

President of our status speaks



by Lisa Lachance

Katherine MacDonald is President of the Nova Scotia Advisory Council on the Status of Women. This provincial organization works with women across the province on equality issues. *The Gazette* spoke with her earlier this week.

Gaz: I'll begin by asking a question Cathy Jones asked you at the "Woman is Right": "As the President of our Status, how are we doing?"

KM: I was just reading through some of the reports emerging from Nova Scotia for the Beijing Conference. Although I think we've made marginal gains in some areas for some women, but the last ten years have been a slide back. If you're young and with an university education then the wage gap may appear smaller, but that's only because wages in general are lower. Women who face double discrimination, like Black, native, lesbians and women with disabilities, are facing a widening gap. And not just in the wage gap but overall, in poverty, opportunities, etc.

Gaz: So do find your job depressing sometimes?

KM: I find it invigorating because I'm really interested in social action issues...making changes in a broad policy perspective. I get to meet so many interesting women across Nova Scotia doing fascinating work about issues they're passionate about.

But when you look at statistics

about violence against women and employment equity, it can be depressing.

Gaz: You've been really involved in the Beijing process, can you tell me about that? (Author's note: Beijing is the United Nations Fourth World Conference on Women taking place in Beijing China in September, 1995)

KM: My involvement comes out of my volunteer work with the Planned Parenthood movement, which I've been involved in for about ten years. The Planned Parenthood movement was heavily involved in the World Population Conference last year. It was the first time an international commitment was for health choices and education for women and girls. It's an exciting process to be involved in. Because of Planned Parenthood and the Advisory Council I will be an NGO delegate to the Preparatory Conference in New York in March.

Gaz: What does the Beijing process offer Nova Scotia women?

KM: I look at the way the public attention around violence against women has changed in the past five years and I would link that back to international agreements like the Convention to Eliminate All Forms of Discrimination Against Women. It's because Canada has signed international agreements that we have programs like police sensitization.

The trickle down effect has been amazing: Women at the local community level who are working at the local level may not realize this sort of connection.

Gaz: The Advisory Council lobbies the provincial government on

women's issues. How have you found the response of this government?

KM: It's the same problem at any level of government or society. There aren't enough women making decisions from a feminist or women's perspective... to get the whole picture. The government can be willing but they don't know what you mean when you say gender analysis. The political will is there in some parts of the process, particularly around issues of violence against women.

Gaz: What have some of the major challenges of the Council been dur-

ing your term as President?

KM: The major aim is to diversify the organization the Advisory Council. The next step I see is to make links with women we haven't heard from before.

Gaz: People around *The Gazette* office were wondering what your plan for International Women's Day were?

KM: Well, it's a whole week really. Myself, I'm doing a large number of speaking engagements. Also, the Council's 1-800 number acts as a provincial hotline for what's going on.

Gaz: So what's your budget reaction?

KM: I was looking last night for any indication that the government has a vision that includes women. I didn't see a vision much less a vision that includes women. When I was 18, I had a baby, I was in university. I had subsidized daycare, decent student loans and social assistance and I got through law school. In a year's time I don't think someone in that position will have that option. I was able to access that Canada that we all believe in.

CFS fights pull-out referendums

by John Besley, The Charlatan

OTTAWA (CUP) — The 440,000-member Canadian Federation of Students (CFS) is facing 10 membership referendums across the country this semester, after dealing with 10 others earlier this year.

At a referendum held this past October, Dalhousie students voted to withdraw from CFS. Of the 16 per cent of Dal students who voted, almost 900 students voted to leave CFS, while almost 700 voted to continue being members.

So far, six schools voted to stay with the CFS, and four voted to leave. The organization is doing well considering the criticism it faces from its member schools.

Those that want to pull out cite the organization's high cost, oversized bureaucracy and its left-wing approach to politics. Some large schools such as the University of Toronto are not CFS members because of the equal power given to small schools.

If the ten associations vote to revoke their membership, CFS mem-

bership would drop by almost 60,000 students.

But many more schools seem poised to join to take advantage of the CFS's lobbying power, resources and democratic structure. A coal-

CFS is facing 10 membership referendums across the country this semester, after dealing with 10 others this year

tion of 27 schools in Newfoundland is considering joining the CFS.

The Newfoundland Federation of Students (NFS) would boost the CFS's membership to 89 from 65 institutions. Three NFS schools are

already CFS members.

Craig Adams, the CFS representative for Newfoundland, predicts the merger will take place in May.

"CFS is looking at [the NFS] as one of the brightest spots in the country."

Brad Lavigne, vice-president external for the graduate student association at Montreal's Concordia University, says his association has been very satisfied since joining the CFS in September.

"Since we joined the CFS, we have done more federal relations work than we have since we have been around."

But Darrell Hynes, a student union vice-president at Memorial University of Newfoundland, which is a member of the CFS, says his association has lost its focus of helping schools.

"I'm tired of going to CFS meetings and arguing whether we should boycott Pepsi or have macaroni for dinner," Hynes told *The Muse*, the student newspaper at Memorial.

"The CFS is so concerned with solving all the problems of the world that they're forgetting their own members."

1994-95 SCHOOL YEAR CFS REFERENDUMS

Schools that voted to pull out of the CFS:

1. Dalhousie University, Halifax
2. Carleton—graduate students
3. Langara College, Vancouver, B.C.
4. University-College of the Cariboo, Kamloops, B.C.

Schools that voted to stay in the CFS:

1. Carleton—undergraduates
2. Ryerson Polytechnical University, Toronto
3. Acadia University, Wolfville, N.S.

Schools that joined the CFS this year:

1. York University, Toronto — graduates
2. Concordia University, Montreal—graduates

Schools that are going to have referendums on CFS membership:

1. Mount Saint Vincent University, Halifax
2. University of Windsor
3. Mount Alison University, Sackville, N.B.
4. University of New Brunswick-Fredericton
5. University of New Brunswick-St. Thomas
6. University of New Brunswick-St. John's
7. University of Prince Edward Island, Charlottetown



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