



The Ontario Committee on the Status of Women

Newsletter, Spring/Summer 1981

MEMBERSHIP RENEWAL

It's time to renew memberships once again. This year we'd also like everyone to make a special effort to recruit friends. The more members we have--the more clout we have, the more people we have to help with projects, the more friends we have. So please make an effort to bring friends you think would be interested in OCSW. A membership form is attached.

NAC ANNUAL MEETING

Four members of OCSW were elected to the executive of the National Action Committee on the Status of Women (NAC) for the coming year--Jean Wood, President, Chaviva Hosek, Secretary, Lynn Sullivan, Treasurer and Cathy Devlin, Editor of Status of Women News.

Those of us who attended the Annual Meeting in March, came away with somewhat mixed feelings. There was a sense of divisiveness rather than cohesiveness and a lot of aggressive or defensive action rather than good debate on the issues. After the meeting a group of us got together to try and sort out just where the problem lay and how the annual meeting might be set up to ensure a more fruitful sharing of ideas for the coming year and accounting for the past year. We need a strong organization working to address the national issues facing us and we won't have it if there are many similar annual meetings.

The basic problems we saw were these.

1. NAC's business matters and policy issues were addressed in the same manner and format.
2. In addressing policy issues, the utopia which women would one day like to see was mixed up with what's needed to be done today. Both were set off against each other in debate.

3. Policy discussion groups attempted generally to deal with all aspects of the policy area for all time rather than concentrating on key issues that are critical in the immediate future.
4. All the issues were debated all over again on the floor of the plenary meeting, (What were the workshops for?) and many contradictory resolutions were passed.

We all felt that in future, the business and policy sections of the convention should be kept quite separate and only a limited number of policy issues discussed.

ONTARIO HUMAN RIGHTS CODE REVISIONS

Bill 7, "An Act to revise and extend protection of human rights in Ontario", is now under review by the Resource Development Committee of the Ontario Legislature. Some of the changes included in Bill 7 are:

- protection from discrimination on the basis of age from 40 to 65 (as in the present Ontario Human Rights Code) to 18 to 65.
- the prohibition of sexual harassment and discrimination based on family (defined as those in a parent and child relationship).
- an extension of the ban on discrimination on the basis of marital status to cover accommodation.

The Ontario Human Rights Code is also given primacy over other legislation.

On June 10th Chaviva Hosek and Lynn Sullivan appeared before the Committee on behalf of the OCSW and filed a list of recommended changes to Bill 7. These include:

- Removal of the upper age limit of 65.
- The OCSW representatives pointed out that there are more older women than men and that these women may have need of

employment. OCSW also asked for a review of the lower age limit of 18, since persons 16 may be employed or require accommodation. Persons younger than 18 may also, in some instances, be charged as adults with offences.

- Changes to section 6 of Bill 7, which deals with sexual harassment. This is defined in the bill as "a persistent sexual solicitation or advance made by a person in a position of authority who knows or ought reasonably to know that it is unwelcome." The OCSW recommended deletion of reference to "persistent" and "person in a position of authority who knows or ought reasonably to know". The OCSW also asked for an amendment to Bill 7 that would clearly prohibit the countenancing of sexual harassment, a change which had been promised by the government.
- Removal of exemptions from non-discrimination requirements for religious, fraternal, philanthropic, educational or social organizations if they are in receipt of public funds or use publicly supported facilities. This would ensure, for example, that all boys sport teams could not continue to exclude girls if they use public facilities (arenas, parks, etc.) or receive government support.
- Deletion of bona fide occupational qualification exemptions for employment based on marital status and sex.
- Require equal pay for work of equal value under the Ontario Human Rights Code.
- Require government contractors and sub-contractors to undertake affirmative action programs to improve employment opportunities for women. These would be maintained by a government agency.
- Broaden prohibition of discrimination based on "family" to include other dependency or support relationships and, in particular, to achieve consistency with the "Family Law Reform Act."

Hearings on Bill 7, which were originally scheduled to end on June 16th, have now been extended. Interested parties may make written submissions to the Resources Development Committee and request an appearance before the Committee to present a submission. The Committee clerk may be telephoned at (416) 965-1406. As the Chamber of Commerce has appeared before the Committee seeking a restrictive interpretation of employee

liability vis à vis sexual harassment letters, submissions, and appearances on this point, as well as on others, would be helpful.

A copy of OCSW's recommendations to the Committee is available on request. Please send a stamped, self-addressed envelope to: OCSW, Box 188, Station Q, Toronto, M4T 2M1. Copies of Bill 7 are available at a cost of 50¢ from the Ontario Government Bookstore, 880 Bay St., Toronto, Telephone (416) 965-2054.

