



Women's Caucus

Newsletter



April 2007

Edmonton New Democrat Women's Caucus

2007 Olga Blondheim Brunch

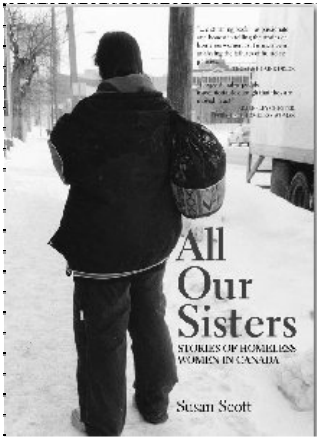
SUNDAY, MAY 6 11 am – 1 pm

NAIT Dining Room (with the blue awning) 11762-106 Street

Speaker: Janice Melnychuk on *What I Learned in Municipal Politics*

\$25 \$20 low income

**Tickets available from Starr Curry (Cell) 974-0130 or
Marg Brown - scarbrow78@shaw.ca**



Join us for the launch and a discussion of Susan Scott's

All Our Sisters:
Stories of Homeless Women in Canada

Friday, May 4th at 7:30 p.m.

John Dutton Theatre, W.R. Castell Central Library
616 MacLeod Trail S.E. Calgary

Hosted by Wayne Stewart, President and CEO of the Calgary Homeless Foundation with commentary from John Rook, CEO of the Salvation Army's Community Services

Edmonton Women's Caucus

will meet on Sunday, May 27 at the Organic Roots Market .8225-112 St.
10:30 am - 12:30 pm

Speaker: Jennifer Warren a U of A student with Oxfam

On: Oxfam and Sustainable Environmental and Ethical Procurement Policy (SEEPP) that the City of Calgary has adopted and they are hoping Edmonton will too.

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May Day March Tuesday, May 01, 2007 at 5:30 pm

May 1st is a day chosen by workers to acknowledge the struggles and celebrate the gains workers have made throughout history. Each year, workers around the world take to the streets to let the bosses, corporations and governments know that workers will continue to fight for fairness, justice and respect in the workplace as well as celebrate our well-fought gains. Join us!

Gather at 5:30pm at Tipton Park (108 St. and 81 Ave), march via Whyte Avenue to End of Steel park (look for caboose near Saskatchewan Drive and 87 Avenue). **After-march rally at 6:30 pm** featuring the performances of Guy Smith, Notre Dame des Bananes, Lex and the People's Poets!

IN APPRECIATION

Our long term Provincial Treasurer has resigned effective the end of December 2006. Lou Crocker first joined Women's Caucus in 1991 because it was a women's feminist group dedicated to helping to get more women elected provincially.

She took over as Provincial Treasurer for the Caucus in 1992 when the Provincial Executive was located in Calgary. After 14 years, Lou has called it quits and turned over the books. Our thanks to Lou for all her hard work over the years. We sincerely appreciate her contribution to Women's Caucus.

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Volunteer Needed: a treasurer for Women's Caucus to take over from Flora Stupich

Please contact starr.curry@portagecollege.ca or 974-0130

Alberta Women Candidates Nominated as of April 7/07

Federal:

Donna Martyn - Edmonton Centre
Linda Duncan - Edmonton Strathcona
Holly Heffernan - Calgary South West
Ellen Parker – Crowfoot
Barb Phillips – Edmonton-Spruce Grove

Provincial:

Julie Hrdlicka - Calgary Fort
Marilyn Assheton-Smith - Edmonton Ellerslie
Christina Gray - Edmonton Millwoods
Rachel Notley - Edmonton Strathcona

To date 11 provincial constituencies have held nomination meetings. We have also approved a couple of other women candidates to seek a nomination in their constituency but the date is not yet set for a meeting. Those candidates are:

Mary Elizabeth Archer - Edmonton Meadowlark & Holly Heffernan - Calgary Elbow

The provincial nominations have essentially been put on hold with the focus right now being on nominating our federal candidates.

