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Résumé de l'article

L'histoire brosse un tableau sombre du manque de succès électoral des femmes ontariennes après 1919, l'année où elles ont obtenu le droit d'être élues à la législature et aux conseils municipaux. Nous examinons de près treize des 21 femmes qui ont posé leur candidature à l'Assemblée législative de l'Ontario avant 1943, notamment les douze qui furent candidates entre 1919-1929, toutes vaincues, le succès politique de quelques-unes de leurs prédécesseurs élues à des commissions scolaires dès 1892, et l'expérience de ces femmes avec les partis politiques. Cela nous permet de vérifier les thèses et explications offertes par la politologue Sylvia Bashevkin et la sociologue Thelma McCormack sur le comportement politique des femmes au Canada anglais.

The Woman Candidate for the Ontario Legislative Assembly, 1919-1929

By Frederick Brent Scollie

The historiography of Canadian women in politics paints a bleak picture of women's political success in the decades after securing universal suffrage.¹ This paper will look at the twelve women who ran unsuccessfully as candidates for the Ontario Legislative Assembly 1919-1929, and their predecessors elected as school trustees, in the era of amateur citizen-politicians. It will test to what extent the historical record confirms political scientist Sylvia Bashevkin's analysis of women and party politics in English Canada and sociologist Thelma McCormack's theory of male and female dual political cultures.²

Provincial Candidates 1902-1937

Twenty-one women would appear on the ballot for Ontario general elections from 1902 to 1937, twelve for the general elections of October 1919, June 1923, December 1926, and October 1929, and another eight

Abstract

History paints a bleak picture of Ontario women's lack of electoral success after 1919, the year women secured the right to provincial and municipal elective office. This article examines thirteen of twenty-one women who ran unsuccessfully as candidates for the Ontario Legislative Assembly before 1943, especially the twelve who were candidates between 1919-1929, the political success of some of their predecessors elected as school trustees as early as 1892, and the experience of these women with political parties. It tests to what extent the historical record confirms political scientist Sylvia Bashevkin's analysis of women and party politics in English Canada and sociologist Thelma McCormack's theory of male and female dual political cultures.

Résumé: *L'histoire brosse un tableau sombre du manque de succès électoral des femmes ontariennes après 1919, l'année où elles ont obtenu le droit d'être élues à la législature et aux conseils municipaux. Nous examinons de près treize des 21 femmes qui ont posé leur candidature à l'Assemblée législative de l'Ontario avant 1943, notamment les douze qui furent candidates entre 1919-1929, toutes vaincues, le succès politique de quelques-unes de leurs prédécesseurs élues à des commissions scolaires dès 1892, et l'expérience de ces femmes avec les partis politiques. Cela nous permet de vérifier les thèses et explications offertes par la politologue Sylvia Bashevkin et la sociologue Thelma McCormack sur le comportement politique des femmes au Canada anglais.*

¹ Anne Anderson Perry, "Is Women's Suffrage a Fizzle?" *Maclean's Magazine* (1 Feb. 1928), 6-7, 58-59, 63. Grattan O'Leary, "Is Women's Suffrage a Success?" *Chatelaine* (Sept. 1930), 12, 52-53. Charlotte Whitton, "Is the Canadian Woman a Flop in Politics?" *Saturday Night*, 26 Jan. 1946, reprinted in *The Proper Sphere: Woman's Place in Canadian Society* (Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1976), 328-31. Catherine L. Cleverdon, *The Woman Suffrage Movement in Canada* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1974), Appendix A, "Women in Canadian Politics" first published in 1950. Terry Crowley, *Agnes MacPhail and the Politics of Equality* (Toronto: James Lorimer, 1990), 171-72, 189-91, describes the pessimism of women about electoral success after Agnes MacPhail's successive defeats.

