



Fall 2001

Volume 2 Issue 1

NEWSLETTER

NCWC NEWS PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Friends, I am writing this, my first "President's Message," sitting in a little room in New York, on September 11th, 2001. Every time I turn my head, I see out of the window between the buildings, the still-billowing cloud to the south where the International Trade Center Towers used to stand. The cloud finally seems to be shrinking a bit, but it is now almost six o'clock and evening will come soon.

The minute we heard the news of the aircraft hitting one of the buildings, almost as it was happening in fact, we could see the cloud from the UN Cafeteria; and then the staff asked everyone to move to the basement toward the north end of the building. A few minutes later, the decision to close down the UN sent everyone out to the streets. The UN's Secretariat tower was thought to be a possible target.

The street, First Avenue, was full of mad traffic heading north and east, with Second Avenue, a block away, almost empty except for emergency vehicles heading south with sirens blaring. Almost immediately, use of cell-phones became impossible. Subways, bridges and surface transit were all blocked or disrupted. Telephone exchanges were jammed.

When the news broke, I was part of a working breakfast. The UN was closed down and off-limits by mid-morning. One of our group had a husband who worked in the Trade Centre Towers; he exited safely. In spite of the difficulties in getting around posed by New York's Emergency Measures, one of the women from a Commonwealth country was able to arrange to meet with me. However, a young TV producer from Ghana needed shelter because she was stranded in New York, with few funds; and her support people were in New Jersey, which could have been the other side of the world on that day.



Returning to NCWC business, after the Annual General Meeting, on what must be one of the most beautiful university campuses anywhere, namely University of British Columbia, and after the first Board meeting, I returned home and started a series of almost weekly trips to Ottawa to facilitate learning all that I needed to know in order to discharge my duties as President. Life was not made easier when the computers went "on strike" and needed extra memory and servicing. That caused an unavoidable delay and some frustration in completing the post-AGM tasks.

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PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

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Some of the activities which Hannah Service and I carried out included: a meeting with NCWC's lawyer about the former Council in Calgary; a networking luncheon with Maryann Bird, the Executive Director of the Canadian Child Care Advocacy Association; an exploratory meeting with Nechi, to investigate the possibilities for a collaborative partnership in a funded programme. In July, Pascale Dufour, a researcher working on researching Canadian women's organizations interviewed me about NCWC policy and organization. We also learned, with regret, that the Prague initiative started last year with CIDA would not be continued after all; among other reasons is the fact that the countries involved were becoming part of the European Union, and so no longer eligible for that sort of programme.

Later in the month, Economics Convener Maria Neil, who prepared a paper for M.P. John Bryden's inquiry, and I appeared representing NCWC at a Press Conference, called by Duff Conacher, concerning Open Government Canada. This is a follow-up on the motion of support passed at the AGM in June. I also brought greetings from NCWC to the Canadian Federation of University Women at the opening of their Annual Conference in Montreal. Later I attended the triennial conference of the International Federation of University Women (IFUW) in Ottawa on behalf of the International Council of Women. The Ottawa members are to be congratulated for a brilliant job of organizing. Congratulations to NCWC Vice-President Mary Scott who was elected to the IFUW Social Justice Committee. We were able to convene the NCWC Constitution Committee for two days in September, thanks to Ruth Brown's kind hospitality.

This summer, Leela Pachai, Citizenship and Immigration Convener, was able to attend the World Conference Against Racism (WCAR) in Durban, South Africa, for NCWC, thanks to the fact she was accompa-

nying her husband who was going to the Conference. We are looking forward to reading her report. The UN Special General Assembly for the Child that Giselle Saurette-Roch was to attend should have started in mid-September, but did not due to the closing and sequestering of the UN and its offices; it has been delayed until June 2002. Likewise, the NCWC business about which I had gone to New York did not get done.

I shall be meeting with the Canadian Women's March Committee. At the end of the September, I leave for what will be several very full and interesting days with both the Winnipeg Council of Women and the Provincial Council of Women of Manitoba. Council members in Manitoba, particularly Elizabeth Fleming, have arranged other opportunities for me to meet with young women.

Board members have been busy this summer with a number of responsibilities that they accepted at the first Board meeting in preparation for the Fall Board meeting right after Thanksgiving. We are thankful to learn now in mid-September that Elizabeth Hutchinson's husband is mending slowly, after being seriously ill all August. She hopes to join us at the Board meeting and thanks everyone for their letters and messages.

On returning to Canada, it was a relief to be away from the over-heated talk about war that filled the airwaves and TV programmes in the United States. I am genuinely concerned that in such an atmosphere it is all too easy to abuse innocent people when we lash out to relieve our anger. It is my hope that the war talked about becomes a "war" against just the terrorists. More particularly it is my hope and prayer that all of us will struggle to right the inequities that fuel the desperation of those who feel oppressed and overlooked by the rich and powerful of this world. We should start at home.