-Sandra Houston, Provincial Secretary

Meet Your Executive...One by One

Cheryl Bereziuk is a college professor of Psychology and Women's Studies at Grande Prairie Regional College. She has taught college for the past 13 years (4 years at Red Deer College). She has a Master of Arts in Psychobiology and Clinical Neuropsychology, a Bachelor of Arts (Honours) in Psychology, and a University Certificate in Counseling Women.

Cheryl has been a long standing supporter of the NDP but became increasingly involved when she was asked to be a member of Susan Thompson's campaign team in the Peace River Riding in the last federal election. As part of the effort to increase women's participation in the political process, Cheryl and a group of women organized a series of non-partisan Political Conversation Cafés at a local coffee shop to get women talking about issues and to generate ideas on getting more women out to vote. This group also organized a Women's Election Forum for the candidates to speak directly to issues of relevance to women. As part of this forum, a female student at the college was trained as the moderator for the event.

More generally, Cheryl has also been active in Grande Prairie as a board member for the local Canadian Mental Health Association and for the Odyssey House Shelter for Women. She has also been involved in various projects with the City of Grande Prairie regarding violence against women and homelessness. At a personal level, Cheryl enjoys running, cross country skiing, hiking, travel, yoga, Buddhist philosophy, and she is currently working on a novel based on women's herstory in the early Bronze Age.

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Report from Women's Caucus Co-Chairs (Starr Curry and Bev Muendel-Atherstone) - a progress report since the annual meeting of the Women's Caucus on October 21/07

Executive and Newsletter

Flora Stupich (Calgary) has agreed to be our treasurer for a year and Maggie Lockwood (Edmonton) is the new secretary. We wish to thank Lou Crocker for all her assistance and support for Women's Caucus financial affairs and organizing the Olga Blondheim Brunch when Provincial Convention has been in Calgary.

Website

Please refer women who want to know about and/or join Women's Caucus to www.women.albertandp.com

Olga Blondheim Fund

It now has \$14,043.54 to distribute to women candidates in the next provincial election.

Election Workshops

The Women's Caucus sent a letter to Sandra Houston outlining the need to add women's workshops organized by the Women's Caucus to the agenda of election workshops, and the need to have workshops in Calgary and Edmonton in order to make them more accessible to members.

Women's Caucus Rep on Candidate Search Committee

Holly Heffernan is our rep on the candidate search committee. If you know women who are interested in running as candidates or who wish to be trained for executive positions on election campaigns please contact Holly at 403-255-0479 or by email holly50@gmail.com

Issues yet to Come

Resolutions for Provincial Convention will be compiled in the next few months and the work is done by email .If any member is interested in helping please contact Starr starr.curry @portagecollege.ca; 974-0130; or Bev 403-328-8883; bmuendel@shockware.com

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CALGARY CAUCUS – Beth Wiwchar

Calgary Women's Caucus joined up with the Women's Centre of Calgary collecting and donating items for children and moms for Christmas, presents for those who fall through the cracks. In February we invited Lisa Hari of the Centre to speak to our meeting, to explain exactly what the Centre does. It was an eye-opener as we heard Lisa explain they are not a shelter but a Centre serving 250-plus families and women, about evening workshops on such wide-ranging topics as cooking, home repairs, healing arts, drumming, etc. Only after hearing from caring people like Lisa do we begin to understand how much work is still to be done in pulling the threads of equality together.

We continue to provide a small food bank for members with needs but we did clear the shelves in February as we donated all that we had to the Women's Centre. With our office not being open, we had a concern of food "dating" and so we will begin again with donations starting in April. Lord knows where he got them, but one of our ND members in Calgary donated five file storage boxes of lotions, shampoo and other personal hygiene products to our Caucus and we happily sent them along to the Women's Centre with the donated food items. The women are so appreciative of our help but it is surely not a good sign when so many go without so often. As New Democrats, we must continue to raise awareness of the needs of others and, as Women's Caucus members, we must continue to raise awareness of the needs of women.

Various coordinating agencies are working together planning a women's conference October 26th-27th in Calgary. Plans are not yet finalized but our Caucus has agreed to sponsor one person to attend. We would prefer to send a member but will sponsor anyone with a need to learn and a desire to get involved.