² Sylvia B. Bashevkin, *Toeing the Lines: Women and Party Politics in English Canada*. 2nd ed. (Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1993). Sociologist Thelma McCormack's dual cultures thesis is analyzed in

TABLE 1: Ontario women candidates : provincial general elections, 1902-1937

| Year | Constituency | Name | Party | No. of votes | Total votes cast | % of total |
|------|---------------------|--------------------------------|-------------|--------------|------------------|------------|
| 1902 | North Toronto | Miss Margaret Haile | Socialist | 81 | 9104 | 0.89 |
| 1919 | Ottawa West | Mrs. Justenia C. Sears | Independent | 2423 | 25758 | 9.4 |
| 1919 | Toronto Northeast B | Mrs. Henrietta Bundy | Liberal | 8615 | 33192 | 25.95 |
| 1923 | Fort William | Mrs. B.O. (Elizabeth) Allen | Liberal | 1152 | 7176 | 16.05 |
| 1923 | London | Isabel Cowan Armstrong | Liberal | 1851 | 15210 | 12.17 |
| 1923 | Toronto Northeast B | Mrs. Mary Elizabeth Becker | Prog. UFO | 4033 | 17985 | 22.42 |
| 1923 | Toronto Northwest B | Mrs. Edith Lelean Groves | Prog. UFO | 3721 | 20867 | 17.83 |
| 1926 | Hamilton West | Mrs. Annie C. Carpenter | Liberal | 3044 | 11480 | 26.51 |
| 1926 | Toronto Woodbine | Mrs. Florabel Evelyth Dilworth | Liberal | 2658 | 12236 | 21.72 |
| 1929 | Toronto High Park | Dr. Minerva Ellen Reid | Prohibition | 4672 | 13119 | 35.61 |
| 1929 | Toronto St George | Mrs. Janet Grant Needham | Liberal | 2930 | 9380 | 31.24 |
| 1929 | Toronto St Patrick | Helen Whitfield Currie | Ind. Cons. | 859 | 6699 | 13.42 |
| 1929 | Windsor East | Rebecca (Becky) Buhay | Communist | 337 | 9538 | 3.53 |
| 1934 | Durham | Miss (Dr.) Lorna Cotton | C.C.F. | 1425 | 13621 | 10.46 |
| 1934 | Hamilton Wentworth | Mrs. Jane B. Evans | C.C.F. | 1491 | 19461 | 7.66 |
| 1934 | Toronto Bellwoods | Mrs. Ray (Lewis) Smith | Independent | 1122 | 16929 | 6.63 |
| 1934 | Toronto Bellwoods | Mrs. Alice (Ayes) Buck | Communist | 1091 | 16929 | 6.44 |
| 1934 | Toronto Bracondale | Mrs. (Dr.) Rose Henderson | C.C.F. | 2734 | 15700 | 17.41 |
| 1934 | Windsor Walkerville | Miss Olive Jane Whyte | C.C.F. | 2151 | 17547 | 12.26 |
| 1937 | Fort William | Mrs. Elizabeth A. Miles | C.C.F. | 1542 | 14354 | 10.74 |
| 1937 | Toronto St George | Mrs. Jean Laing | Labour | 1490 | 20218 | 7.37 |

Source: *Canadian Parliamentary Guide 1920-1940*. Roderick Lewis, *Centennial Edition of a History of the Electoral Districts, Legislatures and Ministries of the Province of Ontario 1867-1968* (Toronto : Queen's Printer, 1967).

for the general elections of June 1934 and October 1937, compared to hundreds of nominations for men (see Table I). No woman would be elected to the Ontario Legislative Assembly until 1943, when former M.P. Agnes MacPhail (1890-1954) was elected for York East and Mrs. Rae Luckock (1893-1972), the daughter of James Morrison, the founder of the United Farmers of Ontario, for Toronto

Bracondale. Ontario would be a laggard compared to the legislatures of Alberta (1917, Louise McKinney and Roberta MacAdams), British Columbia (1918, Mary Ellen Smith), Saskatchewan (1919, Sarah Ramsland) and Manitoba (1920, Edith McTavish Rogers). Four Ontario women were candidates in the federal election of 1921, Mrs. Rose Mary Louise Henderson (Labour) for Toronto

chapter 2. Thelma McCormack, "Toward a Nonsexist Perspective on Social and Political Change," in *Another Voice* (New York: Anchor, 1975), 1-28, notably 24-28, "One Culture or Two?" A more approachable discussion of McCormack's theorizing about women's political behaviour is in her "Examining the election entrails: whatever happened to the gender gap?" *This Magazine*, 22 (8) (March-April 1989), 31-35.

