

STATEMENT  
OF PRINCIPLES

ADOPTED BY  
THE BIENNIAL CONVENTION  
OF THE  
NEW DEMOCRATIC PARTY  
OF  
NEWFOUNDLAND  
AND  
LABRADOR

JUNE, 1986

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## **HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE AND INTRODUCTION**

Newfoundland and Labrador faces a historic juncture. As a people, we have forged a proud and distinct culture fashioned out of centuries of struggle against adversity. We have not yet taken our rightful place in the Canadian Confederation, but we aspire to a new era of economic prosperity and social well being. The obstacles to be overcome are many and varied.

Generations before us have handed down a legacy of fundamental values imbued with the trademarks of decency, fairness and charity. At the same time, a historical pattern has developed in which the majority has been dominated by the rich and powerful few.

Our homeland and its waters were developed from the start as a resource for the extraction of wealth. Our ancestors were servants and pawns in the expansion of competing world empires. Social and economic relations were defined within feudal and capitalistic structures that have continued to distort our development to this day. The self-interest of the merchant and the elite classes, combined with the profit-making enterprises of outsiders created and maintained a system of subsistence and dependency for the majority of our people.

The domination of the rich and powerful over the poor majority has produced widespread inequality which continues to this day. Promises of growth and prosperity based on development of megaprojects have also benefitted the few and failed the majority. Political leadership has been self-serving and manipulative. The dominant political forces have not produced a social or economic foundation to accommodate the aspirations of our people. This situation undermines our identity and threatens our capacity to control our destiny. It must be changed.

### **PEOPLE BEFORE PROFITS**

A basic tenet of socialism is that the fulfillment of human needs is at all times more important than the making of profits. New Democrats there-

fore reject the principle of the free enterprise system which has unlimited financial profit for the few as its prime motivation.

All people contribute to our social and economic well-being and thus all have a right to a more equal share in the product of their labour. We believe that cooperation and mutual responsibility must prevail over private gain and competition as the guiding principles of social and economic life.

Furthermore, the human spirit cannot thrive when basic economic needs remain unsatisfied. New Democrats seek an end to material suffering, economic want and lack of opportunity. Our present system exploits workers and the unemployed alike by keeping from them the just fruits of their labours and by denying them the opportunity to fulfill their human potential.

To achieve our aim of equality, we must change the system of ownership and control of the means of production, distribution and exchange. Major enterprises which affect the lives of large numbers of people can only serve the interests of the majority if they are controlled by the people through their own institutions.

### **A NEW VISION OF THE DEMOCRATIC PROCESS**

In current political practice, our elected representatives adopt a policy of unilateral decision making with little thought for accountability or respect for the wishes of the people who have given them political power. The democratic process therefore has been eroded. It must be restored to an active, vigorous, responsive role, and broadened to permit the active participation of all members of our society in decisions that affect their lives.

We reject the narrow version of democracy which encourages the participation of the people only for elections after which they are subject to the policies and dictates of a government dominated by the business interests that financed their parties' rise to power. We need new political forms and practices to ensure broad and effective demo-

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needs of the people.

New Democrats believe in genuine democratic  
self-government based on economic and political  
equality throughout society. We will develop and  
support efforts to increase full participation and  
control by the people of our financial, industrial  
and political institutions.

We will support democracy in the workplace by  
creating a role for workers in the management of  
enterprise. We will support the integration of  
working and family life through an adequate system  
of childcare. We will support and encourage the ef-  
forts of regional and community associations,  
cooperatives, credit unions and alternative forms of  
worker controlled industries to plan for and partici-  
pate in the economic, social and cultural develop-  
ment of their areas. We will support and encourage  
those organizations which give a real role to the  
people in achieving self determination in the de-  
velopment of our natural and human resources and  
the production of goods and services.

## **ECONOMIC PLANNING AND THE WORKER**

The primary goal of economic development and  
the creation of wealth is to provide for the needs of  
our people. There must be available, for those who  
want them, stable jobs providing adequate incomes  
while protecting the dignity of the worker in a safe  
working environment. A basic goal must be full  
employment. We reject current economic policies  
which cause high levels of unemployment. The  
rights of workers must be defended and improved  
and their power to control their working lives must  
be expanded. At the same time, there must be so-  
cial programmes in place which will provide for  
the most vulnerable people in our province such as  
the elderly, the sick and the unemployed.