We are all aware of the media bias in Calgary and get so frustrated with running into closed doors and closed minds. One of our members, speaking to the Calgary Metro Council, suggested we do it "one step at a time". In associating with the Women's Centre we make other women, particularly immigrant women, aware of us and what we are. In getting involved in other activities we do the same for many groups. Next we'll be joining in with other NDs (in May) to clean a stretch of the Bow River and we are already talking about helping with Gay Pride Week.

Susan Scott's launch of her new book *All our Sisters* is set for May 4th at our main library. Susan has worked so hard on this book that we are sure it will be an overwhelming success. Sometime in the future, Susan and our caucus will join together for another small fundraiser. We would also be remiss if we didn't wish Lou Crocker a happy "retirement". After 14 years as Provincial Treasurer for Women's Caucus, Lou has stepped down. Flora Stupich will take over for the next year.

As always, we need other women to join our Caucus to make suggestions for projects and to help us achieve our goals. We meet the third Saturday of each month (may change because of stat holidays) at the ND office in Calgary. Contact bether@shaw.ca for more information. We would certainly value your input.

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Edmonton Caucus

See the notice on page 1 for information about our annual **Olga Blondheim Brunch on May 6.**

On November 25th the Edmonton section sponsored a lunch for Penny Pretty, Health Critic for the Federal New Democrats. Penny certainly motivated women to assume roles in the party and during elections. Penny was Health Minister in the Glen Clarke government in British Columbia as well as having run municipally.

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Breakthrough Conference for Federal NDP Candidates – Holly Heffernan

I attended the Breakthrough Conference for Federal NDP Candidates on March 17 and 18 in Ottawa. The candidates all had their pictures taken professionally and had our pictures taken with the leader as well. We were treated to presentations on many aspects of a campaign.

Ken Georgetti, President of the Canadian Labor Congress spoke to us at lunch on the first day along with Cheri DiNovo NDP MPP for Ontario Parkdale-High Park. We were given an overview of the campaign so far, messaging, connecting with voters, 3-minute interviews, practice in front of the camera, talking to the press, a day in the life of a candidate, and party resources. We were even treated to how to dress, and how to talk to people. Cautions were also on the agenda. As a candidate we must talk to our families. It is very hard, if not impossible, to run alone. Your family needs to be onside. I think this goes federally, provincially and even municipally. Above all start EARLY.

Jack Layton spoke to us on both Saturday and Sunday. He is the leader to take on Harper and we are the party for the people.

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Holly Heffernan Federal Candidate: nurse, wife, mother and member of the women's caucus is running in Calgary Southwest. The conservative MP in that riding is the PM Stephen Harper. We need to defeat Mr. Harper and his conservative government. We all have a part to play in this. I am starting to lay plans for the next election which could be any day. I need your help today. Donations, of which 100% stay in the riding for the campaign, will help me to build a campaign fund. \$50, \$100, \$250 or whatever you feel you can contribute will help me hit the ground running as soon as the writ is dropped.

Don't forget there is a generous tax credit of 75% for the first \$400 and still more credits after that.

Donations can be sent to: Calgary Southwest Riding Association
c/o 31 Hanover Road S.W.
Calgary, Alberta T2V 3J5

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Peoples Struggles People Alternatives! - Elizabeth Smythe

The World Social Forum (WSF) was held in Nairobi, Kenya from Jan 20-25 this year. Over 50,000 activists from around the world attended hundreds of self-organized workshops at the Moi sports centre, a large outdoor soccer stadium some ten kilometres from the centre of the city.

I want to explain the origins of the concept of the WSF and how it developed out of the transnational movement challenging corporate globalization. The forum was intended as an “open meeting place for reflective thinking, democratic debate of ideas, formulation of proposals, free exchange of experiences and interlinking for effective action, by groups and movements of civil society that are opposed to neo-liberalism”. (Charter of principles available at www.forummundial.org.br)

The first event in Porto Alegre Brazil in 2001 was held to coincide with and challenge the annual meeting of the World Economic Forum and its gathering of corporate CEOs and political leaders. Organizers wanted to move beyond mere opposition to neo-liberalism toward articulating alternatives captured in the slogan “Another World is Possible”. Since that first meeting it has grown in size and moved to different locations within the global south, from Porto Alegre, Brazil in 2003 to Mumbai, India 2004 and then back to Brazil in 2005. By then it was attracting over 150,000 participants including a significant number of Canadians. Since 2001 literally hundreds of continental, regional, national and local social forums have also been held including two here in Alberta in 2003 and 2005.