St. Lawrence-St. George, Mrs. Harriet Dunlop Prenter (Labour) for Toronto West, and Mrs. Elizabeth Bethune Kiely (Liberal) for Toronto East who stood aside for Sergeant Rayfield V.C. Agnes MacPhail (Progressive) was elected for Grey Southeast as the first woman M.P.

Election to School Boards and Municipal Councils

To understand why so few women sought provincial office, we have to briefly examine their experience in lower levels of government prior to the general enfranchisement of all women in 1917 by the Conservative government of Sir William Hearst (*Ontario Franchise Act, 1917* S.O. 1917, c.5, s.4, and *The Women's Municipal Franchise Act, S.O. 1917, c.43*). Female freeholders and householders had been eligible to vote for public school trustees as early as 1850 (*Upper Canada School Act of 1850, 13-14 Vic. c. 48*), and widows and spinsters with real property in municipal elections since 1884 (*Municipal Amendment Act, 1884, S.O. 1884, c.32, s.3*). But eligible women did not always vote—in Toronto in January 1913, the *Globe* reported that only “a percentage” of Toronto women entitled

to vote did so despite receiving a circular from the Women's Suffrage Association.³

As for the right to hold elective office, Premier Hearst, in spring 1919, knowing that a provincial election was imminent, had the Ontario Legislature pass two bills, one to permit women to sit in the Legislative Assembly (*The Women's Assembly Qualification Act, 1919, S.O. 1919, c.8*), and another to permit women to sit on municipal councils (*The Women's Municipal Qualification Act, 1919, S.O. 1919, c.47*).⁴

The first elective office open to Ontario women was that of public school trustee. So far as we know, women were slow to realize that the 1850 Act and successor Acts permitted female freeholders or householders, not only to vote, but also to be elected as school trustees, the only requirement in the Act being that trustees be “fit and proper persons” and “assessed freeholders and householders.”⁵ Like the canary in the coal mine, the interest women showed in seeking office as public school trustees proved a predictor of their interest in other levels of government. Toronto was the first municipality to elect women trustees in January 1892 (Mrs. Jane Ann Harri-

³ “An Act for the Better Establishment and Maintenance of Common Schools in Upper Canada [Royal assent 24 July 1850],” in *The Educational Manual for Upper Canada containing the Laws, Regulations, &c Relating To Common and Grammar Schools...* (Toronto: Thompson, 1856). In the Appendix p. 130-32, Chief Superintendent Egerton Ryerson ruled, “The Court of Queen's Bench alone has authority to decide the legal question finally; but, in the meantime, I think the female as well as male freeholders and householders of a school section have a right to vote at all lawful school meetings of such section.” *Toronto Globe*, 2 Jan. 1913, 22, “Women voters did not all turn out. The suffrage circular met with indifferent response.”

⁴ Leo Longo, “The Women's Municipal Qualification Act, 1919: Ontario women and municipal office,” *Municipal World* (April 2009), 9-10.

⁵ For example, see *The Public Schools Act, R.S.O. 1877, c.204*.

son, Mrs. Mary McDonell, Dr. Augusta Stowe-Gullen, backed by the Dominion Woman's Enfranchisement Association).⁶ In the thirty-eight years to 1930, only nine women, of sixteen women candidates, were elected, and several of these experienced defeat seeking re-election. "It is very difficult to find women who are willing to be nominated for office," acknowledged Constance Boulton, elected trustee in 1918.⁷ The youthful Clara Brett Martin (1874-1923), Ontario's first woman lawyer, though unsuccessful in 1895 as was Mary McDonell, was elected repeatedly from 1901-1910. The fifth and sixth women elected Toronto trustees first sought office in 1914 with the backing of the Toronto Local Council of Women and in the case of Mrs. Courtice, the Municipal Improvement Association, but were defeated. Dr. Caroline Sophia Brown (1862-1936), an unmarried physician and former teacher, served nine years representing Ward 5 (1915-1920, 1923-25). Mrs. Ada Mary Courtice (1860-1923), a widow, served four years (1917-1920).

