

No john No job

by Sue McMaster

"Pee seldom, will provide my own chamber pot." I have felt like adding those terse phrases to the Additional Comments section of many an employment form during my recent search for a job in a steel plant.

As a woman, the very first excuse I always meet when hiring personnel realize I'm not applying for a secretarial position, is "I'm sorry, we don't hire women in the plant. We don't have any facilities."

Generally, I point to the women in the office and hazard a polite guess that there are washrooms for them. A woman manager put it most crudely, "Look, those toilets are too far away from the plant. Are you telling me you don't mind lining up at the urinal with the guys?" So much for that job.

One place made me so mad that I phoned the Human Rights Commission. They think I have a case and are pursuing it. After all, whether washrooms are provided close by has no bearing on my ability to do a job. It shouldn't have any bearing on whether I am considered for the position.

Often, though, the hiring personnel crumple when I point out that they do indeed, have women's washrooms. They then proceed to Objection Number Two, "It's very heavy work, you know." I am jovial, "Oh, that's O.K. I've worked as a swamper before. I'm tough. Women aren't as weak as people often make out, you know!"

At one light steel plant, the manager raised his eyebrows in reply and said, "Some of those sheets weigh 250 pounds." (Yes, and show me a man who can lift 250 pounds on his own, I thought). When I pressed him to describe the different types of jobs, I discovered several that didn't require vast muscle power.

He changed tactics then and arranged for me to tour the plant. When the tour did not intimidate me, the manager accepted my application. He also gave me his name and extension number so I could check back with him. My perseverance had paid off.

Once, I came across an employer who definitely wanted women. It was a firm that makes wire mesh. The process involves weaving. And, of course, he explained to me kindly, women are dexterous and suited to weaving. I handed in my application.

The reactions on the part of other employees was often heartening when I applied for jobs. At one huge steel warehouse, I enquired first at the office. A fifty-year-old woman got up to help me.

- "Where do I hand in an application for the plant?"
- "Who's the application for?"
- "For me."
- "Really? Well, that would be a change!"

She laughed and was obviously quite intrigued. I got instructions on whom to see, and asked whether her reaction meant that no women worked in the plant.

— "Well, not at the moment," she replied smiling. By this time, all fifteen women in the office were listening, so I turned on my heel and said, "We'll have to change all that, then, won't we!" Everyone laughed encouragement as I marched out.

In the yard, I asked a young truck driver sitting in the cab of his semi-trailer where I would find the forman.

- "What for?"
- "I want to find out whether he's hiring."
- "For who?"
- "For me."
- "Really?" It was an admiring exclamation.

He jumped out of his cab and took me all through the yard till we found the forman.

- "Hi, I'd like to know if you're hiring now?"
- "For who?"
- "For me."
- "Really?" He was puzzled. "But all we have is what you see," he said, pointing to clusters of men loading trucks with steel pipes. I did the usual explaining about being tough. His face cleared.
- "Oh, well, no problem then. No problem at all. We're really slow right now, but if you want to call back, we'll sure consider you." And he meant it.

As I walked out, the truckdriver gave me a conspiratorial smile and shouted, "Come back in three weeks."

The thought of having a woman doing that kind of a job was strange to them all, but they thought it was a good idea.

In another plant, I spoke to a doddering old man. He was swiftly defeated on Objections One and Two, and admitted that, well, he did think women would make more steady employees than some males. He suggested that I return the following week because the superintendent was in Hawaii.

The next week I spoke to the superintendent who was surprised at my willingness to work outside in the yard. He told me that some of the machines required a lot of experience. I pointed out that women could gain experience just as well as men. He agreed and accepted my application.

A group of workers overheard our exchange and one of them later relayed their comments:

- "It's disgusting they won't hire her because she's a woman."
- "Yeah, that's crap about the washrooms. She can use the men's can."
- "She should to the Human Rights Commission and then they'd have to hire her. You know, we should go on strike about this."

They certainly were on my side!

I was finally hired by a place that is training me to be a machinist. During the interview I fielded questions ranging from "Ever considered being a heavy-equipment operator?" through "What happens if you get married?" to "Do you mind foul language?" (The ideal answer to that last one is "Oh, fuck, no.") Anyway, they said they liked my spunk.

They don't know what they've let themselves in for.

"There are very few jobs that actually require a penis or vagina. All other jobs should be open to everybody."
Florynce R. Kennedy

Women are persons, court rules

by Rebecca Coulter

Fifty years ago the Judicial Committee of the Privy Council of Great Britain announced an astonishing decision — the women of Canada were indeed, persons and as such were "eligible to be summoned and become members of the Senate of Canada". This landmark judgment marked the successful conclusion of a legal struggle been initiated by five famous Alberta women.

As early as 1919 both the Federated Women's Institutes of Canada and the National Council of Women had asked the Canadian government to appoint a woman to the Senate. In 1921 the Montreal Women's Club submitted a similar request to Prime Minister Arthur Meighen. They included the suggestion that Edmonton's

Emily Murphy, the British Empire's first female police magistrate, be appointed to the Upper House.

Meighen explained the British North America Act made it impossible to appoint any woman to the Senate. Nonetheless, women continued to agitate for the admission of females to the Senate but to little avail. Finally, in 1927, Emily Murphy decided to take legal action in the matter.

This legal action was possible because the crux of the issue lay with the interpretation of the BNA Act. Sections 21 and 22 of the Act contain nothing to bar women from sitting in the Senate. Section 23, which describes the qualifications of a Senator, uses only the masculine pronoun.

Section 24, however, was of critical importance. It reads:

The Governor General

shall from Time to Time . . . summon qualified Persons to the Senate; and . . . every Person so summoned shall become and be a Member of the Senate and a Senator.

