

ONTARIO COMMITTEE ON THE STATUS OF WOMEN NEWSLETTER

P. O. Box 188, Station Q,
Toronto, Ontario. M4T 2M1.

March 1978.

NEXT GENERAL MEETING

The Ontario Committee on the Status of Women will meet on Tuesday, March 14, at 8:15 P.M., at the home of Lorna Marsden, 206 Roxborough Drive, Toronto. Directions: By car: take Mt. Pleasant to Roxborough Dr. (south of St. Clair); turn east, and keep following Roxborough Dr. almost to the end, By TTC: Go on the Yonge subway to Rosedale station. Take the Rosedale bus to the corner of Glen Rd. & Whitney Ave. Walk right (northeast) up Whitney 2 blocks to Roxborough corner. 206 Roxborough is across from Whitney. Lynne Gordon will be guest speaker.

CURRENT ISSUES --- OCSW ACTION

FAMILY LAW REFORM

OCSW Presentation--In mid-January, the Ontario Legislature's Standing Committee on the Administration of Justice held hearings at the second reading stage of Bill 59, the Government's family law reform. In an unprecedented move, the OCSW proposed its own ideal family law, "Bill 50/50"--a Private Citizens' Bill. Speaking on behalf of the OCSW, Millie Morton outlined objections to Bill 59:

1) It does not adequately address the concept of equal sharing during the marriage. 2) The definition of "family assets" which would be subject to sharing at marriage breakdown is too narrow. 3) "Conduct" is still included as a factor to be considered in determining the amount of support payment.

In contrast, OCSW's Bill 50/50 recommends:

1) providing for joint ownership of the matrimonial home and an undivided half-interest in assets acquired by a spouse during marriage. 2) making all assets acquired during marriage shareable with specific exceptions being clearly set out. 3) removing conduct while considering need and ability of the respective spouses to provide support, together with duration of marriage and ages of spouses.

Disregarding the position taken by the OCSW and many other women's organizations, the Legislative Committee made only minor changes in Bill 59, which will be re-introduced into the Legislature for third reading on March 7. Members of OCSW and other groups plan to attend that sitting of the House to show their interest in this legislation. Any concerned women wishing to join us will be welcome. We will meet in the Queen's Park lobby at 1:30 p.m. on March 7.

Supreme Court Decision--Helen Rathwell, the divorced Saskatchewan farm wife who spoke at an OCSW public meeting on family property law 3 years ago, was the subject of a landmark decision by the federal Supreme Court in January. The Court ruled that she is entitled to half the property which was acquired during marriage & placed in her husband's name. This decision took into account Ms. Rathwell's contribution in domestic work and child-rearing, as well as in farming operations.

HEALTH AND FAMILY PLANNING

The OCSW Health subcommittee is preparing a questionnaire to the province's 44 health units, in order to determine the extent of access to conception control programs and services. Three years ago, the Ontario Ministry of Health offered grants to local health units to cover 100% of the cost of such programs, and the OCSW is anxious to find out what services have been made available since then.

SOCIAL SERVICES

The OCSW hopes to hold a public meeting about daycare, but Toronto Arts Productions is showing reluctance to schedule such a topic as part of its Town Hall Forum series. The subcommittee is considering alternatives. Contact Brigid Munsche at 533-2194.

MEMBERS' PERSONAL NOTES

Mary Eberts and Lorna Marsden were guest speakers at an inter-church gathering held in Toronto in February to consider the status of women in Canada. Lorna also appeared as a guest on the CBC Radio phone-in show, Cross-Country Check-up, while Mary gave a paper on equal pay legislative enforcement at a Government conference in January (see below).

Naomi Black presented a paper on the Canadian women's movement, to the York-University of Toronto Women's Studies Faculty Colloquium last month.

Karen Fejer addressed a "Take-a-Break" group at the Beaches Recreation Centre. She was asked to speak on women's issues from the OCSW point of view.

