will not discriminate on the basis of age or sex. It will save the average driver about \$100. a year, and will save families with young drivers much more. Public auto insurance will be handled through existing insurance agents. The plan will be administered through a head office and branch offices located in the province, and will employ about 700 people.

III. JOBS FOR NEW BRUNSWICKERS

People know they can count on New Democrats to speak up for job opportunities for young people, for women, and for the unemployed. With nearly 50,000 people out of work, jobs are our first priority.

1. A Major Youth Employment Programme

Last year nearly 5,000 young people left New Brunswick in search of a job. The unemployment rate for people under 25 is twice as high as it is for other New Brunswick workers. New Democrats believe every young person deserves a fair chance to get started. Specifically, we propose a \$10 million New Brunswick Future Program which will put 1000 young people to work in all parts of the province. Each community will help identify the jobs that need to be done. A Literacy Programme is one example of the kind of jobs that will be created through this programme.

2. Technological Change

Every day, companies introduce technological changes that affect the jobs of New Brunswick workers. Too often, the benefits of technological change are unfairly shared: higher profits for the companies, dislocation and layoffs for the employees. New Democrats believe that the benefits of technological change should be fairly shared. Three times we have introduced a Bill in the Legislature to province for:

- *fair notice of planned technological changes,

- *consultation with workers,

- *efforts to minimize possible job loss, and

- *transfers within the company, retraining, mobility grants and early retirement for those affected.

Three times the Liberals and Conservatives have voted against this Bill - more concerned about their business friends than working people. In the new Legislature, New Democrats will continue to press for fair treatment for workers whose jobs are threatened by technological change. And we are committed to a \$10 million Job Protection Fund to help those affected.

3. Fair Taxes And Jobs

The New Democrats' Fair Tax Plan means more jobs for New Brunswickers. The removal of the sales tax on building materials and labour services will create approximately 1000 badly needed jobs in construction and other sectors. Removing the sales tax on basic restaurant meals will stimulate employment in the hospitality industry.

Other aspects of the Fair Tax Plan - eliminating provincial income taxes for low income workers, doubling the property tax exemption for seniors, and rebating tenants \$25. a month to compensate for double property taxes - will all put additional money in the hands of those who need it. When these people spend that money it will create more business activity and more jobs for New Brunswickers.

4. Jobs And Services

The New Democrats' Services for People programmes will create well over 1000 direct jobs for New Brunswickers. The public auto insurance plan alone will create approximately 700 new head office and branch office jobs in the province.

The kindergarten and extended daycare programmes will open up job opportunities for approximately 600 more people. And our programmes for quality health care will add another 100 jobs.

5. Building On Our Resources

New Brunswick is a province rich in natural resources, but too often the benefits of these resources have ended up in the hands of a few. Our goal as New Democrats is to ensure that our resources are used to create more jobs and more development here in the province. This means:

- *obtaining a fair price for our resources (through fair stumpage fees, royalties, marketing boards, and collective bargaining);

- *encouraging greater processing here in New Brunswick; and

- *helping producers caught in the cost-price squeeze caused by high debts and low commodity prices.

6. Supporting Small Business

New Democrats are committed to encouraging economic development through co-operatives, credit unions, locally owned business and family farms. This will lead to a more balanced economy -- less dependent on a few large corporations. We will encourage small scale manufacturing for the Maritime market, and give preference to suppliers using New Brunswick goods and services.

IV. ENVIRONMENT AND ENERGY

As New Brunswickers, we take pride in our natural environment, but we know that today this environment is threatened as never before. New Democrats are committed to taking action now to protect our environment, and to provide safe and secure energy supplies for New Brunswick consumers.

1. Safe Drinking Water

Nothing is more important to people than clean, safe drinking water. But in many communities around the province the quality of our drinking water is threatened. New Democrats were the first to take action in the Legislature with our Safe Drinking Water Act. In the new Legislature, we will continue to press for a law to protect New Brunswick drinking water through:

- *regulating the quality of drinking water,

- *ensuring prompt corrective action when drinking water is contaminated, and

- *requiring the polluter to pay for the damage done.

2. Acid Rain

Acid rain is slowly destroying our lakes and rivers and retarding the growth of our forests. NB Power and other companies in New Brunswick produce more than their share of acid rain. New Democrats will take action to require NB Power, our largest polluter, to reduce its sulphur emissions dramatically, and to set tough new standards for the private sector.

