

CROSSCANADA

Women MPs still too few

VICTORIA (CUP) — In Liberal Leader Jean Chretien's victory speech he lovingly thanked his wife, Aline, for her consistent support throughout his political career.

Though it's comforting women are being thanked by their outstanding husbands, it's a scandal they aren't being recognized at the polls.

Election '93 saw 50 women elected to Parliament — a record number, but still only one-sixth of the members.

The Liberal party, sweeping 177 seats, is represented by 33 women. Despite 40 per cent of the Liberal candidates being women, only 18 per cent were elected.

Seventy per cent of NDP candidates fielded in Election '93 were women. But the only woman to be elected was Audrey McLaughlin, who in 1989 was the first woman elected to lead a federal political party.

In the Reform Party, approximately 10 per cent of the candidates fielded were women. Reform's first MP, Deborah Grey, was elected in a by-election in 1990. Election '93 saw six of the party's 52 seats taken by women, including Grey.

A worker at Reform candidate Patrick Hunt's Victoria headquarters said many women sought nomination for the riding, but "it's the party that elects the candidate that best represents the riding."

Intimidation was a possible explanation for the low number of women Reform candidates, she said. "Many women don't like the negative attitude in Parliament. Some of the old boys, you know..."

Judy Rebick, former president of the National Action Committee on the Status of Women (NAC), agreed that the environment could be intimidating for Reform women. "Some of the Reform candidates make John Crosbie look like Gloria Steinem," she said. She cited a recent poll in which 68 per cent of Reform party members said they opposed abortion.

Rebick is concerned that the defeat of the Conservative Party and NDP will be blamed on the gender of their leaders.

Sunera Thobani, current president of NAC, insists Kim Campbell "didn't do politics differently" and the shift in vote had more to do with a shift in voters' concerns.

'Obscene' text ban reversed

TORONTO (CUP) — Canada Customs has reversed a decision to bar a course textbook from entering the country after Trent University appealed the ruling.

Last month, Canada Customs at Fort Erie, Ont., barred a shipment of *Man Sitting in the Corridor* by Marguerite Duras, saying it contained "sex with violence." The book was to be taught in two Trent cultural studies courses.

The university appealed the ruling last week, and on October 28 an embarrassed customs official called Trent from Ottawa to say they'd reviewed the book more carefully and didn't have any problems with it, according to Trent bookstore manager Ralph Colley.

Don Labelle, senior communications officer for Revenue Canada, said Customs usually immediately reviews the decisions of border officials to ban books. But in this case, the shipper — United Parcel Service — sent the shipment back to the publisher immediately after the ruling, so Customs didn't have a copy of the book to review, Labelle said.

"Shouldn't it be time to separate the question of fruit and vegetables and firearms from literature?", asked cultural studies professor Zsu Zsa Baross, who ordered the Duras book for her undergraduate course, "The Making of the Modern Body."

"It's a very disturbing book, but suppose I was teaching a course on obscenity. How would I teach it without examples?"

Trent isn't the first university bookstore to have shipments detained by customs. McMaster University, Waterloo University, and the universities of Calgary and Manitoba have all had books barred in the last year.

Ironically, Duras' book is already available at other libraries and bookstores in Canada, such as Robarts Library at the University of Toronto.

Queen's paper goes under

KINGSTON (CUP) — Queen's University students have delivered a mandate to end funding for *Surface*, the often-controversial student paper.

In an Arts and Science Undergraduate Society (ASUS) referendum last week, 55.6 per cent voted against the paper keeping its funding from the society.

"We're disappointed," said *Surface* editor Junipero Lagtapon, "but we tried hard, we did the best that we can."

David Anderson, *Surface* production manager, said the paper argued that it was an alternative voice to the main student paper, the *Queen's Journal*.

"We tried to get our message across, that our mandate is to provide a forum for marginalized forms of expression on the campus."

