

"I don't want a hyena in petticoats talking politics to me. I want a sweet gentle creature to bring me my slippers." SIR R. P. ROBLIN, PREMIER OF MANITOBA, 1900-15.

they had not married and found "their reasons were the same as mine; the *person* could not be subjected."



Marriage was indeed an impediment to achievement. In early Québec single women, most particularly those in religious orders, conceived and established permanent institutions of great value and efficiency. Mlle. Jeanne Mance (who took vows but never actually entered a convent) built the first hospital in Québec, Hôtel Dieu, and staffed it with nuns of the Hospitalières de Saint Joseph; these women were recognized to be as capable of administering affairs as men. (Québec nuns maintained the tradition; in the nineteenth century there were ten thousand in the Province who ran schools, hospitals and orphanages of a quality comparable with similar, man-run institutions anywhere in the world.)

Single women in Québec who were not nuns also had certain established rights. They could hold property, and for a short time, between 1809 and 1834, women property owners (who were necessarily single) could vote. The Civil Code of the Province of 1866 put no limitations whatever on the property rights of single women, but married women were chattels. Under the Custom of Paris, enacted in 1510 and introduced to New France in 1627, they were legally incompetent and absolutely excluded from holding public office. They (and their single sisters) were not given the full franchise until 1940.

In the rest of Canada, the situation was different, though it would be hard to say if it were better or worse. There was no group of women with the authority of the Québec nuns, but the married women outside Québec by and large achieved status, as professionals and as persons, sooner than the married women within. Ontario passed the Married Woman's Property Act in 1872. Queen's University in Kingston admitted women in 1869, and in 1879 King's College in Halifax granted a B.A. to Sarah Maude Doane. (She declined to attend the convocation "because of all those men.") In the early twentieth century the Prairies were the most fertile area for women's growth; Emily Murphy and four other celebrated Prairie women forced the Canadian Government

to recognize Canadian women as "persons" in the eyes of the law.

What are the prospects today? Good but not certain, and in many areas disturbing. As Marc Lalonde, the Canadian Minister of Health and Welfare, put it: "Our society still has a long way to go in recognizing the equality of sexes in fact as in law. . . . Is it part of human nature or an inevitable consequence of biology that the average earnings of Canadian women participating full-time in the work force should be about half that of male workers? We can surely imagine a better society in which this gap would not be so great." In the last decade that gap has actually grown. (See page 3.)

But the progress is real, if not rapid. When Ms. Bird's Royal Commission made its report five years ago, it made 122 recommendations for Federal Government action. Seventy-nine have been partially or fully implemented.

The official International Women's Year is with us, and in this issue CANADA TODAY/D'AUJOURD'HUI attempts to tell you something about a subject which is as complex as the state of humanity. There are sketches of some great women of the past — present progress is built on past foundations — and it is interesting to note that they all lived a long time (devotion to freedom may be as vital to the body as it is to the soul). There are sketches of women now who are achieving things, and there are statistics which speak for themselves.



Women also speak for themselves. Most men have regarded women with affection but without much understanding; they honestly thought, and some still honestly think, that women want to stay home, keep house and raise babies beyond all else. Nellie McClung said long ago: "The stationary female and the wide-ranging male is the world's accepted arrangement, but the belief that a woman must cherish no hope or ambition of her own is both cruel and unjust." And a Canadian Broadcasting Corporation woman employee said only the other day: "I've been a secretary for six years, and whether you're a script assistant or a secretary . . . the problem remains the same: '*Servir ses Grands Seigneurs.*'"

"Politics unsettles men, and unsettled men means unsettled bills, broken furniture, broken homes and divorce. Men's place is on the farm." NELLIE MCCLUNG, HAVING SOME FUN AT THE EXPENSE OF PREMIER ROBLIN.