

# The FTAA

Conseil du statut  
de la femme

and equality between men and women

A different outlook on the world



## What are the consequences?

### **More jobs for young women from Asia and Latin America, but jobs that are low skill and less gratifying**

- The new jobs being created are often ungratifying, poorly paid, low on the hierarchical chain, and performed in difficult conditions.
- They are often nonunionized jobs that require few skills and provide little income in sectors such as electronics, pharmaceuticals, and the automobile industry, and also in more traditional light manufacturing industries such as toys, clothing, textiles, and footwear.
- These jobs can be easily moved elsewhere if workers demand better working conditions.

### **Women in the traditional economy affected by the agrifood industry**

- Policies that promote the consolidation of land and intense agricultural practices by food multinationals deprive women

in poorer countries of their traditional means of livelihood, without giving them access to the new jobs that are created.

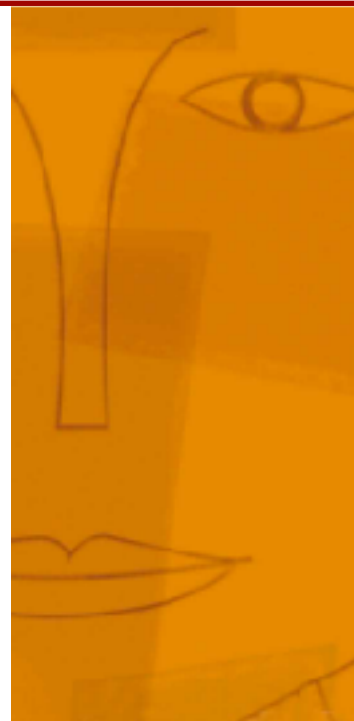
- These women are also victims of the penetration of western consumer products, a phenomenon that creates new needs they can no longer meet with their products.

### **Loss of status for women in Eastern countries**

- The collapse of the centralized economy has significantly increased the financial insecurity of women.
- Educated and skilled women are now being driven into unemployment. Faced with the deterioration of their economic situation and poverty, many of them fall back on the informal economy.
- We are witnessing a flourishing of prostitution networks that are bringing women from Eastern European countries to the richer Western countries.

### **Women in developed countries are also affected by globalization**

- Since women workers are present above all in the service industry and exports are still very much centered around the production of goods in industries where they are less present, they are not the direct beneficiaries of jobs resulting from increased international trade.
- Women bear the burden of financial profitability that globalization increasingly imposes on companies. For women, and for men for that matter, buzzwords like competitiveness, flexibility, and rationalization translate into higher demands at work.
- They seem to be more affected by increasing precariousness, a phenomenon that also affects young men, but that affects women throughout their whole lives. This insecurity is far from conducive to motherhood.
- The rapid integration of new technologies has reduced the size of the workforce in areas where they are concentrated.
- Women have also been hard hit by government budget-cutting.
- For women, less government means fewer good jobs, a falling back on lower-paying third sector jobs, and a return to the home to care for the elderly and the ill.
- Less government also means more market forces, fewer social and labor laws, less tax, more targeted policies, and less redistribution of income



# The Impact of Globalization on Women

Why does globalization have a significant impact on women?

- Because it is driven by economic concerns, without regard for the common good, at a time when government is pulling out of the social field
- Because of the unequal position they occupy in the workforce and the lack of appreciation for their work
- Because of the role women play in the private sphere, particularly within the family, and because of the free nature of this work



## Solutions

**The Conseil du statut de la femme du Québec believes that freer trade should lead to:**

- Greater equality between men and women;
- Equitable sharing of wealth;
- The promotion of human and political rights;
- The protection of resources and the environment.

Globalization and the economic integration of the Americas, despite the many problems we have identified above, represent an opportunity for greater democratization and solidarity. They are also a chance for true equality between men and women, provided the willingness is there and we give ourselves the means to achieve it. Following are some of the means that would make this possible:

- Include in the FTAA a clause stipulating the recognition of the primacy of universal human rights in trade agreements. This kind of clause would mean that in the case of conflict between the two, the right to trade would be interpreted and applied in compliance with human rights obligations.
- Draw up a summary of the precise effects of free trade agreements, specifically of chapter 11 of NAFTA with regard to investments. This analysis must highlight their impact on men and women, and show the differences, if need be.
- Identify social, cultural, and environmental objectives, as well as objectives aimed at achieving equality between men and women within the framework of continental economic integration, along with concrete and effective means to attain them.
- Uphold the exclusion in the FTAA draft agreement of certain services that are already excluded from NAFTA, including health and social services, daycare activities and related services, public services, educational and training services, and those pertaining to the conservation of our natural resources.

- Establish an official forum within the framework of the FTAA negotiations bringing together representatives from the various social groups affected by the issues raised by the FTAA. This forum would have the same status and financial means as the Business Leaders Forum, and women would enjoy equal representation.
- Encourage the participation of women in all bodies where free trade agreements are discussed.
- Include in the FTAA provisions promoting the enforcement of the minimum labor standards contained in the International Labor Organization's (ILO) basic agreements.
- Step up cooperative, training, and exchange efforts among women in the three Americas.
- Keep the public informed about the issues and challenges posed, notably to women, by the creation of the Free Trade Area of the Americas.

Our elected representatives will have to be extremely vigilant in ensuring that the obligations resulting from free trade agreements do not impose social choices that are contrary to the values of Quebecers and the progress they have made, particularly with regards to equality and autonomy for women. We elected our governments to defend the interests of all citizens. It is now up to them to uphold that responsibility.

**Reference :** *Les Québécoises, la mondialisation et la Zone de libre-échange des Amériques : une première réflexion*, [recherche : Francine Lepage], Conseil du statut de la femme, 2001.

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