

Come Celebrate!

The Provincial Advisory Council is holding its Twentieth Anniversary Gala Evening on Wednesday, November 29, 2000 beginning at 7:00 p.m. at Holiday Inn, Portugal Cove Road, St. John's. During the evening we will hear from the women who led the Advisory Council from 1980 - 1995: Ann Bell and Wendy Williams, and current President Joyce Hancock. As well, we will be unveiling the newly created design to represent the Advisory Council as we move into the millennium. Entertainment will feature the Ennis Sisters and Amy House and an LCD presentation on the successful Provincial Women's Conference and World March of Women held during the Thanksgiving weekend in Gander.

Federal Election - Where are the Women . . . Where are the Values?

As I move around the province and speak to women, I am amazed by their emotions around this federal election. It ranges from anger to indifference. There is no real sense of political excitement. If there is excitement it is the kind you'd recognize in a sports arena. The kind of excitement generated when teams scurry about for a goal, a punch or a basket. But not the kind of excitement one would expect to see within a democratic exercise supposedly based on Canadian values. Perhaps it is all this talk about "values." There is something about politicians' use of the word that rings hollow. Perhaps women know that this election is not about values. It is certainly not about the values I hear women articulate when they talk about their community, their children, and their hopes for the future.

Women point to the fear mongering and lack of respect from politicians who are now courting our vote. The media has a decided lack of respect for our understanding. They want us to believe that this is a "two horse race." And yes my sports analogy is deliberate.

We are asked to choose between two parties, one that depleted our social programs through the mid 90's, garnered an EI surplus on the back of Canadian workers, increased child (family) poverty and homelessness, continued to impoverish the have-not provinces through decreasing the federal transfer payments and consistently destroyed our health care system. The other party would have us believe that the hard won rights of people on reproductive choice, human rights, the necessary intervention of the federal government in assisting regions economically are unnecessary and need to be revisited. Indeed if enough reactionary sentiment could be stirred up they might have us living with a privatized health care system and voting again on the death penalty.

This is a scary, unnecessary election. All that we hold dear is up for grabs and could be squandered by politicians who have no understanding of basic community values. Indeed, women are quick to point out that this election is not about values and rather than the question "Where are the Women?" we might well ask . . . "Where are the values?"

I am concerned about the apathy and indifference that women are speaking about. Concerned that we will be angered into not voting or believing the lie that we have only two choices. In this pre-election

period we urge women to ask the value laden questions from those who court our vote. But please vote ~ when politicians toy with our social and economic lives our only democratic response is "to vote."

Vote: not out of fear but from knowledge.

Provincial Women's Conference - World March of Women, Reflections

On Thanksgiving weekend over 430 women converged on Gander to dialogue, celebrate and mobilize. These women came from more than seventy-five different communities throughout Newfoundland and Labrador and more than sixty of the participants came from Labrador communities and regions.

A review of 300 evaluations shows an overwhelming endorsement of the conference. Some of you felt that the panels, which featured women (many of whom were speaking for the first time) speaking about their lives and communities as providing a connection to your lives. Others enjoyed women talking about leadership and the values and style of women's leadership. Many noted the address of the Status of Women Minister as the first experience they had whereby a politician talked about politics in the context of her total life. Still others admired the strength, conviction and analysis in the words of our conference keynote speaker, Judy Rebick

Yet, for many it was the very simple things that mattered. The comfortable roundtable discussions allowing every women to be validated. The delicious molasses buns and bakeapple squares baked by Alma Rowsell of Gander. The Bread and Roses program on Sunday morning with its humble spirituality and powerful message. The bus drivers from Burin and Conne River who jumped in to provide transportation on these two rainy days.

And we will not soon forget that tangled clothes line carried through the streets of Gander with more than 100 t-shirts with political messages calling for an end to poverty and violence.

The Provincial Women's Conference and World March were best summed up by an Inuit women who told the audience that this conference weekend was the first time she had felt a part of Newfoundland and the young woman who committed herself to continued involvement on equality and social justice in her home town.

If there was any doubt that there was a women's movement alive and well in this province, one only had to be present on Thanksgiving weekend in Gander. This women's conference was a first for many of the women and they returned home feeling energized, mobilized and richer for having spent a holiday weekend in the "company of women."

Provincial Women's

Conference 2000

Organizers

Congratulations!

Congratulations to the women of the Burin Peninsula on the many years of work which culminated on September 29 with the opening of the Grace Sparkes Transition House.

Canadian World March of Women

Following The Gander Provincial March of Women, Kathy Dunderdale and Joyce Hancock traveled to Ottawa to participate in the Canadian World March of Women. Carrying the banner that led our march on Thanksgiving weekend they walked with 50,000 women from every province and territory in this country. The spirit of solidarity and joy, which was present during our October 8th mobilization, filled the air as we marched to Parliament Hill. A very special thank you to the women of our province who took to the streets of Gander to add our voices to the call to eradicate poverty and violence.

Following the Canadian March, Kathy and Joyce attended the World March lobby meetings and visited the House of Commons during question period where many of the women's concerns on poverty and violence were raised. On October 18 both women attended the Persons Day Ceremony on Parliament Hill where statues of the "Famous Five" were unveiled. The program ended with about fifty young women singing "We'll Rise Again." One could only hope that the girls were prophetic in singing about the strength and mobilizing of the women and girls throughout our country.