

□ INTERVIEW □

In recent times, our leaders have deplored the absence of women in the upper echelons of government. There is much ado about giving women greater access to senior positions, about affirmative action, and so on.

There are some women who have recently attained top-level positions. What, if anything, is so different about them? Do they have to surmount greater obstacles, or expend more energy than their male counterparts in order to attain the same position? Liaison has attempted to provide some answers to these questions in an interview with Julie Loranger, who will represent Canada in Spain beginning in May.

Sylvie Gauvin: *Ms. Loranger, is the Department breaking new ground by naming a woman Ambassador?*

Julie Loranger: The obvious answer is no, since there have been female heads of mission for a number of years now. I'm not sure who was the first...

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S. G.: *Is this due to the Mulroney government's efforts to promote the status of women?*

J. L.: It's because of the interest our own minister, Mr. Clark, has taken. He is determined to see women more equitably represented throughout the system.

S. G.: *Doesn't this make you feel like "token women"?*

J. L.: It doesn't bother me at all. I consider myself to be quite capable of doing what I have been asked to do and I do not feel that I have been privileged in any way. I studied hard, I worked hard, and I am at an age where it is altogether normal for me to be where I am; many of my male colleagues are at the same point in their careers. Some may feel that because I am a woman, being named head of mission is a privilege. Personally, I do not think that we are being granted a privilege.

I know that women must be promoted more rapidly in order to make

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up for past errors, particularly in our Department, but as far as my own case is concerned, I do not think that I have been done a favour. This is a normal step in my career.

S. G.: *One often hears that in the private sector, women who want to move into senior management have to fight twice as hard as their male colleagues. What is the situation at External Affairs?*

J. L.: There is nothing special about External Affairs, except of course that we work on a career system, so in that sense the situation is unique. We still live in an age where generally, if women really want to succeed and break into upper management, they have to try to be at least as competent as, and often more competent than, the average man around them.

S. G.: *So you have to make a special effort or an extra effort if you are a woman?*

J. L.: Some women would see it as an effort. Others, I suppose, are more competent without necessarily having to make an extra effort.

Indeed, that is often the case, because a lot of young women are better educated and have a better background than a lot of their male colleagues do. The problem, in the past, was that they were not given credit for those things. They had to prove themselves. I think that now we have gone past the stage where you had to fight for recognition; now, the main thing is to be highly competent at what you do. The system is such that if you are, you have a good chance of being promoted. I'm speaking here of External Affairs. One does have to be careful, though, not to generalize and say that all individuals and all managers in External Affairs are that enlightened. I'm sure that there are still some who have trouble imagining a woman in their directorate, or in