WOMEN AND THE CONSTITUTION

The Canadian Advisory Council on the Status of Women held a conference entitled "Women's Responsibility and the New Constitution: An Agenda for Action" on May 29th and 30th in Ottawa. The Friday evening session consisted of keynote speeches by Kathleen Ruff (former Human Rights Director, British Columbia) and Serge Joyal, M.P. (Co-Chair of the Special Joint Committee on the Constitution). Saturday began with a speech by Mary Eberts (a Toronto lawyer who is also a member of the OCSW) entitled "Women in the 80's: Equal Partners in the New Confederation." This speech was followed by panels in which speakers presented papers on the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, federal-provincial jurisdictions, family law and specific issues in constitutional reform such as Indian women, pension reform, child care, employment and women's services. Beth Atcheson and Lorna Marsden, also members of the OCSW, were among the speakers.

It is obvious that the one-day format of the Conference did not allow for detailed plans of action to be formulated. Nevertheless, the information presented defined the issues clearly and several excellent suggestions about how to organize around the issues were presented.

Jessica Hill attended the Conference on behalf of the OCSW. A Constitution Subcommittee of the OCSW has been established; its first area for study will be family law. If you are interested in being a member of this working group, contact Jessica Hill at 923-8883 (Evgs.).

Several of the papers which were presented at the Conference have already

been published by the Canadian Advisory Council in a book entitled Women and the Constitution. This book is a clear introduction to the subject. It is anticipated that the Council will also publish the proceedings of the Conference. To place your name on the mailing list for these publications, write to the Council at Box 1541, Station B, Ottawa, Ontario K1P 5R5.

WOMEN AND PENSIONS

Two members of OCSW's sub committee on pensions, Jean Wood and Lynn Sullivan, attended the National Pensions Conference, March 31-April 2 in Ottawa. The conference included delegates representing the pension industry, employers, unions, women, people with handicaps and pensioners. Four issues were highlighted: Pensions Coverage; Vesting, Locking In and Portability; Indexing; and Women and Pensions. Womens groups at the conference stressed that the first three areas are important for women but that many other issues are of specific concern to them as well.

These include coverage during the periods of pregnancy leave and child rearing, pensions for part time workers, changes to public plans and improvements in Survivor Income Benefits. The last point was, initially, the only point raised by business representatives. The conference supported the "drop out" provision to the Canada Pension Plan, a measure which the OCSW has advocated for a number of years. Under this provision, the person who stays at home to raise children under the age of seven, could drop out those years of low or zero earnings from the calculation of their average earnings and thus increase their CPP entitlement. Ontario and British Columbia have blocked the passage of this amendment to the CPP, an amendment supported by all other provinces.

Any ideas from OCSW members on pensions and pension reform would be welcomed by the Committee. Health Minister, Monique Begin, is reported to be sympathetic to the idea of having pension seminars across the country.

WOMEN AND AGING

The Committee's survey of the literature on planning for old age proved somewhat depressing. We found nothing geared to

the special needs of women (even those written by women) and virtually all the literature we looked at assumed that its readers were at, or very near, retirement age. The majority of books were American and consequently only partially relevant to Canadians. If anyone has had better luck in finding good sources please let us know. On the brighter side the books we found did consolidate our thinking on the outline of a guide for women and gave us some perspectives on individual topics. We've now broken our work into a set of topics and are dealing with sorting out the contents.

IS THERE A ROLE FOR WOMEN IN POLITICS?

Women's Role in Politics was the topic of a debate sponsored by the National Action Committee on the Status of Women (NAC) at Harbourfront in Toronto on April 23.

NAC President, Jean Wood, chaired the discussion. The participants were: Claire Hoy, political columnist for the Toronto Sun, Kay Macpherson, a past president of NAC and an N.D.P. candidate in federal elections; Irma Melville, President of the Women's Liberal Commission; Jean Piggott, long active in the P.C. party and former M.P. for Ottawa-Vanier; and Ed Shorter, a University of Toronto professor and columnist for the Saturday Toronto Star.

Each of the speakers made a few comments and then had time to answer questions from one another and from the floor. Some comments were helpful; others seemed designed to provoke discussion.

Jean Piggott, the only panelist with experience in the House of Commons acknowledged that women who seek election have a difficult time in carving a role for themselves. Family responsibilities and restrictive career patterns are but two deterrents to a political career. Once elected, every M.P. has to juggle the interests of constituents, the caucus, the party and one's own point of view. Her apprenticeship in politics was with Charlotte Whitton; since then she has worked within the party and on behalf of other candidates seeking election. Three years ago she sought the nomination and

won her seat in Ottawa-Vanier. Since the 1980 election she has been working within the P.C. party to improve the role of women.

