

News of the arts

Governor General's awards honour anniversary of women as persons

October 18 marked the fiftieth anniversary of the day women in Canada and the British Empire won the legal right to be recognized as persons.

This year, in commemoration of the anniversary, the first Governor-General's Persons Awards were presented to seven women in recognition of their efforts to advance the status of Canadian women. The awards are to be presented annually, said David MacDonald, Minister responsible for the Status of Women.

Recipients of the medals, who were recently honoured at Government House, were:

- Elizabeth Bagshaw of Hamilton, a general practitioner who pioneered efforts to provide women with information and advice on birth control;
- Thérèse Casgrain of Montreal, who was instrumental in obtaining the vote for women in Quebec and ensuring women's right to participate in municipal politics. She was later appointed to the Senate;
- Marion Royce of Toronto, who contributed to the education of women through volunteer work with the Young Women's Christian Association and membership in the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women;
- Grace MacInnis of Vancouver, who staunchly advocated women's rights in the House of Commons while serving as a member of Parliament from 1965-1974;
- Eileen Tallman-Sufrin of White Rock, British Columbia, who worked as a labour organizer to improve working conditions for Canadian women employed by banks, offices and retailers;
- Mary Two Axe Early of Caughnawaga, Quebec, founder and vice-president of Indian Rights for Indian Women, for her efforts to ensure rights for native Indian women and;
- Sophia Dixon of Saskatoon, past president of the United Farm Women, who worked in support of the co-operative movement and rural women's organizations.

Women's struggle to become "persons"

According to a British common law decision of 1876 women were "persons in matters of pains and penalties, but not persons in matters of rights and privileges". From the beginning of her appointment in 1916 as first woman police magistrate in Canada, Emily Murphy

knew that her office as a city magistrate in Edmonton, Alberta, was a privilege and not one she was legally capable of holding. Mrs. Murphy began a vigorous press campaign, using as her platform the eligibility of women to sit in the Canadian Senate. If the Canadian Government were to appoint a woman to the Senate, they would then be "persons" with attendant rights and privileges.

At the end of 11 years on the bench, with no further word from the federal administration, Judge Murphy decided that the ambiguous status of women needed to be clarified. She had discovered that any five interested persons had the right to petition the Government for a ruling on a constitutional point. She chose her four co-workers carefully for their ability to arouse public opinion. Henrietta Muir Edwards, Louise McKinney, Nellie McClung, Dr. Irene Parlby joined her in signing a petition requesting an amendment to the British North America Act to grant women "person" status and eligibility for the Senate.

"Persons case"

The ensuing legal case, known as the "Persons case" was heard in the Supreme Court of Canada and the decision handed down on April 24, 1928, held that women were not persons and as such were not qualified to hold public office.

The "famous five" as they came to be called met again and decided to try their last course, the Privy Council — the final court of appeal in the British Empire. On October 18, 1929, the Lord Chancellor, Lord Sankey, announced that women were persons, that the word "person" applied to either sex and that this decision was to apply to the whole British Empire.

However, the first woman Senator was not Emily Murphy, but Cairine Wilson appointed in 1931. (Emily Murphy, a Conservative was bypassed by the Liberal government of Prime Minister William Lyon Mackenzie King.)

In a private ceremony at the Supreme Court of Canada last spring, Lynn McDonald, president of the National Action Committee (NAC) on the Status of Women presented Chief Justice Bora Laskin with a scroll and a plaque of the silver medallion minted in commemoration of the "Persons case".

Technology trade show in Boston

More than 100 Canadian companies are displaying their products at the Canadian High Technology Marketplace show in Boston, October 30 and 31, in an effort to share in United States defence contracts worth about \$7 million.

The trade show, the largest ever undertaken by the Canadian Department of Industry, Trade and Commerce, is co-sponsored by the Canadian Consulate General in Boston as part of the Federal Government's Export '79 program. The program is designed to assist Canadian companies to increase their exports to the U.S. or to enter the U.S. market for the first time. More than 2,000 invitations were sent to leading U.S. buyers and procurement officials.

The New England area contains the second highest concentration of high technology industry in the United States, and New England companies receive a large number of defence and commercial contracts. Canadian companies are searching primarily for sub-contracts because most of the American representatives to the show are from firms already supplying defence products through prime contracts.

Duty free

Under the terms of the Canada-U.S. Defence Production Sharing Arrangements, Canadian companies can compete for most of this high technology business on an equal basis with U.S. manufacturers and virtually all Canadian products destined to defence contractors can enter the U.S. duty-free. Provisions of the "Buy American Act" have also been waived for a large range of Canadian supplies under the terms of these arrangements.

Although wages are usually slightly higher in Canada than they are in the U.S., the lower value of the Canadian dollar compared with the U.S. dollar may give Canadian firms a price advantage in this market. In addition, Canadian specialization in relatively short production runs of extremely advanced electronic components may also tempt potential buyers.

Products and technology being promoted at the show include: long-range patrol aircraft, new fighter aircraft, patrol frigate, the Canadair *Challenger*, and steel rolling mill and pulp and paper equipment.