

NEWS FROM THE FEMINIST CAUCUS

By Anne Burke, Chair

The Famous Five Foundation, which was established to honour the Famous Five and other Canadian women, organizes regular mentorship speakers, educational initiatives, and historical exhibits (403-245-6453). In a *Calgary Herald* poll, of the 596 readers who responded, “Do you think the Calgary home of suffragette Nellie McClung [at 805 15th Avenue SW] should be designated a municipal historic site?” 71 per cent agreed, in “Whoa Nellie! That’s Good News”. As I write, the City of Calgary Planning, Development & Assessment Report to the SPC on Land Use, Planning and Transportation recommends the designation of the Nellie McClung House, as a Municipal Historic Resource under Section 26 of the Alberta Historical Resources Act. You will notice there is no mention of Nellie McClung herself. McClung bought the two-storey home in 1923, two years after being elected to the Alberta legislature. She and her husband (who was a pharmacist) lived there with two of their five children. It is a half-timbered, Tudor-style, (with gables, until 1932.) She passed weekdays in the Edmonton legislature and weekends in this Calgary home, where she wrote three novels in her upstairs bedroom. The house was already declared a provincial historical resource, thirty years ago. One idea is to have the home become a museum, for her “nice bright kitchen facing west” and the glassed-in conservatory, known as her “ivy room.”

Investigation: The Nellie McClung House (803-15 Avenue SW) is a Category “A” Property on Calgary’s Inventory of Evaluated Historic Resources. The building merits designation as a Municipal Historic Resource for its architectural and historical merit as identified within the Attachment. (I did my best to download it.)

Implications: General: Designating the Nellie McClung House will protect this property from demolition. It will ensure that heritage value is retained and that any future alterations are in keeping with the Standards and Guidelines for the Conservation of Historic Places in Canada (Parks

Canada, 2003). It will allow the owner to transfer unused density from the property.

Economic (External) It adds character and visual interest to the streetscape which makes economic investment in the area an attractive prospect. It will ensure these attributes are protected and the resulting security will promote high-quality investment. Also, tourists and residents are attracted to areas with historic resources.

Business Plan/Budget Implications. It will have no budget implications for the City. No compensation pursuant to Section 28 of the Alberta Historical Resources Act is owing.

Risks. There is no risk to the City but not designating it would leave the property without a strong measure of legal protection for its future preservation.

The *Herald* newspaper republished “100 Years Ago”, an editorial from 1909, seven years before Alberta women got the vote, and nine years before Louise McKinney and Roberta McAdams became Alberta MLAs (Members of the Legislative Assembly), the first women in the British Empire to be elected to a legislature. Re: The Suffragette Movement, there is an accompanying photograph from the Glenbow Archives of Margaret Lewis who organized the first suffrage society in Calgary in 1913.

One of the chief objections that is urged against women having the vote is that if they get the franchise, they will want to sit in Parliament. Men consider, and probably most women realize, that woman is too highly strung and excitable to be given control of the affairs of state.... [W]omen should have a separate parliament of their own, the members to be all women, the functions ...to be purely consultative and not legislative, with all proposed domestic legislation to be submitted to them for criticism.

This appears to be the most reasonable suggestion that has yet emanated from a member of the fair sex. The absence of legislative authority would remove all danger and tend to prevent undue excitement, and the fact that there are no men present would probably result in a calm and non-hysterical consideration of the matters submitted to them. Women are eminently fitted to give advice on domestic matters.

It is the woman, more than the man, who teaches and trains the children, and they have many opportunities of getting an insight to the needs of the people.

If women would only make their aim a consultative chamber of women, they would probably meet with little or no opposition and they would still retain their distinctive feminine charms which they would be unable to use if they were to stand shoulder to shoulder with men in the hurly-burly of ordinary political life. A congress of the picked women of the land would surely have great influence and should prove a great power for good.

(“The Editorial Page”, January 5, 2009, Section A, p. 8)

Fortunately, Nellie McClung was successful in championing women’s rights, especially by satirizing the reasons given for preventing these rights from being upheld. So, why doesn’t her biography lend itself to mention, when proposing the preservation of her home?