Claire Hoy cautioned women against involvement with just the women's issues. Equal pay for work of equal value is not just a women's issue, he claimed, but an issue that concerns everyone. He was challenged on this point from the floor; it was pointed out that women are paid unequal wages and lead the struggle for equal pay for work of equal value.

Irma Melville suggested that feminists become more active in all phases of political life; work within a party is invaluable for those who ultimately seek elected office. She reminded the audience to remember the discrepancy in the House of Commons between the number of Women M.P.'s and the number of men M.P.'s. It would be sad, she agreed if there were 14 men and 269 women, but not nearly as sad as the mix we have now.

Kay Macpherson believes that women have a role in changing the political priorities and budget allocations. If women continue their struggle within their own countries and at the international level to redirect the huge defence budgets to social services, they will do all people a service.

Ed Shorter maintains that some of the shrewdest politicians in history were women. He cited Catherine the Great, Maria Theresa of Austria, and Eleanor of Aquitaine. Like Claire Hoy, he felt that women over-emphasize the obstacles to a full political life and should go out and act like men.

Many in the audience had questions for Claire Hoy and Ed Shorter but whether either changed any of his views is doubtful. Many women came away from the evening pleased that the issue of Women in Politics had been discussed publicly and with more information about the roles that women can play in political life.

Postscript

Overheard at the bus stop outside Harbourfront: from a 21 year old "I'd like a career in politics but I don't think girls are supposed to think that way."

NOTES

Healthsharing, is a Canadian quarterly Women's quarterly magazine. Each issue carries feature articles, health news, columns, films and book reviews, notes on new health resources and upcoming events, letters and requests for information from our readers. For an individual subscription (\$6.75) write to: Women Healthsharing, P.O. Box 230, Station M. Toronto, Ontario M6S 4T3.

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The National Women's Health Network in the United States is the only consumer organization in that country devoted exclusively to women and health. For more information write to: National Women's Health Network, 2025 I Street NW, Suite 105, Washington, D.C. 2006.

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The Family Planning Services Division of the City of Toronto's Department of Public Health publishes its Bulletin about 6 times a year. Telephone (961-8459) or write (37 Spadina Road, Toronto, Ontario M5R 2S9) to be placed on the mailing list.

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The YWCA of Metropolitan Toronto has been operating Focus on Change, a transition program for women who are sole support mothers. The staff of the program are available for speaking engagements; they have a slide show created for community education purposes. If you would like more information, call 961-8100 and ask for one of the Focus on Change staff team.

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The Saskatchewan Department of Education and the University of Saskatchewan Departments of Sociology and Educational Foundations are jointly sponsoring the first Summer Institute on Women and Education from July 2 to August 14, 1981. For more information, contact: Ms. Mona Frederickson, Co-ordinator, Summer Institute on Women and Education, College of Education,

University of Saskatchewan, Saskatoon,
Saskatchewan S7N 0W0. Also, the College of
Education of the University of Saskatchewan
will be offering a new Masters degree (M.Ed.)
which focuses on women and education which
will begin this September. Contact: Professor
Don Cochrane, Head, Department of Educational
Foundations, College of Education, University
of Saskatchewan, Saskatoon, Saskatchewan
S7N 0W0.

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Women's Petition for Peace

There is a women's petition for peace
being circulated around the world. Voice
of Women, Halifax is co-ordinating its
circulation in Canada. If you would like
to sign or help get signatures contact
Voice of Women, 175 Carlton Street, Toronto,
M5A 2K3.

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MEMBERSHIP IN THE OCSW

The Ontario Committee on the Status of Women is a Toronto-
based voluntary organization formed in 1971 by women wishing
to see the implementation of those recommendations of the Royal
Commission on the Status of Women which fall under provincial
jurisdiction (equal pay, social services, education, family
law, family planning, etc.). It is composed of women from a
cross-section of backgrounds and occupations.

The Committee holds about six general meetings per year.
Projects are carried out by subcommittees working on specific
issues. Past activities have included taking briefs to govern-
ment, and educating the public via press conferences or open
information meetings. A Newsletter is published three times
annually.

Membership Fee -- The OCSW covers its costs solely by means
of a fee paid by each member, and other voluntary donations.
The membership fee for 1980 is \$10. per person (\$7 for students,
seniors). Donations above the membership dues are always wel-
come.

To join the OCSW, send the following coupon with \$10. to:

Ontario Committee on the Status of Women
P. O. Box 188, Station Q
Toronto, Ontario M4T 2M1

NAME :	_____
ADDRESS :	_____ _____
POSTAL CODE :	_____
PHONE :	_____
I AM INTERESTED IN :	_____
I ENCLOSE \$ _____	AS A: NEW MEMBER ___ RENEWAL ___ DONATION ___