Catharine Laidlaw-Sly



FROM YOUR EDITOR

Carol Schweitzer

With the exception of a very few weeks, most people enjoyed an old-fashioned long, hot summer. However, because of recent troubling events, it is difficult to remember what the weather has been like since then.

Members received the last issue of NCWC Newsletter in June and members of the various Councils and Federated Societies will have had the opportunity to peruse it. Now, thanks to NCWC's new Web site Convener, Mary Scott, the Summer 2001 issue is on the Web site! The readers' indulgence is requested for the slight imperfections that appear and which will be eliminated in subsequent newsletters.

Attention is drawn to pages 6 and 7 of the Summer 2001 issue, an article featuring one of NCWC's federates, Girl Guides of Canada-Guides du Canada. Would other NCWC Federated Societies and Councils like to be featured and share information about their organizations in future issues of the newsletter? Please contact the Editor of the NCWC Newsletter to let her know.

Members are encouraged to submit short reviews of books on topics of interest to NCWC members; the write-up should not exceed 250 words. Conveners, Councils and Federated Societies are urged to submit summaries of their recent activities, using a guideline of about 500 words. For those writing feature articles or reports, on such events as last year's March 2000, 1000 words is the suggested length. New ideas for the newsletter are always welcome.

Thanks to Amy Williams and Shirley Browne for their kind assistance in producing this issue of the newsletter; their expert opinions and suggestions are most helpful.

The NCWC Board has decided to reduce the number of issues of NCWC Newsletter. Please note that the *new deadline* for submission of articles for the Winter issue is now January 15, 2002.

REMEMBERING

A Message to all Members and Associates of the National Council of Women of Canada

Catharine Laidlaw-Sly, President

September 11, 2001, a day of terror and tragedy.

May we all remember those families in the United States of America, those from Canada, and those from so many other countries who have lost a loved one.

May we all remember that history is full of horrifying deeds that have been committed in the name of and cloaked by one faith or another. All too often these acts have killed helpless people as was the case on that Tuesday.

May we all remember that so far, while we may know a bit about the persons who committed the acts of terrorism, we do not know if faith was the whole reason for their deeds. We also have no real answer to the universal cry, "Why? Why did they do it?"

May we all remember that history also teaches us that too often it is innocent people, especially women and children, who are punished for the acts of terrorists.

May we all remember that the National Council of Women of Canada has always respected the many faiths among us, using a silent moment of prayer to start meetings.

May we all remember to pray for peace in these days of anger and pain.

May we all remember to extend a loving hand of sisterhood to our Muslim sisters who may be suffering now.



MESSAGE FROM FORMER EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Hannah Service

As you are aware, I have resigned my position as Executive Director. Many of you have sent personal responses to this announcement, which I really appreciate. As one person noted, it is indeed time for me to move on. I am looking forward to bringing energy and managerial talent to a community-based agency that was seeking a goal-oriented Executive Director to oversee the next phase of its growth.

While looking forward, I am also reviewing carefully the lessons that I have learned from NCWC as well as the contributions that I have made to this organization.

I. MEMBERSHIP

Membership is always a true test of the strength of where an organization is headed. The NCWC has a stable but small membership base. The Board has discussed options for increasing this base to broaden its Council's reach and representation, to increase revenues and to profit from the new members' energy and creativity. It is my opinion that the NCWC should develop a strategic plan to dramatically increase membership in a number of ways. Not doing so can have a very negative impact on the organization.

There are many ways of accomplishing this goal. There are the traditional methods such as encouraging individual memberships, attracting younger women and so on. A less traditional but equally important method is combining mem-

bership recruitment and retention with special projects.

One year ago, I was very pleased that our hard work in initiating and obtaining funding for the Securing Our Future (The Economics of Later Life) project yielded two grants and a new contract staff position. This project has the potential to help NCWC renew and spread the word on women's economic security issues in our communities. By targeting younger women, and challenging us to work harder to attract more diverse members, this project can help to build capacity for the future. I devoted considerable time and effort to ensuring that this project was launched successfully and

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Wendy Atkin, Hannah Service and Cathy Tillsley at the AGM



SECURING OUR FUTURE:

Project Update

Wendy Atkin

NCWC members and staff were thrilled to have so many women join our National Roundtable (NRT) on Securing Our Future in Vancouver, Saturday, June 9, 2001. Unique contributions of each participant made this a special day for NCWC. The day opened with songs of sharing and understanding by Sarah Good and Florence Hackett, who together with NAC President Kukdookaa Terri Brown, roused our members to communicate across our many differences and celebrate our common goals. A special welcome was extended to a group of younger women from across Canada, who chose Chantal Thorn of Windsor, Ontario, to deliver a special message on which they had worked late into the previous night, defining their hopes and needs for the future. This new generation of activists was praised by guest speaker Gyda Chud, who spoke of her experiences working for children and early childhood education both in British Columbia and across Canada. We were also very fortunate to have internationally known financial planning expert Gail Kennedy contribute her words of wisdom as well as signed copies of her book, *You're Worth It: Investment Strategies for Women*, to all who attended the annual NCWC dinner.

