

Charlotte VanDine's Last Address to BPW New Brunswick

A Diamond Anniversary is a bright and shining milestone in the story of the Business and Professional Women's Clubs of New Brunswick, and one that should be celebrated. For 60 years the Clubs have been in the forefront of the women's movement in our Province, and, although there are now only two Clubs, we can be proud of the members of the Moncton and Campbellton Clubs who continue to work diligently for the purposes and aims of B P W.

Members of B P W have always promoted women's interests and worked to improve the status of women, economically, politically, socially, with the main thrust for the concerns of employed women. They have always worked for equal opportunity, including equality in salary and wages, in the workplace. Women have been encouraged to enter public life. I am delighted that there are more women - provincially and federally - as elected Members, Cabinet Ministers, Party Leaders. And I am even more delighted that today it is accepted by the public that women ~ be elected to these offices, appointed to the Senate and appointed judges at all levels.

Women have been encouraged to acquire education, further education and vocational training, especially in the technical and scientific fields and non-traditional occupations. It is no longer "newsworthy" that women are foresters, engineers, pilots, race-car drivers, in police forces - the list goes on and on. So progress has been made in the past 60 years. But there is still much work to be done. In its latest report, the New Brunswick Advisory Council on the Status of Women has delivered a clear message that work remains. For example: working women earned 82% of what men earned in NB in 2003, an improvement from 81% the previous year. This is an improvement - but it is moving too slowly. There is no valid excuse for women not to be paid fairly. Women who were recent graduates of community colleges and working full time earned 15% less than male graduates in 2002, and those who had recently graduated from N.B. universities and were working full time in 2001 earned 13% less than male graduates. Again, there is no excuse for this.

At the end of 2003, of the 1,644 government-appointed members of boards and commissions, 29% are women. And of the provincially appointed judges in New Brunswick, 4 of 31 (13%) are women; women are better represented among federally appointed judges in N.B. - 9 of 38, or 24%. I am not going to give you any more statistics, but you definitely get the picture. The Advisory Council's Report Card on the Status of Women gives a valuable information tool, which is interesting but not terribly cheerful information, and should be studied closely.

I am sure you know that age-old question: "What is it that you women want anyway?" The answer is simple: "We just want our fair share."

We are all members of our Canadian Federation, and the great strength of CFBPW lies in its members - in you, the individual member. You bring to your Club your own expertise and your own sense of responsibility. No matter what you are called upon to

do, you use your own talents and willingness. You learn in the doing of any task - you learn that you have abilities and talents which perhaps you never suspected that you had. You learn from the satisfaction of doing a job well. And by developing your own potential, you enrich your own life.

Another great strength is the harmony, cooperation, and friendliness among BPW members everywhere. Such harmony and cooperation make up good teamwork for progress: fair and honest understanding of the other's problems, harmonious settlement of differences, and women helping women. Together, we CAN make a difference.

Through our Canadian Federation, we are automatically a member of the International Federation of Business and Professional Women. Both Federations were formed in 1930: our Canadian Federation in Winnipeg, and the International in Geneva. I have always admired the vision, and the courage of those Canadian women in 1930. They were trying to get a national organization of some six widely-scattered Clubs "off the ground", yet they believed so much in the principles of BPW that they wanted to be part of an international group and share those principles and aims with women in other countries. We are proud that Canada was a founding member – with five other countries - of the International Federation. And just as our

Clubs know that they share in the voice of Clubs across Canada, so members of more than 100 countries on all five continents know that they have the support of the International Federation and all members around the world.

We are living in a highly-developed technological society, but we must rule the machines and not let the machines rule us. We must take time - and make time - to appreciate the richness of the world around us. Machines did not make the whiteness of the snow, the greenness of summer, the blaze of autumn. Nor do machines make our appreciation of intangible riches, of our wanting and need to live more fully. Our country has great natural resources - its people need the inner resource to live up to our country's wealth. And this is our challenge.

We women can lead in knowing how to live in a world of machines. We have a heritage of self-control and self-discipline. It is a channeling of inward discipline that in its outward sign will be a driving force to each of us to live more meaningful, to assume responsibilities of leadership in our community, our country, our world.

We women can do more than exist - we can live. We can do more than touch - we can feel. We should do more than look - we should observe; do more than hear - listen; do more than listen - understand.

Machines are here to stay - but so are we.

Thank you.

Charlotte VanDine
May 15, 2004