Political Candidates--Federal election talk is in the air, and we are reminded that women are much under-represented in Parliament. Women seeking nomination as candidates need campaign workers and funding. Now is the time to help them with volunteer support and donations.

PENSIONS

OCSW Brief--In December, our Pension Subcommittee completed a brief, "Towards Equity in the Pension System", for presentation to the Royal Commission on the State of Pensions in Ontario. The brief looked at "hardships & inequities" experienced by women under the present pension system, and attempted to recommend improvements.

The OCSW Subcommittee's study of the incomes of Canadian senior citizens corroborated findings by the Canadian Council on Social Development--that "the incidence and degree of poverty increase with age", and elderly women on pensions are the poorest of the poor. Women are more dependent than men on personal & family savings, & old age assistance; obviously, then, "work-related pensions are critical for obtaining a decent retirement income". Unfortunately, fewer working women than men are covered by pension plans, and the gap is not closing.

The OCSW believes that pension systems must take into account the particular patterns of women's activity in the labour force, including the following factors:

- 1) Women face discrimination in wages & pensions.
- 2) Women are concentrated in industries with the lowest percentage of pensioned workers.
- 3) Many more women than men work part-time or interrupt careers for child-raising. Women's career paths thus do not fit well into current practices of "vesting" and "locking in", while women who fill the traditional role of homemaker (either permanently or periodically) are at a disadvantage: there is no recognition of the valuable contribution of wives & mothers in public schemes, while employment-related plans do not provide adequately for widows.

The OCSW brief specifies adoption of certain principles to promote pensions equitable for women:

- 1) The entire pension system should be geared to ensuring decent incomes and dignity for retired people.
- 2) The standard must be measurable equality for women--not merely the existence of laws prohibiting discrimination.
- 3) Women's social contribution as homemakers must be accorded equal value with other types of work, and incorporated into the pension system.
- 4) It is unacceptable to ignore inequality in retirement income because it is the result of some more basic discrimination.

Among recommendations made in the brief are the following:

--The Women's Bureau (or another agency) should undertake an education program to inform women of the need for pensions. Employers should be encouraged to offer pension plans.

--All pensions should be made completely portable and all contributions should be fully invested & locked in immediately.

--Length of service requirements for eligibility should be prohibited. Pro-rated pensions should be made available to part-time workers.

--Where husbands die before retirement, widows should receive the total pension.

--Pension credits accrued by husband & wife should be split equally at dissolution of a marriage.

--The use of unisex mortality tables cannot be supported, although a later retirement age for women is suggested, due to their living longer than men.

--The Ontario Government should end its refusal to accept the "drop-out" amendment to the Canada Pension Plan.

At a public hearing of the Royal Commission in February, Anne Hill and Alexis Clark made an oral presentation of the brief on behalf of the OCSW. It was considered an important statement of women's point of view, and requests for copies have been received from across Canada. Copies may be ordered at \$2 each from Brigid Munsche, 142 Howland Ave., Toronto. For more information, call Anne Hill at 465-0898.

NAC ANNUAL MEETING

From March 17 to 20, Ottawa will be under siege as delegates from across Canada meet at the Skyline Hotel to represent their organizations at the annual meeting of the National Action Committee on the Status of Women.

The NAC Executive has been requested to make a presentation on the economic outlook to the federal Cabinet on March 17. That evening, workshops will be held on publications, and women in politics. On Saturday, March 18, the focus will be on equal pay for work of equal value, as well as women & violence. As usual, there will be displays by NAC member groups, demonstrating their accomplishments in the past year. A banquet will conclude the day's deliberations. Sunday will see the election of officers for 1978-9, and reports on NAC's projects to date. On Monday, March 20, NAC will lobby Members of Parliament to bring them up to date with the concerns of Canadian women.

As usual, OCSW will be sending 2 delegates to the week-end meeting, and sponsoring qualified members for Executive positions.

The OCSW has nominated the following members for NAC executive positions. Brigid Munsche for Vice President, Marjorie Cohen for Treasurer, Loreen Joe and Anne Hill for members-at-large.