When NRT participants moved into small discussion groups, many key themes and issues emerged that were brought forward for Community Roundtable planning. Four key themes were highlighted, with numerous issues tabled under each

one. Economic security, education, health, and social services were identified as the four corners of a solid foundation for the life cycle of women. As we develop programs for Community Roundtables, each Local Council will be able to adapt these issues to suit local needs. In Nova Scotia, for example, education and advocating for good retraining programs for women are priorities. In other areas, financial institutions as well as

schools, Girl Guides of Canada, and the YWCA have partnered with NCWC to plan successful community events. If more younger women were attracted to the Community Roundtables, NCWC would enjoy ongoing support for its work on behalf of women's equality.

So far, we have Community Roundtables planned in Ontario (London, St. Catharines & Area, and Ottawa), Nova

Scotia (Halifax and Pictou County), Manitoba (Winnipeg), Saskatchewan (Prince Albert), and Quebec (Montreal). These are in addition to the Windsor Women's Fair and the London Independent Woman event, which were held in spring 2001. We are very excited about these roundtables and are looking at ways to involve our national partners in ongoing work on the four key areas: economic security, education, health, and social services. For more information on Community Roundtable updates, please contact the Project Coordinator, **Wendy Atkin**, at **1-877-319-0993** or **wjatin@hotmail.com**.



Margaret MacGee capturing recommendations from a facilitator's report to the plenary.



Report from Provincial Council of Women of Manitoba

On September 13, 2001, a delegation from Provincial Council of Women of Manitoba met Premier Gary Doer, the Ministers of Advanced Education (also responsible for the Status of Women and Lotteries) and Child and Family Services and other members of the New Democratic Party caucus to discuss a partial brief. PCWM commended the Government for its ongoing support for improving the status of women and its work on child care, palliative care and removing the claw-back of the Child Tax benefit. The PCWM Executive had prioritized a number of concerns and sent in questions on the following topics (and the relevant resolutions) to the Premier and his caucus:

- the inclusion of women on Manitoba government appointed Agencies, Boards and Commissions
- access to information
- public accountability and ministerial roles around Manitoba Crown Corporations
- minimum wage and poverty
- housing for low income earners
- gambling
- child care
- the re-organization of the Aboriginal child welfare system.

At the end of the question and answer period, an

unscheduled delegation of women from the Dakota Tipi Reserve, who had travelled to Winnipeg from near Portage-la-Prairie, spoke. They told the caucus that their Reserve is being run by a man who claims that he is the hereditary Chief. He has apparently refused to hold elections on the Reserve for 20 years. Those who are outside the Chief's circle live in fear and say that they do not receive food, schooling for their children or access to services. They asked for provincial government help. The women were referred to the federal Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development, the Hon. Bob Nault. PCWM will continue to monitor the situation.

A group of women and men visiting Winnipeg from three selected cities in Romania, took part in a seminar on "Women and Civil Society in Canada." Elizabeth Fleming was asked to talk to the Romanians about women, volunteers, the Councils of Women and the work that the Councils do in Canada.

Romania is slowly making the transition from a central, communist government to a democracy. The Romanian visitors are exploring ways to apply sustainable development to their cities. In Romanian cities, decision-making is mostly done in camera, without much public involvement. Each of the three cities has 4 to 8 newspapers and a diverse, lively and accessible media. There are a few women's organizations but there is not the same tradition of women working together as volunteers. Priorities for Romanian women are jobs, the economy and domestic violence. The visit was part of a Local Agenda 21 project assisted by the Winnipeg-based International Institute for Sustainable Development and funded mostly by CIDA.

Resolutions Reminder

Remember to submit all resolutions with accompanying background to Marianne Wilkinson so that she receives everything by November 15th, 2001. For details, please refer to the information sheet enclosed in the September mail-out from the NCWC Office.



News from ICW

In March 2002, the main items with which the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women (UNCSW) will deal will be: eradicating poverty through the empowerment of women throughout their life cycle in a globalizing world; environmental management and mitigation of natural disasters - a gender perspective. In her ICW newsletter President's Message, Prina Herzog notes that the definition of poverty is not confined to lack of material items but also to lack of independence, of power and of voice. She is interested in hearing about projects run by NCWs and their members to empower poor women and to help them help themselves. Information on such activities, if received by December 1, 2001, will be included in her presentation at the UNCSW and might find expression at the ICW Seminar in New York.

