

a Lasting impression

Charlotte Whitton's death in Ottawa last weekend has caused many to mourn the passing of a great stateswoman and to mark the close of an exciting and vigorous politician's career. To list the many accomplishments Miss Whitton achieved during her thirty years in Ottawa politics would not be an easy task, for they are far too numerous. But more important an endeavor is one that would capture all the vigour, wit and enthusiasm that Miss Whitton brought to both the city of Ottawa and to Canada. For Charlotte Whitton's energy was boundless and her humour and intelligence matched this energy.

Was Charlotte Whitton a feminist? Well if being a feminist means fighting for women to have the right to be treated equal in society and to be guaranteed this right under the law, then we can label her a feminist. In Miss Whitton's own words we can find outlined the path women must take to attain equality, she said: "Whatever women do they must do twice as well as men to be thought half as good", and she added a sarcastic note to this comment, "Luckily, it's not very difficult." Charlotte Whitton was not one to be beaten and if it truly meant being twice as good, working twice as hard, then that was the road to be taken. Her career certainly attests to the fact that she was not afraid of toiling long hours for what she believed in.

Miss Whitton's political career started in 1950 when she was challenged in an editorial in the Ottawa Journal to run for a seat on Ottawa's Board of Control. This challenge was a response to a speech she had given to a Ottawa Women's Club concerning the lack of women in public life. Well the issue was set, the battle began and it wasn't hard to predict that Charlotte Whitton became the first woman controller in Ottawa's history.

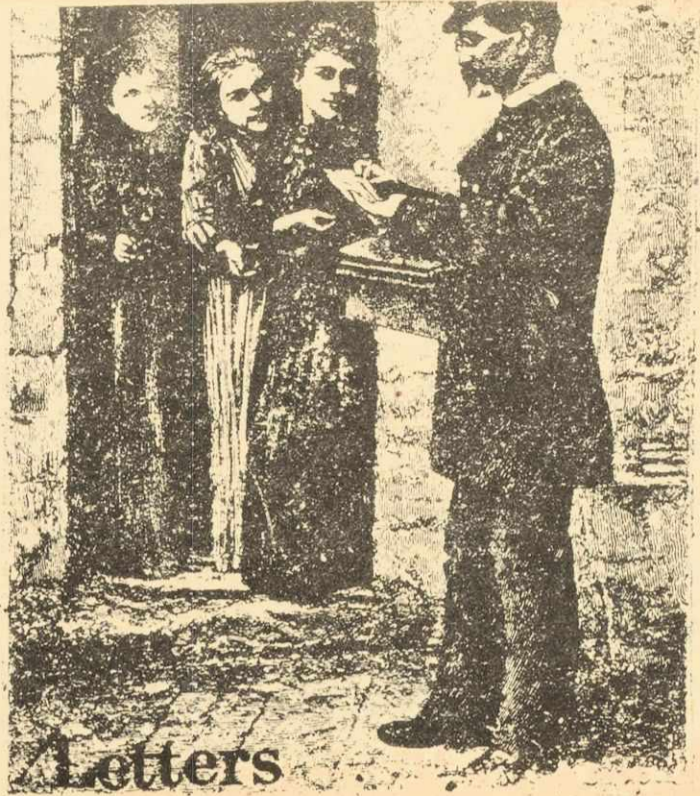
The next battle came into focus when the controllers sought to evade the tradition of naming as deputy mayor the controller with the greatest number of votes, which was Charlotte Whitton. She fought this outrageous 'oversight' of the Board until she was granted the title. Nine months later, Mayor Grenville Goodwin died and she became mayor for the fourteen remaining months in his term.

Miss Whitton ran for mayor in 1952 and 1954 and was victorious in both campaigns with winning vote margins of 3,923 and 10,000 respectively.

These were not quiet days for Ottawa's city Board Chambers, for Charlotte Whitton was fast becoming known throughout the country for the feuds she waged with controllers and aldermen. During one board meeting, which she had dominated with her strident voice she suddenly snapped: "Speak up gentlemen, I am not opposed to male participation in government." Yes, it can not be denied that she had spice mixed into her approach to politics, and life as well.

There were many who breathed a sigh of relief when Mayor Whitton "retired" in 1956. But this was not to be the end of Miss Whitton's affair with politics, only a change in level of government, for in 1958 she won the Liberal nomination to run for a seat in the House of Commons representing Ottawa West riding. This time victory was not to be her fate and she wound up 1,426 votes short of acquiring the seat. It was then back to city politics for Miss Whitton and in 1960 she was re-elected Mayor of Ottawa. This second stretch proved to be more riotous than the previous one. Board of Control sessions were regularly disrupted by bouts of name-calling and shouting. On one occasion she is reported to have terrified council members by pulling a toy pistol on them.

Although Miss Whitton did have a lively manner of expression this never seemed to deter her from reaching her goals, whether it be the reconstruction of city hall or the rebuilding of a bridge. She was forceful in both her personality as well as her notion of equality, especially in regards to women. Much of her public life was necessarily a fight with the prejudices of men against women in politics. She won it by never giving an inch.



Poster to blame

To The Gazette:

We have noticed lately several posters around campus, placed there by the Communist Party of Canada (M.L.). These posters, advertising International Women's Year, contain a photo and note concerning Louise Michel, a French Communist of 1871. We believe this to be a total distortion and misuse of the life and name of Louise Michel, in characteristic Leninist fashion. Louise Michel was a revolutionary Anarchist and feminist, and fought all of her life against the type of State Socialism propounded by the C.P.C. (M.L.), and her ideal, as well as the idea of many of the Paris Communards of 1871, was stateless socialism of the type advocated by the Anarchist theoreticians Bakunin and Kropotkin.

The Paris Commune, which is also claimed on the

poster, as an attempt by the Paris Working Class to establish the "Dictatorship of the Proletariat", was nothing of the sort. It was, in fact, an attempt by the city of Paris to attain self-government, and a modicum of Socialism. Led by the followers of Blanqui, the Jacobins, and the French section of the First International (which was at this time Anarchist and anti-Marxist), it has been claimed by revolutionaries of many shades of opinion.

While granting the C.P.C. (M.L.) its opinion on the Paris Commune (though they are shaky on historical grounds), we feel we cannot stand by and see the name of Louise Michel misused on every pillar and post. Apparently the C.P.C. (M.L.) do not have any significant women revolutionaries of their own, since they have to slander an Anarcho-feminist such as Louise Michel.

Debbie and Peter Ridley for the Halifax group of the Social Revolutionary Anarchist Federation.

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