

Charlotte Whitton



Charlotte Whitton, Ottawa's (and Canada's) first woman mayor, was, literally, a fighter; she once punched a city controller who had made an invidious reference to her spinsterhood.

She died early this year at the age of 79, after serving as city controller, mayor (five times), alderman and regional councillor.

She was the classic example of the woman who was too bright and too feisty to stay home. She won scholarships in six subjects to Queen's University, Kingston, and graduated in 1918. She became a social worker, a writer, a lecturer, the first executive director of the Canadian Welfare Council, assessor to the Commission on Child Protection of the League of Nations, and a Gov-

Senator Renaude LaPointe, a distinguished Québec journalist for more than 30 years, joined the Department of Indian Affairs in 1970 and served as delegate to the UN that same year. She was appointed to the Senate in 1971, returned to the UN in 1972 and was elected speaker of the Senate in 1974.



ernment consultant on the transportation of British children to Canada during World War II.

She was elected an Ottawa controller in 1950, mayor in 1951 and again in 1952, 1954, 1960 and 1962. She was celebrated for sharp comment, to both men and women. To women she said: "Whatever women do, they must do twice as well as men to be thought half as good. Luckily it's not that difficult."

To the city aldermen and controllers she said, on one occasion: "Speak up, gentlemen, I am not opposed to male participation in government."

When the visiting Lord Mayor of London, wearing his regalia of office, noticed the corsage on her low cut evening gown and said, coyly, "If I smell your rose, will you blush?", she asked in turn, confidentially, "If I pull your chain, will you flush?"

In 1972 the city of Ottawa named the council chamber Whitton Hall, and when she died last January her body was laid out in state and she was given a civic funeral.

The Right Rev. William Robinson, Anglican Bishop of Ottawa, said on that occasion: "Long before anyone was talking about women's lib, she was woman's lib incarnate."

Katie Cooke is chairwoman of the 30 member Advisory Council on the Status of Women. She has been involved for years with the role of women in rural development and economic expansion.