Female trustees were rare before the First World War—at the Lakehead in 1913, with the support of the West Algoma Equal Suffrage Association and the Independent Labor Party, two women were elected trustees, former Buffalo NY journalist Miss Sara Stafford (1853-1927) to the Port Arthur Board of Education, and widow Mrs. Beatrice Maud (Higginbottom) Harvey (1872-1965) who headed the polls for the Fort William Board of Education.⁸ It was not until January 1919 that women public school trustees were elected in Ottawa, Mrs Florence Gertrude (Kenny) McDougall (1872-1969); in London, Mrs. Alberta Eliza Williams, Mrs. Fanny Derby Edwards, Mrs. Lorna G. Harris; and in Kingston, Mrs. Flora (Macdonald) Newlands (1867-1932), Miss E.G. Mowat.⁹ Madame Eugénie Lorans made a brave attempt to be elected to Ottawa's Separate School Board in 1919 but met entrenched opposition from her compatriots. Two women were unsuccessful in Hamilton in 1918; only in 1928 was Mrs. Agnes Sharpe (1887-1974), an In-

⁶ *Toronto World*, 25 Dec. 1891, 2 "Women for the School Board." *Toronto Globe*, 1 Jan. 1892, 8 letter to editor, "The Women Candidates"; 5 Jan. 1892, 8. Edith M. Luke, "Woman Suffrage in Canada," *Canadian Magazine*, V (August 1895), 328-36 focuses on Toronto.

⁷ Harrison, McDonell, Stowe-Gullen (all 1892), Clara Brett Martin (1901), Caroline Brown (1915), Mrs. Ada Mary (Brown) Courtice (1917), Miss Constance Rudyerd Boulton (1918), Mrs. Edith Lillian Groves (1919), Mrs. Adelaide Plumtre (1926). Only seven others even tried, Mrs. Agnes Vance and Mrs. V.P. Humphrey (1892), Mrs. Emily Ann (Shortt) Cummings (1903), Mrs. Mary Cockett (1913 & 1914), Mrs. Jessie (Campbell) MacIver (1919), Jennie Archdekin (1921 & 1922), Mary Agnes Watt (1922). See DCB for biographies of Courtice, Cummings and Martin. *Toronto World*, 29 Dec. 1917, 11, citing Boulton. Many women candidates were teachers or former teachers (Archdekin, Brown, Groves, Watt).

⁸ Port Arthur *Daily News*, 7-8 Jan. 1913. Fort William *Daily Times-Journal*, 4 Jan. 1913; 9 Jan. 1914.

⁹ Widow Mrs. Harriet Ann Boomer (1835-1921) had earlier been appointed a member of the London school board by city council, but was never elected. London *Advertiser*, 23 Dec. 1918, 2 Jan. 1919. Ottawa *Evening Journal*, 17, 24 & 30 Dec. 1918, 3-4 & 7 Jan. 1919. *Daily British Whig*, 2, 4 & 7 Jan. 1919.

dependent Labor Party activist, elected.¹⁰ In each case their electoral success was the result of careful organization and canvassing on the part of women's groups, often with the support of men's organizations. But, having proved that women could be elected as trustees, women's groups did not maintain the pressure or canvassing, and thereafter women were left to run on their own merits. These few women trustees confirm Bashevkin's thesis that, if elected, women make a policy difference, but the evidence also confirms her thesis that Ontario women failed to develop sustainable organizations and strategies for electoral success.¹¹

If education fell within women's sphere, progress would be glacial at the municipal council level. The first woman elected as a Toronto city councillor was suffragist Mrs. Constance Easton Hamilton (1862-1945) in 1920, followed by the wealthy Mrs. Ethel Small in 1921, both elected with substantial help from women's organizations.¹² In Hamilton it was not until 1931 when *Herald* journalist Miss Nora Frances Henderson (1897-1949), was chosen by the Local Council of Women and re-elected councillor for four terms. Former trustee Mrs. Agnes

Sharpe joined her as alderman in 1933. Another twenty years passed before Ottawa elected Charlotte Whitton (1896-1975) to its Board of Control in 1951, and Mrs. May Nickson (1918-2010) its first city councillor in 1955. London elected Mrs. Margaret Alberta (Thomson) Fullerton (1909-1991) in December 1953 as its first female councillor.