Anita Fahrni, of the Swiss National Council, would like to know if any ICW members have experience with cigarette smoking prevention programs successful or not, aimed at young women. Contact NCWC newsletter editor for Ms. Fahrni's address.

From NCW around the world: Great Britain - working on two major issues, race relations and housing; Italy - held Round Table on "Programs of Social Care for

Immigrant Women" and seminar on mental health: "Knowledge in order to live better"; Spain - studying the social and economic situation of older women in Spain; Taiwan, ROC - held seminars with a "Social Services and Women Volunteer" theme; Australia - NCW Victoria one of few women's groups selected to march in "Our Nation on Parade" celebrating national celebration of Federation and the Theme of NCWV was "Valuing the Volunteer in Women's Issues."

Friends of ICW can become Individual Members of ICW. Fees in US\$ are: Life Members - single payment of \$1,500, Patron Life Member - single payment of \$3,000, Triennial Members - \$300 for 3 years or \$100 per year. Individual membership permits one to attend ICW Meetings as an observer and to receive various reports and publications. Those interested in ICW Individual Membership should contact the NCWC Office for the application form.

A source of information: the United National International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women (INSTRAW) has a new Gender Awareness Information and Networking system (GAINS). GAINS is an internet-based system producing, managing and disseminating gender related knowledge and information on critical world issues and trends: www.un-instraw.org Also, visit the ICW website at www.icw-cif.org

Campaign 2000 Continues

Joyce Ireland

To eliminate child and family poverty in Canada is an ongoing commitment. NCWC is a partner in "Campaign 2000 Continues." This is a non-partisan national coalition of Canadian organizations working to realize the objective set out in the House of Commons resolution which was unanimously passed on November 24, 1989, namely, "to seek to achieve the goal of eliminating poverty among Canadian children by the year 2000."

A meeting of partners from across Canada was held in Toronto on June 2-3, 2001. With the number of children living in poverty now higher than it was in 1989, the partners reaffirmed their position to demand a comprehensive range of policies at the federal, provincial and territorial levels to invest in support for children and families. It was agreed that further work is

needed to develop and clarify the concept of a designated children's fund directed to this objective. The partners also confirmed the importance of public education and community support to urge the responsible levels of government to work cooperatively to eliminate child poverty. The national, provincial and local Report Cards produced annually and distributed through the partners' networks are key informative tools for influencing public opinion and facilitating education around poverty issues. In addition, "Campaign 2000 Continues" is a partner in "Photosensitive," a national project to capture visual images of poverty and social inequality in newspapers and community exhibits across Canada.

"Campaign 2000 Continues" is also taking part in a Multi Faith Partners group organizing an "End Poverty Fast" from September 27 to October 4.

Look for information about "Campaign 2000 Continues" on the Council website in the near future.

NCWC

Windsor Women's Fair April 2001



London Roundtable May 2001



NCWC Roundtable in Vancouver June 2001



NCWC

NCWC Annual Meeting and Banquet June 2001





World Conference Against Racism - Disaster or Triumph?

Muriel Smith, Convener of International Affairs

Was the World Conference Against Racism a disaster or a triumph? Probably neither, but it was another small step in the long road towards defining international norms of behaviour in our global village. The media painted the September 2001 Durban World Conference on Racism, Xenophobia, Discrimination and Related Intolerance as an unparalleled disaster. The US and Israel and several Canadian delegates walked out over the "Zionism as racism" issue. Experiences of Canadians who attended varied depending on their expectations, their knowledge of the UN conference procedures, and their personal concerns.

As a veteran of the '93 UN Human Rights Conference held in Vienna, but unable to attend this event, I found myself listening very carefully to media reports and seeking to understand what was going on. Raised in an atmosphere of horror for the WWII holocaust and resulting sympathy for some aspects of "Zionism", I had to listen carefully to African women I met in 1975. These women had attended the first World Conference on Women in Mexico City. For them, the term was mixed with racism and incorporated all the ills and injustices of history - imperialism and colonialism, economic globalization, the slave trade, apartheid, patriarchy, social injustice and the entire range of racially prejudicial behaviour.

During the '70s when I served with the Manitoba Human Rights Commission, we looked at the intersection of race, gender and class. To this list have since been added: age, ability, political opinion, sexual orientation, Islamophobia and even geographical regions of the world.

My experience at the Vienna Conference in '93 introduced me to the extraordinary and terrifying range of human rights hot spots in the world - illegal imprisonment, torture, extra judicial executions, gender based violence - and the intense desire of the spokespersons at the Conference to tell their particular horror story. Too often, and understandably, their analysis had not progressed beyond unproductive blaming.

