

**Provincial Advisory Council on the Status of Women
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International Women's Day Edition

International Womens Day March 8, 2001, will be marked by womens groups, union groups and individual women who use this day in womens history to take stock of our lives. Womens equality seeking organizations will plan events in many areas of our province. As always we will remind ourselves, our communities and our province that women are not equal and we still have much to do to ensure womens equality, equal participation and inclusion.

As women, we do need to give ourselves permission to celebrate our accomplishments. We can look back with pride at the past year and reflect upon the things that our individual organizations and our collective activism have done for the advancement of women in Newfoundland and Labrador. There are reasons to be proud. In this province women contributed to the enormous success of the World March of Women in our province, country, and throughout the world. Since March 8, 2000 there have been marches, meetings, workshops and conferences all reflecting upon the issues of poverty and violence and the need for governments to develop policies which address the social and economic inequality of women.

There are many challenges ahead. We have seen major upheaval on our provincial political scene. Politics in our province is never stagnant and often downright exciting. But what of women in this game being played out by men who want power. As I write one third of the provincial cabinet are women and women have made enormous gains in senior bureaucracies as well as business. However, our womens movement has never simply been about the individual gains of women but rather the collective advancement of women. Women leaders who carry a feminist analysis into their leadership positions know this and those of us who support and challenge them know all too well that being a feminist in any leadership position will never be an easy task.

We must ensure that as political parties "jockey" for position in the year ahead that we are not fooled into thinking about this as some kind of popularity contest. Instead, we must as voters insist that those who would have us give them power tell us their plans for the inclusion of women and women's experiences in the formulation of policies which affect our lives and the future of our communities. For the women of Newfoundland and Labrador ~ nothing less will do!

As our foremothers cry of Give us Bread and Give us Roses resonates this IWD week, we will remind ourselves that our sisters marched for the right to vote and the right for decent working conditions. We continue to march for equality of participation and policies which include the concerns of women, families and communities.

In Sisterhood
Joyce M. Hancock

Bread and Roses

Millions of women around the world mark International Women's Day (IWD) each year on March 8.

The origins of IWD have been traced to labour strikes on March 8 in both 1857 and 1908. Again in 1911, 128 women died while trapped in a fire at the Triangle Shirtwaist Factory in New York. This caused a strike where 15,000 women garment workers demanded what other women had demanded fifty years earlier: shorter working hours, an end to child labor, safer working conditions and equal pay. The slogan "Bread and Roses" they sang as they marched: bread a symbol of economic security and roses a symbol for a better social structure, including for women the right to vote. On February 15, 2001, Rose Freedman, one of the women who survived the blaze, died in her sleep at home. She was 107. Rose Freedman described the fire:

"Hundred forty-six people in a half hour. I have always tears in my eyes when I think. It should never have happened."

Mostly women and girls were killed when fire swept the Triangle Shirtwaist Co. on the eight, ninth and tenth floors of a Manhattan building on March 25, 1911. Some died at their sewing machines, others were trapped by a locked door, and many jumped to their deaths. Bodies lay in piles in the streets.

"One day on Saturday ~ we were almost ready to leave ~ we smelled smoke." The fire had erupted on the eight floor and rapidly spread upward. " All of a sudden, you've got a terrible panic," she said. "Everybody was running to the door. It was locked."

"I figured I want to know what the executives were doing and I ran towards the tenth floor. And when I came there, they saved themselves already." She pulled her dress over her head and went up to the roof. " I met the fireman and I had tears in my eyes, there was a distance from the roof to the top of the adjacent building. They had to hoist me up and that's the way I got down the other side. And they brought me towards the stairs. I sat down on every stoop and cried til I was in the street. When I came in the street, here comes my father. He collapsed. He fainted. And I didn't go back to work anymore. I went to college."

The fire remains New York's worst industrial accident.

Ms. Freedman appeared at labour rallies for the rest of her life. She always expressed rage that the factory doors had been locked, either to keep workers at their machines or to prevent them from stealing scraps of cloth. She said one of the owners tried to bribe her to say the doors were not locked. She refused. The owners were eventually acquitted of manslaughter charges when the jury could not establish whether they had ordered the doors locked or had even know they were. But in 1914, civil suits brought by relatives of 23 victims ended with payments of \$75 to each of the families.

Excerpts From: Associated Press and the New York Times