



The Ontario Committee on the Status of Women

Newsletter, Winter 1981

ONTARIO ELECTION, 19 March 1981

OCSW has zeroed in on four key issues affecting women--employment, equal pay for work of equal value, day care, and pensions. We have surveyed each party headquarters and a number of individual candidates on their coverage of these issues and on the accessibility of information on their positions. During the latter part of the campaign we will be blitzing the media to get publicity on our findings. Do your bit and ask your candidates what their position on women's issues is.

For some suggestions you might want to get a copy of *A Woman's Guide to the Ontario Election* by the Ontario Status of Women Council, available free from them at (416) 965-1111. It lists fourteen facts about women's status in Ontario and suggests questions to ask candidates. Women's issues will become much more central and important if politicians expect them to affect votes.

FEDERAL PENSIONS CONFERENCE

OCSW has asked Health and Welfare Minister Monique Bégin for representation at the federal-provincial conference on pensions at the end of March. Our pensions committee will be submitting a background paper focusing on:

- ways of providing pension credits for time out of the work force raising children.
- pension provision for divorced women who have not been in the labour force.
- provision of mandatory joint and last survivor coverage in pensions.

ONTARIO ROYAL COMMISSION ON THE STATUS OF PENSIONS

The Haley Commission report was finally published in February. The Commission took the stand that provision of retirement income is the joint responsibility of the individual and government. The government's role should be to "support initiatives that result in a retirement income system made up of government programs, employer-employee arrangements regulated by government, individual plans encouraged by government support, and personal savings."

Some of the major conclusions and recommendations of the Commission follow:

- Lack of pension coverage and portability are both problems. The latter is difficult to resolve because of the variety of employer plans. The solution to both of these is a compulsory contributory plan (employer and employee both make contributions) with a money purchase design (Provincial Universal Retirement System--PURS). With this system, individuals could choose the investment vehicles for their funds and the form of benefit. Employers whose pension plan met certain criteria could opt out of PURS.
- Annuities under PURS, RRSP's and money purchase plans should be calculated on the basis of unisex mortality tables. This important recommendation means women would receive monthly benefits equal to men's which is not now the case.
- Mandatory joint and last survivor plans are recommended. And this option is to be waived only by written consent of

both the employee and spouse. Spouse's benefit would be not less than 60% of the pension.

-If PURS is adopted vesting in employment pension plans would happen after ten years' continuous service with an employer or ten years' membership in the plan. If PURS is not adopted vesting would be after five years. Given women's employment patterns, ten years is too long to wait for vesting.

The Haley Commission recommendations, if adopted, would make little change in private pension plans. The major change would be PURS. If PURS is not adopted, we'll be just about at square one.

FEDERAL TASK FORCE ON EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES FOR THE 80's.

This task force of MP's is to make recommendations on critical skill training for the 80's. How to bring traditionally under-employed groups into the economic mainstream is one problem under consideration.

Lorna Marsden and Lynn Sullivan made a presentation to the task force for OCSW. Our main points were these:

-Despite a vast increase in the participation rate of women, the labour force remains overwhelmingly sex-segregated. It is essential for a healthy economy to achieve a more desegregated labour force. At a Conference Board meeting in November 1980, David Dodge stated that if the current male/female distribution by industrial sector is maintained with current labour force growth rates, by 1985 there will be a shortage of 50,000 men for those jobs normally held by men and by 1990 a shortage of 443,000 men. The OCSW recommended that the government take the following action:

(i) The renegotiation of training monies between the federal and provincial governments under the Adult Occupational Training Act should include provincial targets for training women.

(ii) There should be targets for increasing female representation in non-tradi-

tional jobs whenever jobs are created by government subsidy or training programs are funded by government grants.

(iii) Government contractors should be required to undertake affirmative action to hire and promote women.

-In view of impending technological change we recommended that:

(i) Women must be involved in decisions about technological change, and know of its impact on jobs, on their long-term employment prospects and on the conditions of work.

(ii) Legislation and contractual arrangements must ensure that women's work skills will not be downgraded and that jobs lost will be absorbed in other sectors at the same or better levels of skill and economic benefit.

-With regard to women in highly qualified work positions we recommended that this year's renegotiation of Established Financing Programs should induce post-secondary institutions to provide greater opportunities for women as students, researchers, and faculty.

-On the general issue of the paid labourer and the family, we pointed out that children are seen as private responsibilities cared for by women. Consequently it is unrealistic to suppose that women can be fully effective in the paid labour force if they do not have access to adequate child care. The labour force needs women and women have a right to employment. Therefore we advocated a policy that recognized a family with two wage earners and two responsible parents. Changes in taxation, social security benefits, and legal arrangements should all reflect such a policy. We drew the attention of the committee to the model in Swedish society where parenting leave and adequate child-care arrangements have been developed.

The reaction of the task force was disappointing. Their comments focussed on the effect women's working would have

on babies and the need to socialize women for the skilled trades.