The question then became whether women were Persons or not as conceived under the Act.

Murphy resorted to a section of the Supreme Court Act allowing any five interested persons to petition for an order-in-council directing the Supreme Court of Canada to rule on a constitutional point. She sought and obtained permission to proceed with this line of attack.

As fellow petitioners, Murphy chose four other Alberta women who achievements in various fields had won them national prominence. These women were Nellie McClung of Edmonton, Louise McKinney of Claresholm, Irene Parlby of Alberta and Henrietta Muir Edwards of Macleod.

The case to determine whether or not women were Persons was heard by the Supreme Court of Canada in 1928. The Court ruled that under the BNA Act, women were not eligible for appointment to the Senate.

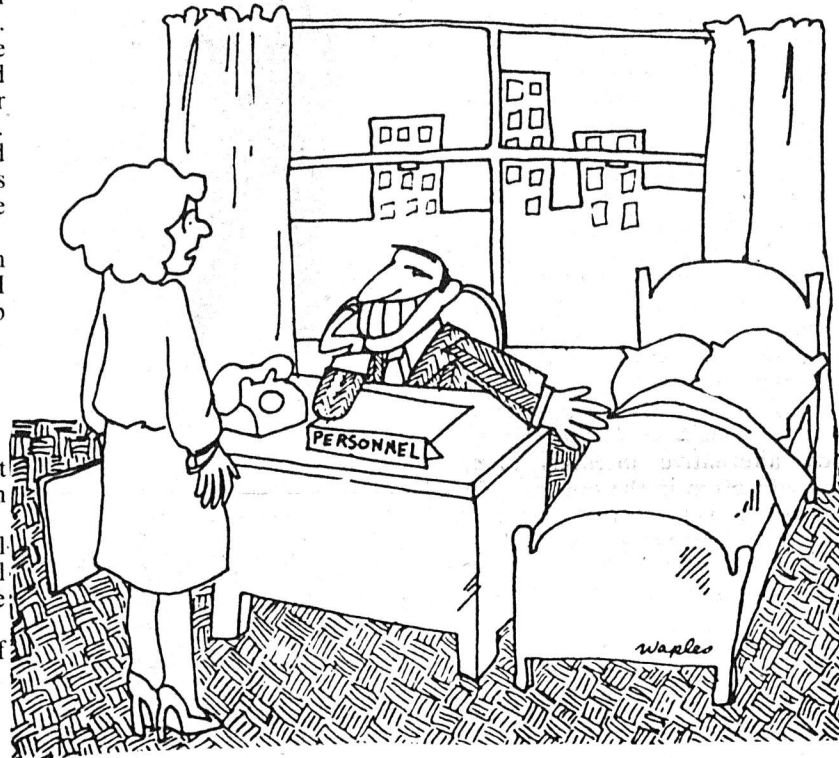
However disappointing the decision, the "five persons from Alberta" did not give up. They appealed this ruling to the Privy Council in London.

The correctness of the decision to fight to the end was revealed when, on October 18, 1929, Lord Sankey delivered the decision of the Privy Council. Recognizing the changing times, the Privy Council reversed the ruling of the Canadian Supreme Court and said, in part,

Their lordships have come to the conclusion that the word persons includes members of the male and female sex, and that therefore . . . women are eligible to be summoned and become members of the Senate of Canada.

Another blow had been struck for the emancipation of women. While none of the famous five persons were ever appointed to the Senate, another woman, Cairine Wilson, became a Senator in 1931.

This year, women's groups across Canada are planning activities to mark the fiftieth anniversary of the Women's Persons case. Further information on these plans is available from the National Action Committee on the Status of Women, No. 306, 40 St. Clair Ave. East, Toronto, Ontario. M4T 1M9.



Androgyny — the key

Men and women are searching for a key to equality of the sexes and liberation from sex role stereotyping.

Androgyny is such a key.

Androgyny is often confused with hermaphroditism and bisexuality, but the confusion is easily dispelled by defining the three terms.

Hermaphroditism is a physiological manifestation in which an individual has both

male and female physical attributes. Bisexuality simply refers to a person's preference for both male and female sex partners.

Androgyny is a combination of the best of male and female personality traits to form a completely liberated individual. It does not imply that the individual will be either a "feminine" male or a "butch" female.

Women's studies courses

by Sue Smith

The University of Alberta does not have a regular program of women's studies. However, there are courses offered with this focus in a number of different faculties and departments.

According to history professor Dr. Pat Prestwich, there are two main reasons why Women's Studies Courses should not form a separate program. First, the name would "isolate" the program and would lessen its general appeal. Second, the program might end up like Black Studies Courses in the United States. It might not prepare people for jobs and could therefore be "self-defeating".

Dr. Tova Yedlin, chairper-

son of the ad hoc committee on Women's Studies Courses at the University and professor in the Division of East European Studies, has compiled a list of courses dealing with Women's Studies.

In Women's Studies courses, she states, the emphasis is on "introducing women's history, their position in society, and their problems and possibilities." Prestwich, who teaches *Introductory History of Women*, says that Women's Studies Courses are beneficial to the discipline that offers them. "Any discipline that looks at society must look at women, for one cannot separate women from society."

She adds that the emphasis of Women's Studies Courses is to

"get more people studying women rather than creating a separate discipline."

Faculties and departments offering Women's Studies Courses are Business Administration and Commerce, Sociology, Physical Education, English, History, Home Economics, Psychology and East European Studies. People interested in courses offered under Women's Studies should contact the particular faculty department, or for general information call Dr. Yedlin at 432-3231.

An information booth on Women's Studies Courses will be open in Humanities 1-11 Saturday March 10 (for Varsity Guest Weekend).