Fortunately, there was also another contingent of people - human rights workers, lawyers, some sensitive bureaucrats and social justice advocates - who were able to work towards achieving the best possible consensus for the representatives from 189 states. Both government and non-governmental organization (NGO) documents dealt with norms, institutional mechanisms and resources required for prevention, reporting, adjudication and redress. Admittedly, there was also another in-between group who just found the first group with their array of suffering and torment too much to handle, and the negotiating group too cerebral and detached to relate to. From all reports, at the Durban Conference, there were even more such groups.

The question then arises: should there be such conferences? Presently, these UN fora are the only places where all these voices can be heard, and where there is a concerted international effort to develop the norms and the means to address them. For me, the opportunity to learn about the many facets of these local problems and the varied ways the human rights machinery was being developed to deal with all their facets was invaluable. I learnt, often for the first time, about the tragedy of the Japanese comfort women, the degradation of the Ogoni land in Nigeria by Shell Oil, the terrible oppression of women the world over in the private sphere of life (that was where the principle of "women's rights are human rights" was officially recognized), the horrific torture inflicted by the state in far too many political dictatorships, particularly on indigenous peoples and on refugees and migrants. As a strong supporter of the UN and its slow but vital efforts to build a saner, more peaceful and equitable world, I believe such a forum, excruciatingly difficult though it may be, is needed now more than ever before.

In a backgrounder written by Makami Themba-Nixon, Ms. Themba-Nixon noted that at the first UN Conference on Racism held in Bandung in '55, the focus was on the North-South divide, prejudice against people of colour - the "black-white" legacy of conquest. The call was for "solidarity and unity" across these divides. In '65 came the Convention on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination which fur-

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World Conference Against Racism- Disaster or Triumph?

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ther codified the issues and their solutions. By '01, the concepts of anti-semitism, ethnic cleansing, xenophobia of all sorts and bloody political coups had been added to the list. Some have coped with this expansion of these concepts by using the term of "intersectionality" ñ the greater the number of discriminatory factors involved, the worse the "racism".

Another issue was the perceived dominance of "northern" and "white" groups. African voices wanted inclusion of the trans-Atlantic slave trade as a "crime against humanity" for which compensation should be paid. Countries like Canada were more moderate. They rejected financial compensation but favoured apologies for past inequities, changes in discriminatory laws and positive measures to achieve greater equality.

In advance, thoughtful critics felt that only a shared vision of racial justice which would include racial solidarity of blacks with whites and a long term framework of unity and solidarity could transcend the divisiveness. The definition of racism would have to go beyond seeing "racism" as simply "oppression of blacks" to include all forms of oppression.

Contentious themes were pursued by the "Russian Panthers" in Israel who focused on "hate crimes" and

"institutional racism", the Dalits of India who rejected the negative and minimalist goal of "religious tolerance" in favour of the more positive and comprehensive goal of "racial justice", Tibetans whose voices are too often silenced by China's strong insistence on Tibet being an "internal affair." Africans tried to get HIV/AIDS onto the agenda. Indigenous peoples identified environmental degradation and the occupying of their homelands, often by foreign transnational corporations. The shouting of the Palestinians and their supporters dominated the airwaves and left some Zionist supporters feeling profoundly abused.

Before the Conference, Makami Themba-Nixon challenged all who care about human rights to dream and imagine freedom for all, and then, identify what is needed for those dreams to be realized. The events of September 11 re-enforce the need to find compassionate and constructive solutions. Both the NGOs and the Governments' Durban Declarations and Programmes for Action will, in my opinion, provide very useful signposts to guide us on our way. When the final forms are released, they may be found at: <http://www.unhchr.ch/html/racism/02-documents-cnt.html> or at <http://www.un.org/WCAR/> and go to Documents.

NEWS FLASH-

GOOD NEWS FROM OAS!!

Joaquin Tamayo, Coordinator of the Civil Society Organization, Office of Summit Follow-up, of the Organization of American States, has written the following message to NCWC President:

"I am pleased to inform you that the Permanent Council of the Organization of American States (OAS) at its meeting held today approved the participation of The National Council of Women of Canada in OAS activities, as outlined in Guidelines adopted for this purpose by the Organization in resolution CP/RES.759.

"I look forward to your increased involvement in the activities of the OAS and your contribution to strengthen means of cooperation between civil society organizations and member states."

Catharine Laidlaw-Sly, in her former position as Vice-President International Affairs, worked to enable NCWC acquire this recognition at OAS and is gratified with the news. "Thanks for a job well done" is extended to her!



MESSAGE FROM FORMER EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

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that we recruited staff who had experience in renewal and capacity building in the non-profit sector. It is my strong recommendation that NCWC continue to address Securing Our Future as a top priority in its work plan.