WOMEN AND THE CONSTITUTION

The last OCSW Newsletter (Fall 1980), included an outline of issues arising from the proposed Charter of Rights and Freedoms which should be of critical concern to women. On 18 November 1980 the Canadian Advisory Council on the Status of Women presented an extensive, superbly-reasoned brief entitled "Women, Human Rights and the Constitution" to the Special Senate-House of Commons Joint Committee. The brief pursued, in considerable detail, those issues which its then President, Doris Anderson, presented to the OCSW last fall. The OCSW presented a brief to the Joint Committee which paralleled the Canadian Advisory Council's position; the National Action Committee on the Status of Women and several other women's groups also prepared and presented briefs. Parliament certainly knew that women were informed and concerned!

The impact of the presentations by women's groups could clearly be seen in the amendments to the Charter which the Minister of Justice, the Honourable Jean Chrétien, proposed to the Joint Committee on 12 January 1981. Significant amendments were proposed to the non-discrimination provisions as found in Section 15 of the Charter. Specifically, an amendment was made to ensure that equality relates to the substance as well as the administration of the law and another amendment clarified that women may be a disadvantaged group for the purposes of affirmative action programs.

There is no doubt that the amendments did not answer all of the concerns expressed by women's representatives. We should be pleased and proud that we made as much headway as we did; the amendments are a testimony to the quality of the work done and the perceived political strength of women. We can build on this foundation. The Charter of Rights and Freedoms is still very much an issue as the February National Conference on Women and the Constitution in Ottawa proved.

In addition, all the questions relating to the division of powers remain to be resolved by our governments. The OCSW, like other women's groups, will continue to give the issues surrounding the Constitution a high priority through its Constitution Subcommittee.

For more information or copies of briefs, contact:

1. Canadian Advisory on the Status of Women
151 Sparks Street
Box 1541, Station B
Ottawa, Ont. K1P 5R5
2. National Action Committee
40 St. Clair Avenue East
Suite 306
Toronto, Ont. M4T 1M9
3. National Conference on Women and the Constitution
c/o Women for Political Action
Box 1213, Station Q
Toronto, Ont. M4T 2P4
4. Ontario Committee on the Status of Women.

HUMAN RIGHTS

A small working committee of the OCSW had commenced work on Bill 209, An Act to revise and extend the Protection of Human Rights in Ontario. We were planning a presentation to the committee when the election was called. If and when the Bill is re-introduced after the election, our working committee will start up again.

WOMEN AND AGING

Work continues on developing a planning guide for women. It is proving to be a large task. If you have any useful information on the area we would be pleased to get it. Equally we will let you know of any particularly good information we turn up in a future newsletter.

IN MEMORIAM

Elsie Gregory MacGill, a member of the OCSW for many years, died in November. Elsie's contribution to changes in the status of women in Canada was substantial. She was the first woman to graduate in electrical engineering from the University of Toronto (1927) and the first to earn a Master's degree in aeronautical engineering at the University of Michigan (1929). She was appointed to the Royal Commission on the Status of Women, was the President of the Canadian Federation of Business and Professional Women's Clubs, and was on the Executive of the National Action Committee on the Status of Women. Her dedication to serving a broad community of women and men was an inspiration to many of us who shared committee work with Elsie.

A donation from the OCSW has been made to the Elsie Gregory MacGill Commemorative Fund.

FUND-RAISING EVENT FOR INTERVAL HOUSE

Interval House is a Toronto shelter for women and children. The Ports Dinner Theatre will be presenting a special performance of "I'm Getting My Act Together and Taking It on the Road" on the afternoon of 17 March 1981, at 3:00 p.m.; the total cost, including a light snack and a donation to Interval House, is \$20.00. For a reservation call Pat Kincaid at 598-4931, x360 or x361).

STATUS

The Ontario Status of Women Council publishes a periodical titled *Status*. The latest issue, January 1981, contains items on the Constitution, the Leatherdale Case, equal pay for work of equal value, and immigrant women. *Status* provides its readers with an opportunity to follow the activities of the Council and developments in issues of interest to Ontario women. It may be obtained, free of charge, from the

Ontario Status of Women Council, 700 Bay Street, 3rd Floor, Toronto, Ont. M5G 1Z6; tel. (416) 965-1111.

OCSW MEETINGS

The next meeting will be on 8 April. We hope to have a good brainstorming session on the key social issues affecting women that we should be addressing, and get organized for action. Further details will be sent out closer to the date.

The final meeting of the year will be on 27 May.

PUBLICATIONS

The publications list of the Canadian Advisory Council on the Status of Women may be obtained by writing to the Council at 151 Sparks Street, Box 1541, Station B, Ottawa, Ont. K1P 5R5, or by telephoning (613) 992-4975.

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The Family Planning Network of Metropolitan Toronto and Family Planning Services of the Department of Public Health of the City of Toronto have recently published the first annual Family Planning Compendium of Services. It is a comprehensive and "easy-to-find" reference for over sixty clinics and other agencies providing contraception and pregnancy counselling and related services in greater Toronto. For more information, contact Family Planning Services at 37 Spadina Road, Toronto, Ont. M5R 2S9.

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The Canadian Human Rights Commission publishes a newsletter every two months. In order to place your name on the mailing list, you may contact the Commission at 257 Slater Street, Ottawa, Ont. K1A 1E1.

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 government, 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 welcome.

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

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ADDRESS :	_____ _____
POSTAL CODE :	_____
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