INCREASED MINIMUM WAGE

The Ontario Government intends to raise the standard minimum wage from \$2.65 to \$2.85 an hour in August, with a further increase to \$3 in January 1979. However, rates for servers of alcoholic beverages, and for students, will remain at \$2.50 an hour. While the OCSW is pleased to see the general increase, it continues to deplore the assumption that alcohol servers necessarily receive large tips and thus require no further income to offset inflation.

EQUAL PAY FOR WORK OF EQUAL VALUE

Government Conference--In January, the Ontario Ministry of Labour sponsored a two-day conference, "Equal Pay/Opportunity", which was attended by many members of the OCSW. The Newsletter offers a few highlights from the papers delivered.

Marnie Clarke, Director, Women's Bureau, Ontario Ministry of Labour--outlined the present state of remedial action, noting that the concepts of equal pay & opportunity are still not completely accepted in the industrial nations. In the current economic downturn, women are pressured to give jobs over to unemployed men; however, if this were done in Ontario, 660,000 positions would be unfilled, while others would be taken by men lacking the skills to perform them. Male-female differentials in wages continue to widen, and cynicism will result if this trend does not reverse. Clarke argued that legislating the "equal value" concept is not the solution. She recommended improved enforcement of the present equal pay laws, affirmative action with contract compliance, tax incentives to employers for better use of women's resources, and more action for change by volunteer groups, labour, and employers.

Michael Skolnik, Assistant Director, Administration, Ontario Institute for Studies in Education--stressed the seriousness of the problem of equality in the labour force, rather than the certainty of solution. He pointed to the tendency of administrators of reform programs to limit evaluation, and concluded that alternative policies must be developed. Skolnik would prefer to handle wage differentials by involving employers & employees in decisions made at the local establishment level, since costs will vary widely. He warned that strong government action would likely be required to implement the "equal value" concept.

Baroness Seear, London School of Economics--described the British experience. She sees job segregation of women as the main problem, although widespread ignorance of the equal pay laws and ineffective application were also cited. She maintained that when complaint cases are investigated and publicized, business is forced to re-evaluate its practices.

Daniel Elisburg, Assistant Secretary of Labor for Employment Standards, and Issie Jenkins, Deputy General Counsel of the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission--set out the American approach, which includes "class action" suits and affirmative action with contract compliance. Jenkins described the implementation of Title 7 of the Civil Rights Act, claiming that recently the courts are withdrawing from the broad interpretations of the law which were common in the 1960s. She also pointed to obstacles such as "reverse discrimination" suits mounted against affirmative action, and delays in investigation due to a backlog of cases.

Gail Cook, Executive Vice-President, C. D. Howe Research Institute--emphasized the need for equality in the range of effective choices open to both women and men. She argued that we should not restrict attention to conditions affecting the labour force alone: responsibilities in the home, and general attitudes in society, also affect our choices. As an economist, she views the climate for future reform pessimistically, but says this does not mean that women should not demand the "basic justice" of equal pay and opportunity; furthermore, they should not have to marshal economic arguments to support the principle of equality. If equal value legislation is put into place, society will adapt to it.

Mary Eberts, Professor of Law, University of Toronto--concentrated on the current approach to enforcement of equal pay/opportunity legislation in Ontario. She found inadequacies in the law itself. Its aims cannot be carried out because of lack of financing. The interpretation of terms like "same or similar work" causes difficulty, and many women work where there are no men whose jobs are comparable. There is a fundamental contradiction between the intention of the law and its enforcement procedure: the conciliation stage is anomalous, while the use of the individual complaint model means that solutions cannot be binding for other victims. Eberts believes that the Ontario Government could strengthen the enforcement of equal pay legislation by: adequately funding its enforcing agencies (Employment Standards Branch, Human Rights Commission); improving the low wages in the job areas where women are clustered (sales, clerical, service); moving from the individual complaint model to a group approach in eliminating inequities; giving tax incentives for achievements due to affirmative action programs.