2. SUSTAINING PRODUCTIVITY AS A NON-PROFIT ORGANIZATION

For ncwc, as for most women in Canada, the turn of the century has not signified a major improvement to women's well being. Many of the issues on which our founders rose in unison are no less pressing today, yet we have to question whether our own successors will be eager to pick up our causes, or whether they will direct their energies elsewhere. In order to achieve productivity in the non-profit sector, we need measures that are meaningful to the many political challenges that we undertake. For example, are community-based partners, government representatives, and corporate partners interested in taking up and supporting our messages? Are we renewing existing connections and taking up new strategic alliances? Do we draw upon best practices and build skills among our members as well as staff to ensure that we are working as hard as possible and in meaningful ways? These are just some of the ways to examine where an organization is and where it may be directed.

3. ADMINISTRATIVE PRACTICES

The staff at NCWC has contributed greatly to my work as Executive Director. Our financial practices are now in ship-shape, thanks to the expertise of our bookkeeper Eva Andras and the sound direction of Treasurer Mary Lambros. The office is a well-run unit that produces high quality

documents and has developed templates for each stage of the nominations and resolutions processes. All organizational records, including subject files, briefs and papers, and minutes of meetings are now sorted and readily accessible. In addition, the office responds promptly to numerous requests from members, the Board, government, and the general public. Our Office Administrator, Cathy Tillsley, should be given due credit for all her hard work in this regard. The office has developed a template for organizing the Annual General Meeting, in collaboration with the Host Council, and should be trusted to ensure that the event planning model that we have worked hard to develop is implemented in order to ensure a high quality AGM.

4. PUBLIC EDUCATION INITIATIVE

The incorporation of the NCWC Education Foundation is a major accomplishment of which we can all be proud and is a first step in improving our future resource potential. Once a charitable number is registered successfully for the foundation, an opportunity will present itself to bring in women who have distinguished themselves in politics, education, and business settings in Canada.

These women, together with appropriate representatives from the NCWC Board of Directors will bring wisdom and profile to the challenges of the new millennium.

My tenure at NCWC has been a series of fruitful and interesting challenges. I hope that you have learned as much from my contributions as I have from yours. Governance in the non-profit sector is a constantly evolving set of ethics and practices and I wish you well as you continue to strive for excellence in your work, as I will continue to do so in my new capacity as Executive Director of Operation Go Home.



Open Government Canada

Maria Neil

IN 1977, NCWC adopted as policy the right of the Canadian public to information concerning the public business. Since that time, NCWC has urged the Government of Canada to enact legislation that would implement the best methods to improve public access to government information.

Our democracy cannot function well without access to information from government. Yet, since it came into force July 1, 1983, the federal Access to Information Act (ATI Act) has not ensured easy, regular access to that information. Instead, some government institutions refuse to disclose information and records that should, under the law, be released. A statutory review by a parliamentary committee in March 1987 made some recommendations for strengthening the ATI Act but these have been ignored by successive governments. In 1993, the former Information Commissioner, John Grace, commissioned three evaluative studies, with no significant response from the federal government. Despite numerous pleas for change from other sources, including private members' bills such as Bill C-206 of the last Parliament by Hamilton-area backbencher, John Bryden, M.P., only two minor amendments have ever been made to the Act.

NCWC was represented at the March 2000 inaugural meeting of Open Government Canada (OGC). Since then, Elizabeth Fleming has represented NCWC on the interim steering committee of this national coalition of citizens, journalists, librarians, media lawyers, and academics, dedicated to improving access to information.

In June 2001, Ms Fleming prepared NCWC's Brief to the Access to Information Review Task Force. It is posted on the Task Force's web-site: www.opengovernmentcanada.com. The Brief criticizes the government for appointing an internal group of bureaucrats as members of the Review Task Force. It is

a review by the public service of itself. However, there is a conflict as these same public servants swear an oath of office which requires them not to divulge any information which comes to their knowledge through reason of their appointment. It is also troubling that the two Government agencies conducting this review, the Treasury Board and the Department of Justice, were singled out by the Information Commissioner for being unduly secretive and uncooperative and for starving his office of the information and funds to do the job.

NCWC's Brief argued that before any administrative or legislative changes are made, there must be an independent and open review of the federal access to information system.

Duff Conacher, of Democracy Watch, called a press conference to launch officially the program of Open Government Canada. It was held in the Centre Block of Parliament Hill on July 25, 2001, and Catharine Laidlaw-Sly and Maria Neil represented NCWC. Twelve reporters were present, a good turnout which made the small room look quite full. Catharine and Duff made the presentations, including the 47 recommendations of OGC, and then fielded questions. This was followed by less formal conversations with members of the Press.

Coverage was good. Articles were seen in or heard on the following: CBC Radio and TV; CFRA Radio (Ottawa); QR77 Radio (Calgary); Le Devoir (Montreal); The Toronto Star; National Post, Ottawa Citizen; The Ottawa Sun (and other "Sun" papers), Canadian Association of Journalists by e-mail. A piece by Canadian Press was picked up by several other papers across the country.