3. Gasoline Leaks

In April 1986, a series of explosions rocked Saint John; it was very fortunate that no one was killed. In February 1987, people in East Saint John were evacuated from their homes. A week later there was an evacuation in Woodstock. In each case, gas had leaked from storage tanks and pipes. The New Democrats pressed the government for a full explanation -- even going to court to force them to release certain documents. Recently the government has begun to respond. In the new Legislature New Democrats will press forward with a Spills Bill, similar to that in Ontario, so that a gas leak or chemical spill can be cleaned up quickly, with the company responsible paying the bill.

4. A Non-Nuclear Future

After Chernobyl and Three Mile Island it is clear that nuclear power is not the safe, clean energy source that the nuclear industry promised. Nuclear power is in fact an expensive source of energy that involves enormous risks, both financial and environmental. Now more than ever, the New Democrats vision of a non-nuclear future makes sense for New Brunswick.

5. Securing Our Energy Supplies

New Democrats will press for a separate Department of Energy to develop our potential energy resources here in New Brunswick. The Department of Energy will work with NB Power, non-profit co-operatives and the private sector to:

- *produce wood chips from waste materials, to be used for generating electricity and methane gas.

- *convert Coleson Cove from an oil-fired to a coal-fired generating station, using the best technology available for pollution control.

*encourage the development of solar energy, wind and small scale water projects. We will offer users a two-way meter system, so that people producing electricity on a small scale can sell to NB Power when they have a surplus and buy when they have a shortage, and

*continue to implement energy conservation measures so that economic growth can be achieved without the need for big increases in energy supplies.

6. Fair Gas Prices

New Democrats are committed to establishing fair gas prices in the interest of New Brunswick consumers. Under our plan the price will be the same throughout New Brunswick, with an adjustment if necessary for areas on the Maine border. The oil companies will receive a fair wholesale price, dealers will be guaranteed an adequate margin, and provincial gasoline taxes will be adjusted to achieve the one-price policy.

V. FAIRNESS IN THE WORKPLACE

Working men and women are the backbone of our economy; New Democrats are working to make sure they get a fair deal.

1. A Decent Minimum Wage

Thousands of New Brunswick workers - most of them women - receive the minimum wage of \$4. an hour. In the last five years they have received only one increase totalling \$.20 an hour. New Democrats are committed to an immediate increase in the minimum wage to \$4.25 an hour, with a further increase to \$4.50 an hour in May 1988. Financial assistance will be available to protect jobs where the higher minimum wage might otherwise cause a small firm to shut down.

2. Pay Equity

There are over 100,000 women working in New Brunswick. In general, they are paid less than men. New Democrats will work to achieve fair wages for women in both the public and private sectors as quickly as possible.

3. Part-Time Benefits

At present, part-time workers are not often eligible for the same kind of benefit as full-time workers. New Democrats are committed to better benefits for part-time workers.

4. Job Security

New Democrats recognize the importance of job security for workers and their families.

a) Job Protection Fund

New Democrats are committed to a \$10 million Job Protection Fund:

*to assist workers affected by technological change and unavoidable plant shutdowns, and

*to protect jobs where our higher minimum wage might otherwise cause a small firm to shutdown.

b) Job Creation Grants

New Democrats will take action to make sure employers cannot replace regular employees with lower paid employees hired under various job creation grants.

5. Occupational Health And Safety

Each year about 30 New Brunswick workers lose their lives because of accidents on the job, and thousands more are injured. New Democrats will take action to strengthen the Occupational Health and Safety Act and reduce industrial accidents.

6. Free Collective Bargaining

New Democrats believe that free collective bargaining is an essential right in a democratic society. New Democrats are committed to:

*extending collective bargaining rights to woodworkers and others,

*encouraging the peaceful resolution of industrial disputes, and

*streamlining the arbitration process.

VI. EQUALITY FOR WOMEN

New Democrats are committed to winning the battle for economic and social justice for women. New Democrats will press for a Department of Women's Rights to ensure that the needs and concerns of women are reflected in all aspects of government policy.

1. Fair Wages And Working Conditions

a) Pay Equity

A full-time working woman in New Brunswick makes about \$6 for every \$10 earned by a man. New Democrats believe this inequality must be corrected; that is why our party is committed to "pay equity". People who do work of equal value should be paid equally, whether they are men or women, whether they work for the public sector or the private sector. Unlike the Conservative party that has done nothing on this issue for 17 years and the Liberal party that wants only to help 4000 female civil servants while ignoring more than 100,000 other working women, the New Democrats are committed to "pay equity" for women in both the public and private sectors, as a matter of principle. We will phase in "pay equity" for working women in both sectors over a period of time in order to minimize economic dislocation.

b) Minimum Wage

The New Democrats minimum wage proposal of \$4.50 an hour will help thousands of New Brunswick workers, the large majority of whom are women.

c) Part-Time Workers

The New Democrats' proposal to make part-time workers eligible for the same benefits as full-time workers on a pro-rated basis will help thousands of part-timers, most of whom are women.

