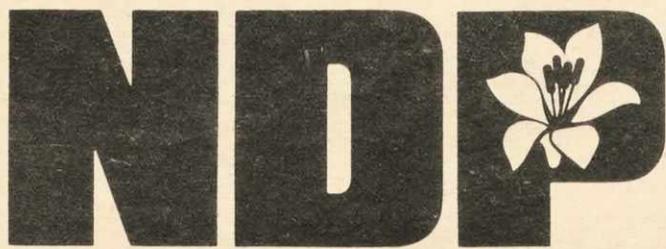


McDonough: hints for political women



by Gretchen Pohkamp

Although introduced as the new leader of the NDP, Alexa McDonough put on her non-partisan cloak to discuss women in politics with the November meeting of Women and the Law.

McDonough says the greatest barriers to getting women involved in politics are fear, exhaustion and insufficient time.

"I was terrified every step of the way in both federal elections, and even more terrified throughout this past convention (where she won the leadership race)."

But she suggests that there are ways to overcome these fears, one being to look around and see how inept most of the male politicians really are. Most of them are really awful she says, and women must realize that nothing terrible will happen to them if they get involved. "Sure you make a few mistakes, everyone does, but you have to go on from there."

McDonough says she only became politically active because of her mother's political awakening late in life.

"At 60, my mother looked at her life and saw her political activities confined to making sandwiches for rallies, hosting convention delegates and helping my father." That wasn't enough.

McDonough says she learned from her mother's self-questioning and from her own realization that she couldn't be a mother, hostess, social worker, politician and woman all rolled into one, without something giving.

She says she was asked several times to run for the Liberal party, but felt that she would not be able to support her primary goal of establishing equality for women through that party.

She became involved in the NDP affirmative action program as a member of the Participation for Women Committee. This committee seeks to put women's issues in the

forefront, encourages questions and discussion of women's issues in the House of Commons, helps women in the party become more confident about running for office, and works to increase the participation of women in politics both as candidates and as members of the party.

McDonough says without her involvement in this committee she would never have had the confidence to become an active politician. She says the support of other women is essential in building this confidence.

McDonough says many other barriers which are traditionally cited as those which keep women from advancing from municipal politics to provincial or federal politics, including economic and social considerations, traditional attitudes and stereotypes and lack of mobility and aspiration, are not the primary restraints.

In reality, she says, the major problem is that the political parties operate as gatekeepers. In municipal elections, one only needs public support to run, no party politics come into the matter. But as soon as a woman wishes to run on a provincial or federal level, partisan politics come into play, she says.

It is much harder for a woman to get a party nomination because of old myths

such as 'men won't vote for a woman' and 'woman don't vote for women either'. She says that although the NDP's record looks good in that they have nominated twice as many women candidates as both the Conservatives and Liberals combined, in actual fact, their record is worse than the Liberals in getting women elected. She says this is because women are not running in seats which are considered safe and so have little chance of being elected.

But she warns that just getting women elected does not necessarily mean that women's issues will be addressed.

"We must get women who are serious about making changes favourable to women, not just any woman at all," says McDonough.

By the same token, institutions such as the Advisory Council for the Status of Women should not be looked at through rose-coloured glasses, she says.

"There must be women on the council who actively support change in order for the council to be more than just a buffer between the feminist organizations and the government."

McDonough says changes in the Election Expenses Act have made it more possible for women to get the financing needed to become involved in

politics. On the other hand, women have traditionally not been in jobs then can just leave at the call of the election. They don't call the shots so they can't demand to be taken back if they are defeated in an election.

McDonough says there are many more changes necessary to ensure equal participation of women in politics. She says the current constitutional debate is key because reforms can be made to allow greater opportunities for representation of women.

Proportional representation is one suggestion which she says might guarantee more seats to women. There are only three democratic countries in the world (Canada, the U.S., and Great Britain) which don't use some form of proportional representation. In many of the countries that do, women have used proportional representation to increase their voice in the government.

McDonough says she does not feel that it is much of an achievement to be the first woman leader of a political party in the history of Canada.

"It's pretty disgusting to think that in 1980 I am the first," she says. "It's not a celebration of achievement; it's just a celebration of hope. And it will only become a celebration of achievement when 50 percent of the leaders and representatives are women."