Andrew Dick, leader of the No campaign, called the referendum a great victory. "Students have had the chance to speak in the most democratic way possible. They have said that they don't want to continue mandatory funding of *Surface*."

Surface has been a lightning rod for controversy at Queen's for over two years. In October of 1991, its editors received death threats after printing a poem that criticized white heterosexual males.

news



GRAPHIC: THE FULCRUM

Province issues weak explanation

Native students denied funds

So often overlooked, aboriginal students in Nova Scotia were dealt another insult when federal policy changes left female native students without support for childcare. The provincial government was slow to step in on their behalf.

by Emily Macnaughton

An intergovernmental mix-up which denied subsidized day care to at least five Nova Scotia native university students has been resolved to the satisfaction of all parties involved, claim government sources.

But some native students disagree. "We're relieved that this crisis has been resolved but we're not happy," says Dalhousie Transition Year Program student Cynthia Brooks. "We received no notice, no reason for the decision, no written policy announcing the decision and no one apologized. We've been told that we'll be reimbursed but I'm not so sure."

The initial decision by the provincial government denied native students day care subsidies, as a result of confusion stemming from policy changes by the federal Department of Indian and Northern Affairs. This decision was later dismissed at a meeting at the Micmac Native Friendship Centre on October 20. Present at this meeting were Minister of Community Services Dr. Jim Smith, Aboriginal Affairs Liaison Officer Alan Clark, representatives of the province's Day Care Services, the federal Department of Indian and Northern Affairs and members of the aboriginal community. Native students now eligible for subsidies will be reimbursed for their day care costs dating from September 1, 1993.

This meeting was a result of repeated inquiries to the Department of

Community Services by people inflamed with what they saw as a discriminatory decision.

The students discovered in September that they had been denied day care subsidization on the basis of their native status after enrolling at university and securing day care seats for their children. Unable to afford the full cost of day care, students expressed a concern that they would have to leave university.

The experience has left some students feeling unsupported.

Not only Halifax students, but women in the Truro-Millbrook area were also affected by the confusion.

Students were reportedly told that an actual policy denying natives day care existed. When Brooks requested a copy of this policy, she claims to have been told by Day Care Services that "it was more of a verbal agreement."

The real problem was confusion within the bureaucracy over which level of government was responsible for funding native students, says provincial director of Day Care Services

Greg Gammon. The Postsecondary Student Support System, offered at the federal level by the Department of Indian and Northern Affairs, previously provided financial assistance for native students. Changes made to the system in 1989-1990 made this source of funding insufficient. Day care responsibility has since been delegated to the provinces.

Presently, the grant of a subsidized day care seat is based on an assessment of an applicant's social needs.

When asked why the Department of Community Services was unaware of the changes to the federal program, Gammon replied, "It is not practice for the federal government to notify provincial governments of these changes. There is no mechanism in place to ensure this information is passed along. It is unfortunate that this had to happen but at least when there is a lack of communication, things like this come up and changes can be made."

"The Nova Scotia government is very committed to acknowledging the First Nations," says Mi'kmaq Child Development Centre coordinator Christine Gibson. "In the future they'll know to consult the Department of Indian and Northern Affairs and the community before making these decisions."

However, the experience has left some students feeling unsupported. "I was shocked," says Mount St. Vincent University student April Maloney. "I've never really experienced discrimination but this made me realize that it really happens. I wasn't prepared to let this situation go without a fight."

"We regret that students were inconvenienced, but we are pleased to address the issue now," says Gammon. "If any confusion remains among those affected, they may contact me. I'll do my best to answer their questions."

At present there remains no clear course of action for Day Care Services and no strong decisions have been made regarding the misunderstanding.

Canadian University Press (CUP) is a national organization made up of over 40 student papers from St. John's to Victoria. CUP enables student papers to exchange stories and ideas through the wire service, regional and national conferences. As a founding member of CUP, the *Dalhousie Gazette* makes sure that our university news becomes national news.