

Take a memo: Dear person...

This is a memo from me to you — a memo from one person to another. That statement is more significant than you may think.

Canadian women have been legally 'persons' for only 50 years. The date that should be memorable, but probably isn't, is Oct. 18, 1929. On that day, the Privy Council of London ruled that women were indeed persons under the terms of the British North America Act (BNA). Whoopie!

In the early part of this century, women occasionally had been mentioned as logical appointments to the Senate. But the governments of that period steadfastly refused. They said it was not legal to appoint a woman to the senate because women, dear friends, were not 'persons.'

Five outraged and persistent women clamored and pushed and generally made nuisances of themselves. Thank God!

Emily Murphy, Irene Pariby, Louise McKinney, Henrietta Edward and Nellie McLung probably were considered great nuisances, and I'm sure there were lots of people — women included — who wished they'd go back to the kitchen where they

belonged. But they pulled it off for the rest of us, appealing all the way to the Canadian Supreme Court for clarification of the BNA Act.

The Canadian Supreme court ruled that the word 'persons' did not include females and women were, therefore, ineligible to sit in the Senate.

Bettie Bradley

Times community editor

It could have died there, with the five women indeed retreating to their kitchens and bedrooms. But instead they took it across the sea to the Privy Council in England, which reversed the decision. Hallelujah!

That was in 1929. Two years later, Cairine Wilson became Canada's first woman senator.

These persistent fighters were Ontario women and Ontario civic organizations are being asked to honor them next month.

If you want to celebrate being a person, become active in the fight for Private Member's Bill 3, a bill designed to incorporate the principle of equal pay for work of equal value into the Employment Standards Act (1974). The wording is subtle but important. Equal pay for equal work is a principle easily avoided. Employers simply say jobs aren't exactly equal. The intent of this bill is to close the loophole.

The majority of women who work must work, but custom forces them into female job ghettos which are traditionally underpaid. Meanwhile, the wage gap between male and female workers continues to grow and this gap will not be closed until dissimilar jobs (the traditionally female and the traditionally male) can be compared and valued on the basis of skill, effort and responsibility. That's what Bill 3 is all about.



THE TIMES

Fall crocuses?

Tina and Jeffrey Winrow, 3 and 9, found the first sign of spring in their garden last week, a blooming batch of mauve crocus... but wait a minute... This is fall. Gord Tyrrell, gardener at Springbank Nurseries said the occurrence of a crocus blooming in fall is rare and, in fact, he's never heard of it.

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