Alternate Views--Several participants at the Conference expressed points of view other than those heard from the platform. Shelley Acheson of the Ontario Federation of Labor mentioned the 2/3 of Canadian working women who are not unionized, and said that becoming unionized is not easy. Laurell Fitchie of the Canadian Chemical & Textile Union felt that a speaker from the federal Government should have been invited to explain the "equal value" concept as it will be enforced under the new Human Rights Act.

Government Conference on Equal Pay/Opportunity

OCSW Resolution--The Ontario Committee, represented by Karen Richardson, proposed the following resolution to the Conference:

"We urge the Government of Ontario to: 1) seriously enforce the present equal pay and anti-sex discrimination regulations; 2) legislate the principle of equal pay for work of equal value in order that Ontario may resume its role as a leader in this field; and further

that these recommendations be presented to the Minister of Labour immediately upon her return from the Conference of Labour Ministers in Victoria, B.C., for her response to us within one month.

The motion was seconded by Elsie Gregory MacGill of the Business and Professional Women's Association (Ontario), and was accepted by a majority of the Conference participants.

NEWS FROM OTHER GROUPS

NELLIE'S--The fund for the hostel premises is rising up to \$20,000 of the \$400,000 sought. W. O. Mitchell will present a one-man show to benefit Nellie's on March 7 at York University. For tickets or information, contact Nellie's Capital Campaign Headquarters, Eaton Centre, Box 504, suite 113, 220 Yonge St., Toronto. (598-1450) Remember--donations are more welcome than ever at Nellie's.

RAPE CRISIS CENTRE--Without more financial support, the Toronto centre cannot keep up its present level of service in public education and counselling of victims. Send donations to P. O. Box 6597, Station A, Toronto M5W 1X4. (368-5695)

FEDERAL ADVISORY COUNCIL ON THE STATUS OF WOMEN--Box 1541, Station B, Ottawa K1P 5R5.

Lately, the Council has been active on several fronts. According to its analysis, at least one study used as background for amendments to the Unemployment Insurance Act shows bias, implying that women are abusing the system, while failing to take enough account of the discrimination they face in obtaining jobs. The Council is continuing to study the tax system. It wants to see the present child care deduction replaced by a flat-rate tax credit to single parents in the labour force & 2-earner families with young children; the Council believes that no receipts should be required, and the tax credit should be given to the lower-income spouse. Another Council study found shortcomings in the treatment of women in the federal corrections system. Programs of educational upgrading, job training, & community support upon release still fall far short of the recommendations of the Royal Commission Report.

The Council has also condemned the film How to Say No to a Rapist and Survive, previously criticized by the Ontario Status of Women Council. The film mistakenly suggests that physical resistance to sexual attack is not effective. The Councils fear that women following such poor advice would expose themselves to physical and legal hazards.

International Decade for Women: What It Means to Canadian Women--is a free booklet from the federal Advisory Council, outlining what action has been suggested and what must yet be done; included is an update on the 122 Royal Commission Report recommendations within federal jurisdiction. The Council finds 52 of these implemented, 46 partly implemented, and 22 not implemented, with 2 others not applicable.

NEWS OF INTEREST TO WOMEN

News Ghetto--Toronto's Globe & Mail drew fire deservedly for re-instating its Thursday "Woman's Section". In a recent letter to the Editor, Pat Lundie of OCSW protested the use of this "discredited name" which is a "banner of discrimination" and represents a step backward.....A report for the Ontario Press Council concluded that those in control of newspapers assume that the average reader is male. Stories on women in the news still concentrate on physical attributes and marital status, with the result that the cumulative image of women fails to reflect contemporary roles.

Education--A study done for the Ontario Ministry of Education has found that textbooks used in the province vastly under-represent females and show them in limited roles..... Educators surveyed by the Canadian Association for Adult Education see a need for good career guidance for mature women as well as young women in the school system..... Meanwhile, women learners questioned by Humber College saw their needs as child care, convenient course hours & locations, and assistance with transportation & finance.

