

Women's liberation movement not furthering participation in political process, panel says

By ROSEMARY McCracken
The women's liberation movement shows few signs of furthering the participation of women in various aspects of the political process, said a panel discussing Women on the Move, Nov. 14.

Canada has 5 women in the 264 seat House of Commons and 6 in the 102 member Senate. Female political representation, in Canada, as in other nations, comes nowhere near the number of women, in terms of population.

The panel discussion, sponsored by Women for Political Action, was presented by the Toronto public af-

fairs department at the St. Lawrence Centre, in an attempt to explore women's place in the political process. The chief question asked the 5 panelists was "What can women do to gain political power?"

The members of the panel were Sophie Firth, "working class writer," author of *The Urbanization of Sophia Firth*; Jeanette Lavell, Canadian Indian and fighter for native women's rights; Sylvia Spring, first Canadian woman to make a feature film; Dorothy Thomas, Toronto alderwoman and member of the city hall task force on woman; and, finally, Anne Wanstall, consumer specialist.

WOMEN NEED SELF-ESTEEM

Thomas stated that in our society women are neither conditioned nor

trained to become politicians. She stressed that a woman needs the societal conditioning to be able to perform in a political post as well as a man. It is important that a woman have a proper sense of self-esteem to convince others of the political issues she represents.

Lavell lost her Indian legal rights two years ago when she married a non-Indian. She said she deplores the Indian Rights Act which "has one set of rules for men and another for women." Indian men can marry a non-Indian woman and she is automatically given Indian rights.

"Because of this discrimination only one-third of the Canadian Indian population is legally recognized as being Indian. This is frustrating because even the Indian spokesmen are very often not recognized."

THE NATIVE WAY

According to Lavell, the native way of Indian self-government included women. But now, the form of government "imposed" upon Indians by the Indian Rights Act forces Indian women to be treated differently than Indian men.

The situation of native women is thus allied with the problem of women's place in the government process. It is for this reason, Lavell concluded, that Indian women see the importance of furthering the participation of women in the political process.

Representatives from the Liberal, Progressive Conservative and New Democratic Parties were present at the meeting.

A question posed to them was "What are Canadian political parties actually doing to help and encourage women to enter politics?"

The Liberal representative said each individual riding must send at least one woman delegate to the Liberal convention. In 1971, a Task Force was commissioned to investigate conditions of women across Canada, documenting those items from the Royal Commission on the Status of Women which it felt were priority issues.

The NDP representative said NDP policy states that a woman working equally with a man over a period of years (in the home or in business) has an equal right to their joint proceeds. It was felt that such an attempt at economic liberation would help free a woman to pursue political interests.

According to Joyce Boyden, the Canadian Conservative Party is not doing anything to encourage women to be good candidates. "We aren't encouraging women because they are women, but rather because they are

capable individuals."

Women For Political Action is a Canadian multi-artisan group formed to gain equal representation for women at all levels of government.

Delegates vote for Ont. union

LONDON (CUP) - Delegates from ten university staff associations met at the University of Western Ontario here recently to form an Ontario union of staff associations.

The union hopes to become a strong voice for the separate staff associations.

It intends to push for standardization of such matters as wages, job descriptions and fringe benefits at the various universities.

The delegates are optimistic that the new union will wield effective bargaining power against university administrations.

The funds necessary to run the new organization will have to come from the staff members themselves, but the fact that the vote forming the union was unanimous seemed to signify that members feel the need outweighs the cost.

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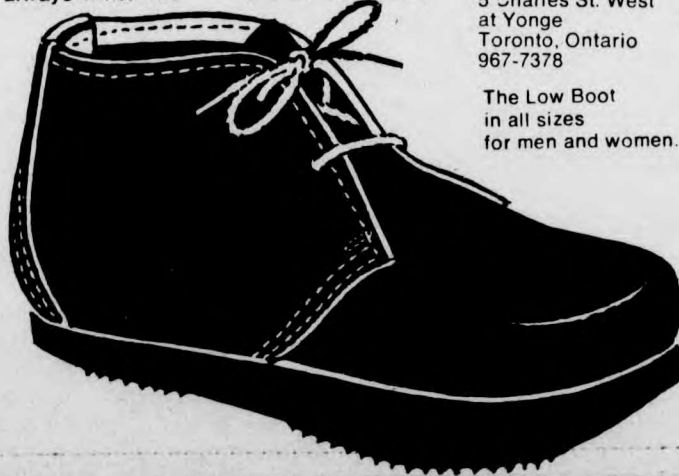
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