

### The passing of Charlotte Whitton

Charlotte Whitton, the first woman mayor of a Canadian city and the first woman to hold any civic office in Ottawa, died of congestive heart failure in the capital on January 25. She was in her seventy-ninth year.

Dr. Whitton, who had been in retirement for two years because of a broken hip, served Ottawa for more than 20 years, first as controller in 1950, then mayor (1951, 1952, 1954, 1960 and 1962), alderman (1966) and regional councillor, until she retired.

An outspoken and often controversial figure, she once summed up her own philosophy in her mother's words: "Children, you don't have to fight. But if someone wants to scrap it's your Christian duty to meet them half way."



Charlotte Whitton, during one of her terms as Mayor of Ottawa in 1956.

Born in Renfrew, Ontario, Charlotte Elizabeth Hezeltyne Whitton was the daughter of John Whitton, of Yorkshire descent and Elizabeth Langan Whitton, of Irish extraction. She entered Queen's University, Kingston, with scholarships in six subjects and left in 1918 with a master's degree in English, history and pedagogy. Hockey, in which she excelled, was a favourite sport. Her photo caption in a Queen's year-book states: "She will brook no tarrying; where she comes the winds must stir."

This diminutive, aggressive woman

was well known as a fighter and a tough opponent in all her endeavours.

"She was never at a loss for words, usually the right words, and very often the last," said another former Ottawa mayor, now Judge Kenneth Fogarty. Of herself she once announced publicly: "I've been the best mayor this city ever had." During her tenure, a new city hall was constructed, bridges built, sewage treatment improved and the Ottawa Queensway highway got under way.

Her numerous disagreements with city aldermen and controllers frequently made national headlines. At one meeting which she had dominated she suddenly snapped: "Speak up gentlemen, I am not opposed to male participation in government." At another, she physically attacked a controller after a remark which she interpreted as insulting her spinsterhood. Asked later if she minded the publicity incurred by the incident she said, "Of course I don't mind the publicity. I won the fight."

#### Varied career

During her career, Dr. Whitton was a social worker, writer lecturer, the first executive director of the Canadian Welfare Council, Assessor to the Commission on Child Protection of the League of Nations, Geneva; delegate to the Social Questions Commission and, during the Second World War, a Government consultant on the transportation of British children to Canada.

Miss Whitton first became known in 1947, when *New Liberty* magazine published an article called "Babies for Export", based on her report that Canadian children being supported by welfare were being placed in the United States. She had been conducting a welfare survey in Alberta; the Alberta government sued the writer, Miss Whitton and the magazine for libel. The charges were suspended at the opening of the trial and a provincial royal commission, which investigated the situation, made 32 recommendations, one of which was that placing welfare children in the U.S. be stopped.

Many are the tales of what sometimes were called her "Whitticisms". Once, when she was mayor, she met the Lord Mayor of London at a public function. Both were wearing their ceremonial chains of office. In Dr. Whitton's words: "When he leaned over to sniff

a rose I was wearing on an evening gown he asked coyly, 'If I smell your rose will you blush?' And I leaned forward and replied, 'If I pull your chain will you flush?'"

Always encouraging women to enter public life she said: "Whatever women do they must do twice as well as men to be thought half as good." Then she added: "Luckily, it's not that difficult."

In 1972, the City of Ottawa named the council chamber Whitton Hall. In expressing appreciation for the honour, Dr. Whitton couldn't resist recalling how once the Ottawa council had nearly named a sewage-treatment plant after her.

Charlotte Elizabeth Whitton, O.C., C.B.E., M.A., D.C.L., LL.D., chosen six times as "Canada's Woman of the Year", was given the first lying-in-state ceremony ever for a former mayor, and a civic funeral on January 27. The Right Reverend William Robinson, Anglican Bishop of Ottawa, who conducted the service, described her in his eulogy as a woman of many personalities and many talents, a person of many friends who drew admiration even from those who opposed her. "And," he said, "long before anyone was talking about women's lib, she was women's lib incarnate."

Mrs. Jules Léger, wife of the Governor General, and Leader of the Opposition Robert Stanfield were among those who attended the service. Former Prime Minister John Diefenbaker was one of 12 honorary pallbearers.

### Canada supports goals of International Women's Year

*The Prime Minister made the following statement to the House of Commons on January 22:*

...As this session of Parliament reconvenes, we are entering not only a new year, but a unique and special period — International Women's Year.

International Women's Year, 1975, was proclaimed by the United Nations. It is a year which has three goals — peace, development and equality. Canada, as a member nation, has undertaken a substantial program of support for this special year; through legislation, through funding of groups and organizations, through the promotion