Occasionally women who had electoral experience as school trustees (Torontoians Brown, Groves, Plumptre, Luckock) were emboldened to accept nomination as municipal councillors and members of the Legislative Assembly. But electoral success at the school board or municipal level meant little at the provincial and federal levels where political parties controlled the electoral process.

The Party Machines and Women

While women were trying their political wings in school board politics, progressive political parties (Liberals, Socialists, Labour) concluded that women, if given the vote, might be useful to their cause. As the American suffragist, Carrie Chapman Catt, prophesied, "Like a maelstrom, the political parties are

¹⁰ Ottawa *Evening Journal*, 30 Dec. 1918, "Strong opposition already for woman. Madame Lorans advised to keep out of public life;" 3 Jan. 1919, 8. Hamilton *Herald*, 4 Dec. 1928. Sharpe served 1929-1933.

¹¹ Bashevkin, *Toeing the Lines*, 67. Two studies confirm that women trustees had a definite impact. Kari Delhi, "They rule by sympathy: the feminization of pedagogy," *Canadian Journal of Sociology*, 19 no. 2 (1994), 195-216 discusses the 1892 election of women trustees and their support for kindergartens. Terry Crowley, "Parents in a hurry: the early Home and School Movement in Ontario," *Social History*, 19:38 (Nov. 1986), 323-342, discusses Ada Mary Courtice and Dr. Caroline Brown.

¹² Toronto *Globe*, 27 Dec. 1919, 2; 31 Dec. 1919, 10. Philadelphia-born socialite Mrs. Sidney Small (nee Ethel Dallas Horstmann, granddaughter of Republican William Darragh Kelley), had support from the Women's Liberal Association, the Women's Conservative Association, the Jewish Women's Club, the Home and School Council and the St Joseph's Alumnae, Toronto *Globe*, 22 Dec. 1920, 10 "Women endorse Woman Candidate." Toronto *Daily Star*, 2 Jan. 1923, 13 "Bitter attacks aid Mrs. Small in notable victory."

bound to sweep you in sooner or later.”¹³ Socialists led the way in Ontario. Margaret Haile, former General Secretary for the State Socialist League of Massachusetts, who appeared on the ballot for North Toronto in the 29 May 1902 general election, replaced the Ontario Socialist League’s first choice, Mrs. Mary (May) Darwin, sister of Robert Glocking, secretary of the Ontario Bureau of Labor. “The object of the nominators,” reported the *Toronto Globe*, “is to conduct an educational campaign on behalf of woman suffrage.” Three days later, officials of the Ontario Attorney-General’s department told the *Globe* “there can be no doubt that a woman cannot sit as a member of the Legislature. They therefore say that for Mrs. Darwin’s name to be placed on the ballot in North Toronto would probably result in the election being upset.” Whatever the reason for switching from a married woman to an unmarried one, Haile’s nomination was accepted. Only men could vote for her.¹⁴

The Ontario Liberal Party under Newton Rowell (1911-17) repeatedly advanced the right of married women to vote in municipal elections and claimed that the Conservative government was afraid to do so because women might

tip the balance in favour of prohibition, known as “local option.” In Toronto particularly, women emerged as useful allies in the federal and provincial elections of 1911. The Toronto Women’s Liberal Association emerged about 1913, and the Ontario Women’s Liberal Association not long after.¹⁵ The Hamilton Women’s Liberal Association was formed in April 1914. During the June 1914 election, the party had future candidate Mrs. Grant Needham tour ridings to organize and speak to women on behalf of Liberal leader Newton Rowell.¹⁶ In May 1917 the Ontario association engaged Mrs. Margaret Hyslop, the Dominion organizer for the Women’s Christian Temperance Union, as field secretary to organize “societies of Liberal women in every corner of Ontario.” One reason why political associations had emerged, said Mrs. Hyslop, was “the impossibility of discussing political issues in non-partisan societies,” such as the Local and National Councils of Women and the Imperial Order Daughters of the Empire. In 1917 the Toronto Association had 900 members, and already included as vice-presidents future candidates Mrs. Florabel Dilworth and Mrs. Henrietta Bundy.¹⁷

Arthur Van Koughnet organized the

¹³ Cited in Veronica Strong-Boag, *The Parliament of Women: The National Council of Women of Canada 1893-1929* (Ottawa, 1976), 335. Kirstin Thoennes Keller, *Carrie Chapman Catt: A Voice for Women* (Minneapolis: Compass Books, 2005).