DNA opens door to reward and danger

by Walter G. Speirs

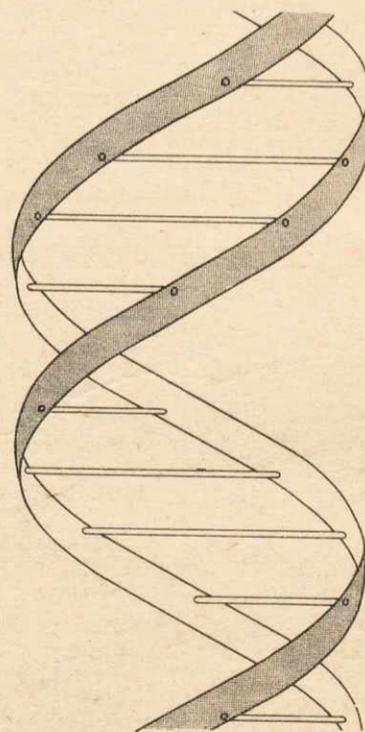
The floodgates of DNA research with its many possible applications and dangers

opened about two years ago, said Dr. James D. Watson speaking at a lecture at St. Mary's University. His lecture was entitled "The Scientific

Rewards of Recombinant DNA".

Recombinant DNA research involves the splicing of genes into or out of a molecule of deoxyribonucleic acid, the genetic code of life for every organism. Since 1952 when Watson and Francis Crick discovered the structure of DNA, research in this field has really exploded throughout the world and has enabled greater production of substances of interest and use in medicine. To say as Dr. Watson once wrote, "this structure has novel features which are of considerable biological interest" was indeed an understatement.

But public concern about the possible sociological implications and health hazards of research using recombinant DNA techniques such as cloning have been raised in the last few years. Watson described cloning as the insertion of a gene that produces a specific protein from one organism into another bacteria for example. The escape of only a few lethal bacteria containing some "bad" recombinant genes capable of causing disease would be of dire consequences. The thought of an invading army of cloned Hitlers is a theoretically possible but extreme example. In general however, Watson said the use



of "sick" or weakened bacteria that cannot survive outside the lab has eased the danger somewhat.

Watson explains as far as pharmaceutical applications go, a mouse gene that produces insulin can now be inserted into the DNA of bacteria, allowing the bacteria to produce insulin in greater amounts for diabetics.

With the recent controversy over the antiviral substance,

interferon, which some regard also as a possible cure for cancer, the cloning of interferon genes would be a welcome breakthrough. Very small amounts of it currently cost many thousands of dollars.

Very complicated mathematical analyses were used because as Dr. Watson put it "one's intuition at the level of twenty angstroms is not very good". One such technique was x-ray diffraction, the diffraction of x-rays by material used in determining its physical structure. Crick and a fellow scientist, Maurice Wilkins used this technique to help deduce the structure of DNA.

Dr. Watson during his research, received many humorous letters from Russian physicist and friend George Gamow who showed how the fun side of science can be enjoyed. Take for example the "RNA Tie Club" which had twenty members one for each amino acid, the building blocks of protein. The spirit of academic competition was there too as Linus Pauling unsuccessfully raced to beat Watson and Crick to the 1961 Nobel Prize.

Dr. Watson's currently director of the renowned Cold-Spring Harbor Laboratory in the United States.

Help Line out in cold

by Sylvia Kaptein

After ten years at its present location on Dalhousie campus, the Volunteer Bureau/Help Line is moving to another location.

The reason they have been asked to leave is that the Student Union, which controls the rental of the rooms, needs the space for paying customers. Student Council gives the Volunteer Bureau/Help Line, which is all one organization, an annual grant, which is not given in cash but rather in the free use of the space.

At present, they have no idea where the new location will be, says Help Line co-ordinator, Cheryl Downton. A relocation committee made up of members of Volunteer Bureau/Help Line has been set up to find suitable accommodations before the June 30th leaving date.

The ideal place would be

somewhere near the university, since many of the Help Line workers are students, and inexpensive, as the organization's funds, which come mostly from the United Way, are limited.

In addition, the Volunteer Bureau should be visible to the public, while the Help/Line should be invisible, since its location and the identity of its workers is supposed to be a secret.

Last Saturday, a skate-athon was held to aid with relocation expenses and to buy furniture to replace the things lent by the Student Union. These skate-a-thons have been shown to be effective ways of raising money. Previous ones wiped out a \$13,000 deficit that had been hanging over the organization's head.

This year's skate-a-thon has over 100 skaters participating and raised an estimated \$5,000.