

Didn't want to be opted into system, Sabia tells York crowd

By ARA ROSE PARKER

Laura Sabia, politically active spokeswoman for women's rights and past chairperson of the Ontario Status of Women Council, discussed the achievements and failures of the women's movement in a luncheon rap, last Wednesday in Osgoode Hall.

She spoke strongly, with conviction, expressing her frustration with the slow pace of development and effects of the movement. "Exactly how far has it got?... not very far"; the women's movement has reached a plateau and is now, even going backwards, according to Sabia.

A pathetic pessimism has been created as backlash to an earnest movement. The pay division, Sabia feels, says a lot; there is a widening each day as increases go on. The unions are not a bit interested in the women's movement, according to her, and a discrimination is present even in the "halls of academe", here at York.

Sabia said the percentage of women attending university has never been higher than in 1929; more women (percentage wise) were in surgery in the 1930's, and yet today, at Women's College Hospital, most top positions are now held by males. She warned students not to be fooled by appearances. More women may be enrolled in first year than ever before, but fewer women continue through second year, even fewer to post graduate and more still are cut down at the professional level.

Even though more women attend law school than in the past, Sabia warned the Osgoode law women against being "ghettoised... shunted into areas men don't want to deal with... emotional issues", such as family law and real estate.

In the educational system, high school level, teachers have been for the most part women but they are now dwindling to a 35 per cent representation. In the past 50 per cent of the principals were women, it is now close to 1.9 per cent. In elementary schools the same pattern is being established. With better pay and more prestige associated with each position, Sabia contends women are being relegated to inferior jobs.

If she were to do it again, knowing now that the mistakes were during the past years of the women's movement, Sabia said above all the first change, she would fight for would be in attitudes among women themselves. Secondly, the concepts created by religion must be attacked, most importantly, the "myth of motherhood... a piece of chicanery." There has been no breakthrough in the religious world, the Anglican priesthood still can't accept the notion of equality; a female is but "a misbegotten male." Sabia awaits gleefully the day men could give birth, "by that time abortion would become a sacrament."

Women must become freed from the influences of commercialism, religion, politics and sexual role playing, in order to become strong. "You can peel off my skin" Sabia says, "I'm tough, nothing bothers me."

In relation to her past position of three years as chairperson on the Ontario Status of Women Council, Sabia said she had to leave because of the "feeling of being opted into the system." All councils can be manipulated, but in hers she felt there was too much give and not enough take. She said "I'm a catalyst, I criticize very well and I'm better on the outside."

Laura Sabia's nearest ambition is to establish a women's trust company in the Nellie McClung mock court style. Tellers would be men and top positions would be monopolized by women, "and we're certainly not going to ask if the woman is on the pill before getting a loan!"

The tone of the encounter was generally serious. It was in this light that Laura Sabia threw the torch over to anyone who thought she could take it, to continue the fight that had only just begun for equality.



Laura Sabia speaking on the progress of the women's movement.

Natives need north autonomy

EDMONTON (CUP) — The native people of the north want northern development but with the freedom to run their own affairs, native representatives told a University of Alberta forum recently.

"What we are struggling for is not just land claims or property," said George Barnaby, president of the Indian Brotherhood of the Northwest Territories, "but the right to be self reliant."

"We can't be responsible for protecting ourselves and the land if we don't have control."

He said the northern people have their own culture and want it

recognized.

NWT MP Wally Firth told the forum, "First settle claims of the native people and give them control to decide," on any pipeline proposals.

First said the north is looked at as "something to be used." A Mackenzie Valley pipeline would be the first of many ventures leading to environmental pollution, he added.

He suggested that before non-renewable energy sources are taken from the north, renewable resources such as hydro power and wood be looked.

"Our philosophy of northern

development is in terms of social and human development," Inuit Tapisirat representative Jim Arvalak told the forum.

"If the government would cooperate with us we could help with northern development and avoid the dangerous social implications."

Barnaby concluded, "We are fighting for future generations, to leave them something that will last."

"We are not selling out for our own benefits to save the land... we owe something to the children that follow us."

Pioneer writers topic of "Women: The Past"

By RONEN GRUNBERG

The autobiography of three Pioneer women writers in Canada was discussed by York Professor Clara Thomas, at Vanier College dining hall last Wednesday, as part of the "Women: The Past" lecture series.

These women, among the first to start writing in Canada, were Ana Jameson, Susana Moody, and Catherine Trail.

Thomas said that underlying the work of all women writers is the drive towards freedom, and that it is this drive that provides the basic kinship among these writers. She said that in order to achieve this individual freedom, these women had to remain outsiders to their society, and that they had to have a very strong will in order to be compelled to work outside of society's conventions and norms.

She added that "the host of first women lawyers, women doctors, and women writers are outstanding and are outsiders to their society and their time and place."

Anna Jameson, who was the main topic of the lecture, wrote the five volume Sacred and Legendary Art — a commentary on Christian art, and Catherine Trail wrote the book Backwoods of Canada, and The Canadian Settlers guide where she assembles information and instruction on every facet of settling and living in a new country.



Clara Thomas addresses a Vanier audience on pioneer women.

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TUESDAY, NOVEMBER 30

Guest: Craig Campbell

A former editor and publisher of the magazine Northern Journey he is presently working on a novel.

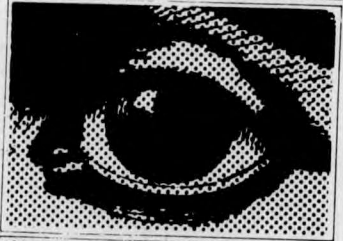
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