Instead, we are told:

Environmental. The preservation of historic places helps the environment by capitalizing on the energy investment in the original structure, preventing unnecessary resource use and reducing the pressure on landfill sites from demolition...thereby reducing our ecological footprint and aligning with Triple Bottom Line sustainability.

How Nellie would have laughed!

By the way, the attachment was the Proposed Wording for a City of Calgary Bylaw to Designate The Nellie McClung House as a Municipal Historic Resource.

Some titles to look for in Women’s Studies are briefly mentioned below.

Re: *Radicalized Bodies, Disabling Worlds: Stories Lives of Immigrant Muslim Women*, by Parin Dossa (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2009). 176 pp. cloth \$32. paper \$24.95. Women share their stories of social marginalization and disenfranchisement in a disabling world. Women who are subjected to social erasure in policy and

research define their identities and claim their humanity using the language of everyday life. Parin Dossa is a Professor in the Department of Sociology and Anthropology at Simon Fraser University.

Re: *Policing and Gendered Justice: Examining the Possibilities*, by Marilyn Corsianos (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2009) 190 pp. cloth \$70. paper \$36.95. The UTP Higher Education Series. Women are extremely underrepresented in the arena of law enforcement, and female officers are more likely to work in gender-specific areas within their organizations. Gender contributes to experiential differences within this culture, leading to oppression in the workplace for female officers. This is the only available analysis of women in law enforcement in Canada and the United States. With case studies, it points toward the potential for positive change. Marilyn Corsiano is an Associate Professor in the Department of Sociology, Anthropology, and Criminology at Eastern Michigan University.

Re: *Making Work, Making Trouble: The Social Regulation of Sexual Labour*, Second Edition, by Deborah R. Brock. (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2009) 256 pp. cloth \$55, paper \$24.95. This is an updated study of prostitution in Canada, containing new material on sex trafficking, migrant sex work, sex-worker rights organizing, and considers the potential impact of the Robert Picton trial on the practice of sex work. Deborah R. Brock is an Associate Professor in the Department of Sociology at York University.

Re: *Public Policy for Women: The State, Income Security, and Labour Market Issues.*, edited by Marjorie Griffin Cohen and Jane Pulkingham (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2009) 384 pp. cloth \$75, paper \$35. This collection contains essays from leading feminist academics and social activists. It addresses important public policy issues that fail to meet women’s needs. This volume deals with the relationship between the welfare state and vulnerable populations of women. Some of those issues are: single working mothers, prostitution, mandatory retirement, guaranteed income, and work for welfare. Marjorie Griffin Cohen is a Professor in the Departments of Political Science and Women’s Studies at Simon Fraser University. Jane Pulkingham is Chair and an

Associate Professor in the Department of Sociology and Anthropology at Simon Fraser University.

Re: *Angels of the Workplace: Women and the Construction of Gender Relations in the Canadian Clothing Industry, 1890-1940*, by Mercedes Steedman, (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2009) 346 pp. paper, \$26.95. The Canadian Social History Series. This is a reprint of the 1997 historical study of workplace gender discrimination, left-wing unionism, and 1930s management; about the subordinate role women played in the workplace and in the trade union bureaucracy; in terms of wages and representation. The author is an Associate Professor in the Department of Sociology at Laurentian University.

Re: *Women, Religion, and the Atlantic World (1600-1800)*, edited by Daniella Kostroun and Lisa Vallendorf (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2009) UCLA Clark Memorial Library Series. 368 pp. cloth, \$80. This text explores the meaning of an Atlantic community and challenges the conventional boundaries of nation-based inquiry in the humanities (drawing on historical, literary, and anthropological methodologies). The focus is on European, indigenous, Creole, African, and mestiza women's interactions, with shifting paradigms of Protestantism, Catholicism, Judaism, and syncretic beliefs through the Atlantic basin. The essays include studies of a Peruvian nun's battle against a demon; an African slave, and native American healers. Suitable for religion, gender, ethnicity, and authority studies in the early modern Atlantic world. Daniella Kostroun is an Assistant Professor in the Department of History at Indiana University-Purdue University Indianapolis. Lisa Vallendorf is a Professor and Chair of the Department of Romance, German, Russian Languages and Literatures at California State University, Long Beach.