Judge Not--In British Columbia, a panel of the Judicial Council ruled that Judge Leslie Bowley's statements in a recent trial were "injudicious" without being cause for his removal from the bench. The Judge had referred to witnesses as "a bunch of clucking females", and commented that "women don't get much (sic) brains before they're 30". The panel's decision did not satisfy the B. C. Federation of Women or Vancouver Status of Women: the groups had called attention to Judge Bowley's remarks as indicating prejudice and condoning violence against women.

Women in the Labour Force--For the first time, in Ontario in 1977 more than half of our adult women are employed outside the home.

Family Incomes--A study done for the Economic Council of Canada has found that the average family headed by a man has an income twice that of the average family headed by a woman. Part of the income disparity is the result of an increase in the number of women under 25 and over 65 who live alone.

EVENTS

Raising Liberated Children--is a program for parents & others to consider sex-role conditioning. It will be held on Saturday, April 15 from 9:45 a.m. to 4 p.m. at the YWCA North Program Centre, 2532 Yonge St., Toronto. Cost is \$15. Daycare is available at \$5 for children 18 mo. to 8 yr. Bring your own lunch. To pre-register or receive more information, call the Y, 15 Birch Ave., Toronto. (925-3137)

Conference on Violence--Calgary's Status of Women Action Committee will sponsor a conference on women in a violent society, from April 21-23. For information, contact the group at 223 12 Avenue S. W., Calgary, Alberta T2R 0G9.

RESOURCES

Equal Opportunity at Work: A CUPE Affirmative Action Manual--costs \$3 from CUPE, 233 Gilmour St., suite 800, Ottawa.

Women in the Labour Force, Facts & Figures (1976), Part I--is available from the Women's Bureau, Rights in Employment Branch, Labour Canada, Ottawa K1A 0J2.

TV Ontario--Programs on women's changing roles & other issues have now been videotaped and placed in public libraries. Ask at your local branch for titles & details.

Film Catalogue--The Office of Equal Opportunities for Women at the federal Public Service Commission has updated its list of films on women's issues. For a copy, write to the Office at 300 Laurier Ave. W., suite 1559, Ottawa K1A 0M7.

Women & Population Growth: Choice Beyond Childbearing--is the latest study from the Worldwatch Institute, 1776 Massachusetts Ave., N. W., Washington D. C. 20036. (\$2 U.S.) Senior Researcher Kathleen Newland maintains "If women do not have alternatives to motherhood, attitudes about family size are unlikely to change..... Lack of social services pushes women toward an all-or-nothing choice between committed employment and parenthood."

OCSW NEWSLETTER SUBSCRIPTION

Increased costs of publication and postage compel the OCSW to drop from the mailing list the names of those who have not paid the \$5 fee for 1978.

If a red dot appears on the outside of your Newsletter, this is the last one you will be sent unless we hear from you--either renewing membership with a \$5 cheque (to the Ontario Committee on the Status of Women), or asking for our fee to be waived due to your straitened circumstances.

As for other organizations, the OCSW will continue the arrangement of exchanging its Newsletter for similar publications from such groups on a regular basis.

OCSW MEMBERSHIP

The Ontario Committee on the Status of Women is a Toronto-based group formed in 1971 to press actively for implementation of the recommendations of the Royal Commission on the Status of Women. Affiliated with the National Action Committee on the Status of Women, the OCSW is composed of women from a variety of backgrounds & occupations. Action takes place in subcommittees working on specific issues; general meetings are held 6 times a year.

To join, send the form below with \$5 to:
Ontario Committee on the Status of Women;
P. O. Box 188, Station Q,
Toronto, Ontario. M4T 2M1.

NAME _____ PHONE _____

ADDRESS _____

POSTAL CODE _____

I am interested in _____

I am renewing membership _____

I wish to become a member _____

March, 1978

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