Economic planning must be long term to main-  
tain the continued productivity of our natural re-  
sources. Short term projects which exhaust resour-  
ces over a few years leave communities depressed as

profits go to the corporate interest and no provision  
is made for the long term economic health of the  
community.

To ensure effective planning, government must  
exert real control over the economic behaviour of  
such major elements in the economy as the banks  
and larger corporations. At the provincial level,  
government must establish policies to insure that  
savings and investments in pensions and trust com-  
panies are used to benefit the provincial economy. A  
significant proportion of these holdings should be  
invested in local enterprise and development to pre-  
vent the drain of savings out of the province.

New Democrats must encourage the establishment  
of new forms of enterprise and employment in all  
sectors of the economy. Government must empha-  
size the formation of cooperatives, credit unions,  
worker or community controlled businesses and ser-  
vices, and community development corporations as  
vital to the social and economic development of the  
province. Government subsidy for large scale private  
investment with public funds should be done only in  
return for equity participation and a share in corpo-  
rate decision making within established guidelines.  
Small business enterprises can and should be encour-  
aged to play a significant role in providing goods  
and services through individual effort.

## **WOMEN**

New Democrats recognize that the contribution  
of women, whether in the workplace or at home is  
fundamentally important and integral to the develop-  
ment of a just society. We recognize and support the  
struggles of women to overcome the oppression to  
which historically they have been subject. We will  
work to overcome sexist ideology and practice, and  
to restructure our institutions so as to enable men  
and women to participate fully in them. New Demo-  
crats are committed to the full and equal participa-  
tion of women within the party structure and  
throughout society.

We recognize and support the right of women to  
control their future and to live, move and work free-



ly and without fear in our society. We reject the pervasive influence of violent and pornographic images of women and children.

### **MINORITIES**

New Democrats believe that every person has an equal right to full recognition of their worth, dignity and individuality regardless of their sex, age, race, colour, system of belief or sexual orientation. We have a particular responsibility to be responsive to and support the struggles of minorities in our society. Our system of absolute majority rule often leaves smaller groups without adequate protection and recognition. We must commit our support to the enrichment of the lives of those who are physically or mentally challenged and work wherever possible to place them in situations where they too can have the opportunity to contribute to society for the benefit of all people.

### **COMMUNITY LIFE AND DEVELOPMENT**

The cultural and economic life of our rural communities must be protected, supported and where eroded, restored. We are committed to decentralization, to spreading benefits and resources, both social and financial, throughout Newfoundland and Labrador. We must ensure the continued economic viability of all regions in the province through improved transportation and information systems, and through a greater concentration of educational, health and financial resources in regional centres. Government has a primary responsibility to support local economic activity and to plan for the long term health of small communities in which people have a right to live if they so choose.

### **OUR PLACE IN CANADA**

As citizens of Canada, New Democrats in Newfoundland and Labrador will strive together with all of our sisters and brothers to establish New Democrat governments. We will continue to cooperate with, support and learn from New Democrats in all

of the provinces and in the territories, and to play our part in the determination of national policy and planning.

### **GLOBAL PARTICIPATION AND THE PURSUIT OF PEACE**

Newfoundland and Labrador's history of poverty and struggle against the particular hardships of isolation and a difficult environment cannot help but make us aware of and sympathetic to the struggles of other peoples in the world. We support the people of other countries as they strive against material want, economic exploitation, political oppression and military aggression.

The pursuit of peace has never been more important. We live with the ever present threat of nuclear annihilation and are appalled by the fantastic waste of the planet's resources which are used to feed an infinite military expansion. It is the responsibility of every citizen of the world to work for peace and justice. Our aim as participants in the global village is to contribute our voices and our work to the achievement of a lasting peace among nations—a peace based on freedom, equality and social justice among nations and within nations.

**\* For further information on this policy statement and for details on joining the NDP please call or write the provincial NDP office at: 739-6378**

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**\* Comments are also welcome.**