M.P. John Bryden has set up an all-party ad hoc committee which is attempting to improve the Access to Information Act. At this point, the Prime Minister's Office and Justice Department have not participated; NCWC was hoping to do so.

For further information, please contact Elizabeth Fleming or Maria Neil. Their coordinates may be obtained from the NCWC Office.

Disclaimer: The opinions expressed by contributors are their own and do not necessarily reflect or represent the views of the National Council of Women of Canada, its members or federates.

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Women and Power in Canadian Politics: *How Much? How Soon?*

Elizabeth Fleming,

President, Provincial Council of Women of Manitoba

"Women and Power in Canadian Politics: How Much? How Soon?" was the topic of a University of Manitoba Political Studies Colloquium held March 9th, 2001. The three panelists were the Honourable Sharon Carstairs, Leader of the Government in the Senate; the Honourable Becky Barrett, Manitoba Minister of Labour and Minister responsible for Multiculturalism and for the Workers Compensation Act; and Dr. Brenda O'Neill of the Department of Political Science, University of Manitoba.

Statistics compiled below are reproduced with Dr. O'Neill's permission. The statistics for British Columbia*, Nova Scotia* and the Total* have been updated from Government web sites.

Current data on Women and Power in Canadian Politics (March 2001)

Table 1: Percentage of Women Candidates and Elected in the House of Commons in Recent Federal Elections

Election Year	Percentage of Women Candidates	Percentage of Women Elected to the House of Commons
2000	20.7% (375/1808)	21% (62/301)
1997	24.4% (408/1672)	21% (62/301)
1993	28.3%	18% (53/295)

FACT: The current world average for the percentage of women in the lower house of National Parliaments is 14.2%. The highest percentage exists in Sweden where women constitute 43% of the legislature; at least eight countries report no women legislators (e.g. Jordan, Kuwait).

FACT: The Canadian Elections Act recently recognized child care costs as legitimate campaign expenses. This recommendation was made in 1991 in the Report of the Royal Commission on Electoral Reform and Party Financing as a means of increasing the number of women candidates in the federal election.

FACT: Ten of the current thirty-seven Federal cabinet ministers are women - 27%.

FACT: According to Statistics Canada, Canadian women working full-time, full-year in 1997 had average earnings of just under \$31,000, or 73% of their male counterparts' earnings. This is up from 68% in 1990.

Table 2: Representation in Provincial and Territorial Legislature

Province/Territory (in descending order)	No. of Women /Total Members in Legislature	As a Percentage of All Legislators
Yukon	5/17	29.4 %
Alberta	22/83	26.5 %
Manitoba	14/57	24.6 %
British Columbia*	19/79	24.1 %
Quebec	29/125	23.2 %
Saskatchewan	13/58	22.4 %
Prince Edward Is	6/27	22.2 %
New Brunswick	10/55	18.2 %
Ontario	18/103	17.5 %
Newfoundland	8/48	16.7 %
Northwest Terr	2/19	10.5
Nunavut	2/19	10.5 %
Nova Scotia*	4/52	7.7 %
Total*	152/742	20.1 %)

FACT: According to Statistics Canada, "even when employed, women are still largely responsible for looking after their homes and families. In 1998, women employed full-time with a spouse and at least one child under age 19 at home spent 4.9 hours per day on unpaid work activities, an hour and a half more per day than their male counterparts.

Senator Carstairs noted that a major barrier to women in politics is that parties decide who will run. Changes need to be made to the nomination process to ensure equal numbers from both genders. Political parties in France face fines if they do not present an equal number of women candidates. To level the playing field for women, caps need to be placed on the spending levels during election campaigns.

Acknowledgement and thanks to Dr. Brenda O'Neill, University of Manitoba for the statistics and FACTS. For verification, please contact Muriel Fleming for Dr. O'Neill's phone number.



"Global Ageing, Working Together in a Changing World"

Freda Hogg

The International Association of Gerontology held its 17th World Congress in Vancouver at the beginning of July. Doctors and other health professionals from all over the world gathered to present results of their research on ageing.

Freda Hogg, along with five others from the Advanced Mental Fitness Group in New Westminster, had been preparing for this event for the past year and were part of the Congress program when 550 papers and symposia were presented by many learned persons on a multitude of aspects on the ageing process. Hogg's talk was on "Learning and Memory", part of the symposium "Mental Fitness for Life: The Key to Vital Ageing." Stating that one must precede the other if one was to maintain memory capabilities to the maximum, she said that learning helps one focus on a goal, helps one

concentrate and persevere, all of which increases one's ability to remember. She cited her experiences in her travels, her computer learning, and her current lifestyle, all of which have been enhanced by the principles of the Advanced Mental Fitness program.

Some of the other presenters on this program spoke on Goalsetting: Ageing with Purpose and Passion; Critical Thinking: A Process for Erasing Limiting Beliefs; Mental Fitness for Life: New research with a Positive View of the Ageing Brain.