The International Council of the WSF made a key decision in 2006 that the Forum should be held in 2007 in one of the regions of the world most negatively impacted by neo-liberalism—Africa. Given the size and scale of the event and the conditions facing the organizers in Kenya, the event being held in and of itself is something of a triumph. The huge number of workshops, activities and cultural events were organized around nine key themes which included peace, justice, dignity, gender equality and economic, cultural and social rights. Such a huge, diverse and rich array of ideas and issues is impossible for any one person to summarize and what I offer is only my perspective on what I saw and experienced.

Like all social forums as well this event took on the colour of its context and many of the themes and issues reflected African concerns and perspectives. Naturally these included issues such as the HIV/Aids pandemic, gender equality, food sovereignty, poverty and imbalanced and unfair trade agreements. One highlight for me was hearing Nobel prize winner and Kenyan Wangari Maathai, founder of the Greenbelt movement, give a stirring call for unconditional debt forgiveness for the poorest countries in the world. I also learned a lot about the issues and challenges facing Africans. I had the privilege of meeting an inspiring group of Kenyan youth who worked in the slums empowering youth and led us delegates through some of the slums of Nairobi where much of the population live on less than 2 US\$ a day. There schools are few and far between and amid the piles of garbage we met dedicated young volunteer teachers and eager students, many of them Aids orphans, who are desperate to learn. The African youth themselves gained much from the forum. Many were intrigued by the tent that offered information on gays and lesbians, treating people of different sexual orientations with respect. Homosexuality is a taboo topic in Kenya.

Gender equality and women’s rights were given poignant expression in a Danish sculptor’s depiction of a pregnant teenager being crucified and a series of workshops and street theatre raised the issues of women’s ability to control their sexual relations and their access to safe methods of contraception. I also

attended numerous workshops raising awareness of, and organizing resistance to, international and regional trade agreements.

The WSF does not take formal positions on issues but many of the movements and non-governmental organizations there come together to network and form joint plans and proposals. Maude Barlow was involved in a series of workshops on water, access to it and the implications of privatization. Several activists from across Africa went a step further and created an African water network advocating the recognition of water as a human right and recognizing access to it as a social justice issue.

What struck me is how similar many of our struggles are. The World Social Forum is about creating and strengthening networks of global solidarity, recognizing as we struggle for social justice - we are not alone.

Elizabeth Smythe can be reached at elizabeth.smythe@concordia.ab.ca.

Next year the WSF would like groups to hold local forums the third week of January (ie 2008) to mobilize at the local level. Perhaps it is time for another Alberta Social Forum. **Another Alberta is Possible!**

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Betty Mardiros

Betty Mardiros was a lifelong activist, promoting peace and social justice. She and her husband, Tony Mardiros, moved to Edmonton in 1946 when Tony accepted a position in the Philosophy Department at the University of Alberta. Both were supporters of the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament and were active in the CCF (both attended the founding convention of the NDP) and were founding members of the Woodsworth-Irvine Socialist Fellowship. Betty was an active member of the Voice of Women in the '60s and '70s, urging Canada to support an international Nuclear Test Ban Treaty. Their home was a haven for American draft resisters during the Viet Nam war, and for Chilean refugees from the Pinochet regime after the coup in 1973.

After Tony's death in 1987, Betty continued her involvement in progressive organizations, including the formation of the Edmonton Raging Grannies in 1992. Betty was one of the first members Parkland Institute ever had (she was member #11), and dedicated numerous hours to the work of the Institute.

Betty is survived by two sons, a daughter, 5 grandkids, and 4 great-grandkids. She died on Friday, March 30th, 2007.

A remembrance of Betty on May 14 was organized by Louise Swift and greatly appreciated by the many who attended.

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MEMBERSHIP FORM ON BACK PAGE!

But do they have arch supports?