2. Affirmative Action

New Democrats are committed to an affirmative action programme to open up new jobs for women in non-traditional areas.

3. Meeting Family Responsibilities

New Democrats recognize that most workers have important family responsibilities, and that government can do a lot to offer a helping hand.

a) Better Employment Standards

New Democrats propose a special sick day allowance for working parents who must sometimes take a day off work to look after a sick child.

b) Kindergarten And Daycare

New Democrats are committed to introducing public kindergarten during the term of the new Legislature, and expanding preschool and after-school daycare programmes in the province.

c) Single Parent Families

New Democrats will help single parent families - most of whom are headed by women - through "pay equity", regular increases in social assistance benefits, and better daycare services.

4. Family Violence

Family violence occurs all too frequently in New Brunswick, and the usual victims are women and children. New Democrats will press for emergency shelters, where women can get protection and counselling, to be located in all parts of the province.

VII. OPEN AN HONEST GOVERNMENT

New Democrats bring something different to New Brunswick politics - the belief that ordinary people come first. While the Liberal and Conservative parties look after their friends and special interests, people can count on New Democrats to speak up for open and honest government.

1. One-Stop Service Centres

New Democrats are committed to open and accessible government. We will work to establish one-stop government service centres in communities around the province. These service centres will provide people with a wide range of government services, without a lot of red-tape or bureaucratic runaround. Each centre will have input from the local community so that services can be tailored to meet the needs of each particular area.

2. Equal Opportunities Commission

New Democrats will work for fair treatment of both French and English speaking New Brunswickers through an Equal Opportunities Commission. The Commission will monitor:

- *the delivery of government services to ensure that they are available to people in their own language; and

- *job opportunities, to ensure that both linguistic groups are treated fairly.

3. Promoting And Preserving Our Cultural Identity

New Democrats believe that an open and responsive government must actively promote and preserve our special New Brunswick heritage and culture. To do this, we will establish a separate Department of Culture and Heritage.

4. Extending Political Rights

a) Civil Servants

Civil servants in New Brunswick are not allowed to participate openly in the political process. Most civil servants are office workers, labourers, tradesmen and community college teachers. New Democrats believe that denying these people their political rights is undemocratic and unfair. We will press for full political rights for civil servants, except those who directly advise the government on policy issues.

b) No Discrimination

In the last session of the Legislature, the New Democrats moved to amend the Human Rights Code to prevent discrimination on the basis of political affiliation. The two old parties - more concerned with patronage than fairness - voted against the proposal. In the new Legislature the New Democrats will continue to press for fair treatment for all, regardless of political affiliation.

5. Political Party Financing

In the last election, 100 banks and large corporations gave \$500,000 to the Liberal and Conservative parties. Most of these donations came from outside the province. Why are these banks and large corporations spending so much money to tell New Brunswickers how to vote? New Democrats believe that large companies from outside the province have too much control over New Brunswick politics. We will continue our efforts to make the government more responsive to ordinary New Brunswickers by banning corporate contributions from banks and large companies located outside the province.

6. Fighting Patronage And Overspending

People know they can count on New Democrats to try to keep the government honest. We will work hard to expose the abuses of patronage that enrich friends of the party in power at the expense of everyone else. And we will press for sensible guidelines to prevent excessive spending by cabinet ministers and others on government expense accounts.

7. Financial Responsibility

Politics as usual in New Brunswick means millions of dollars of promises at election time - and broken promises after. New Democrats are working to change that. In this election, we are promising tax cuts for tenants, for seniors, for those with incomes below \$8,000 a year, for the construction industry, and others. But we are also proposing tax increases for large corporations and the rich which will make the tax system fairer and will essentially pay for these tax cuts. It's a responsible approach to tax reform.

In addition, New Democrats are promising job creation, job protection, and better services for people. Our specific commitments will add one percent to government spending in the coming year. These expenditures will be covered by the normal increase in government revenues, without tax increases and without adding to the provincial deficit. Instead, by cutting patronage, government spending in New Brunswick could actually decline under a New Democratic government.

New Democrats are being upfront about where the money will come from to finance our election promises. We challenge the other parties to do the same. We believe that this is the kind of financial responsibility the people of New Brunswick want.