The facilitators for this presentation were Dr. Susan Cusack, Department of Gerontology, Simon Fraser University, and Wendy Thompson. Dr. K. Warner Schaie from the U.S.A. was Respondent and he complimented the panelists on their innovative research, reiterating that keeping an active brain was of vital importance in our ageing population.

The panelists were asked many questions by the large audience. Hogg's name has been given by Dr. Cusack to some university students who are currently doing research and preparing papers on older citizens.

Sophie Steadman 1895-2001

Ruth Brown

The women's movement that blossomed in the latter half of the twentieth century lost one of its pioneers when Sophie Steadman died June 9, 2001, in Ottawa, at the age of 105. This remarkable woman was a part of the history of the women's movement for much of the last century.

Sophie first came to Ottawa as a young woman soon after the end of the First World War to take a position in the Department of Finance. She was able and independent-minded, not prepared to put up with discrimination on the basis of her gender, and given the attitudes of the time, she must sometimes have had a very uphill fight. She first began working with the National Council of Women in the 1920s to fight the government policy of forcing women to resign from the public service when they married. At that time she also corresponded with Nellie McClung and worked to support the Persons Case, which was being fought through the courts. In the 1960s, she was one of those who pushed for the establishment of an Advisory Council on the Status of Women. In 1970 she worked on a widely distributed NCWC Study Guide called "What's in it?" which analyzed the Report of the Royal Commission on

the Status of Women and was the basis for NCWC resolutions and advocacy related to the Commission's recommendations. It must have seemed especially appropriate when she received the Persons Award from the Governor General in 1980.

Sophie advocated for the appointment of more women to boards and commissions, and was active in the establishment of a roster of women qualified for such government appointments. She was on the NCWC Executive for fifteen years, including a term as Vice-President. She was also for many years a member of the Ottawa Council of Women, where she was a long time representative of the Business and Professional Women's Club. She attended meetings until well into her nineties, and those of us who knew her then remember her interventions as pithy and full of common sense. She remained a crusader for human rights all her life, working with Dr. Marguerite Ritchie to help her establish the Human Rights Institute of Canada in 1974.

Sophie had many friends, and at her memorial service some of them spoke of her determination and her commitment. On the subject of women's equality, she was quoted as saying "I was stirred to the depths of my being, of the need for it. I am still stirred by the need."



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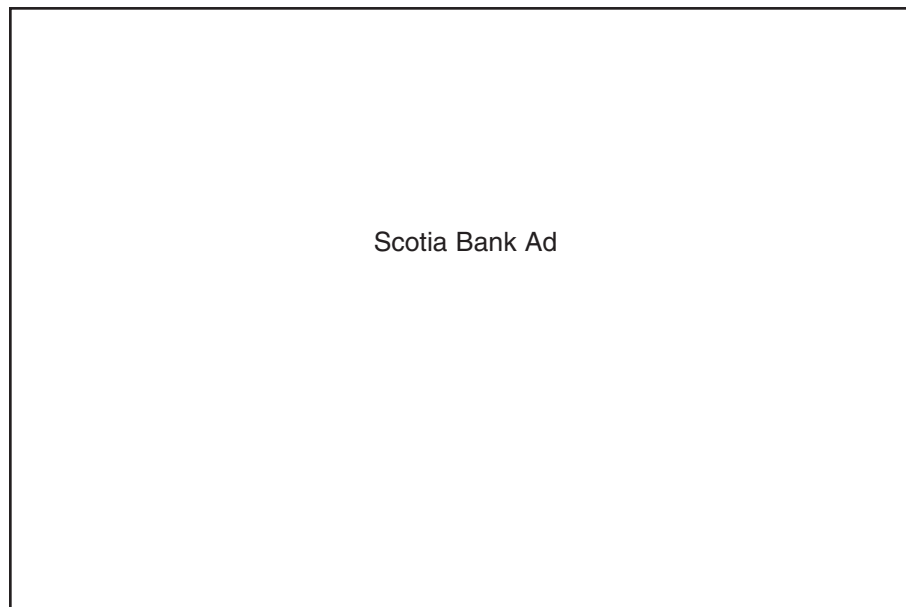
Annual subscriptions to the NCWC Newsletter cost \$15.00, the NCWC Yearbook costs \$25.00, and A Splendid Vision, a history of the National Council of Women of Canada, costs \$35.00 (including postage and handling). Please make cheques or money orders payable to the National Council of Women of Canada. Cut out and use the attached order form. Please be sure to include your mailing address.

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NCWC Web Site

The NCWC Web Site is being rebuilt in modules. The Web Site Development Committee is encouraging suggestions and feedback from members. Please look for the NCWC Web Site Update memo from Mary Scott, Chair of the Committee, which was sent in the November mail-out from the NCWC Office.



Looking to the Future

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