¹⁴ *Toronto Globe*, 25 April 1902, 1, “A Woman Candidate”; *Globe*, 28 April 1902, 1, “Woman Not Eligible.” *Toronto Star*, 22 May 1902, 1 “No Interest at the Nominations”; *Star*, 30 May 1902, 2 election results. Linda Kealey discusses May Darwin and Margaret Haile in “Canadian Socialism and the Woman Question, 1900-1914,” *Labour/Le Travail*, 13 (Spring 1984), 84-86, and in *Enlisting Women for the Cause: Women, Labour and the Left in Canada 1890-1920* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1998).

¹⁵ Bashevkin, *Toeing the Lines*, chapter 5, 114-35, “Women’s Organizations in the Major Parties.”

¹⁶ *Toronto Globe*, 27 June 1914, 12 “Mrs. Needham’s Tour of Ontario.”

¹⁷ *Toronto Globe*, 27 April 1917, 10 Toronto Liberals; 12 May 1917, 10 Ontario Liberals.

first Conservative party woman's auxiliary in Toronto in 1911. In 1917 his wife, Gertrude Van Koughnet, president of the Toronto Women's Conservative Club, took pride in the fact, "that since the war the association had neither held political meetings nor forwarded any political propaganda."¹⁸ During the war, they, like Liberal women, busied themselves with distributing comforts to soldiers. Suffragist and Toronto public school trustee Miss Constance Boulton (1864-1940) was president of the Toronto Women's Conservative Club in 1921-23, and a member of the 1920 Platform committee of the National Council of Women, as were Constance Hamilton and Emily Cummings of Toronto. Conservative policies held little appeal for progressive women interested in social and moral reform. The party was more exclusionary of women, as we shall see, yet retained a strained hold on women like Dr. Caroline Brown, Ethel Small, and prohibitionist Dr. Minerva Reid. It is striking that no Conservative woman was able to win a nomination 1919-1937.¹⁹

Astute analysts like Anne Anderson Perry and Charlotte Whitton saw these clubs as "merely the tools of the men's party organizers and organizations." In

her famous 1946 essay, "Are Canadian Women a Flop in Politics?" Whitton was scornful that "These really good citizens, along with the immobilized thousands in our great women's organizations (pledged to non-political when they really mean non-party action) serve as sounding boards for "what the women want"... One end result is that neither within their own party organizations nor within many of the strong women's groups is there more than a minority, prepared to support informed and vigorous women who might "inconvenience" the party leaders or the machine, might, above all, force clear-cut policy and substantial over-hauling."²⁰

A fine example of an "informed and vigorous" woman was Fort William city librarian Mary J. L. Black (1879-1939), a Liberal party activist torn between political independence and her party. The experience of coalition government under Drury and at the federal level, Borden and Meighen, convinced her that party government was preferable to coalitions and independents. Speaking in support of Elizabeth Allen in 1923, she said "democracy required party government. It tended to discipline, and the citizen like the soldier who lacked discipline was as useless in the

¹⁸ Toronto *World*, 8 Apr. 1911. Toronto *Globe*, 14 April 1911, 9, "Mr. Van Koughnet is again president"; 20 June 1914, 4 Campaign notes; 6 May 1915, 8; 17 May 1917, 9, "Tory organizer cheers the women"; 12 April 1918, 8. Regina *Leader*, 13 Oct. 1927, 10, "Van Koughnets among notables" states Arthur Van Koughnet is the "political godfather of the Women's Conservative Clubs of Canada."

¹⁹ Toronto *World*, 29 June 1914, 2 Boulton. Toronto *Globe*, 15 Sept. 1921, 7; 11 April 1923 Boulton, 13. Anne Perry has a devastating critique of how 360 women delegates were ignored by the national Conservative party at its 1927 Winnipeg convention in her "Is Women's Suffrage a Fizzle," *Maclean's Magazine* (1 Feb. 1928).

²⁰ Anne Anderson Perry, "What's Wrong with Women's Clubs?" *Canadian Comment* (Sept. 1933), 15. Whitton, *Saturday Night*, 26 Jan. 1946.

battle of life as a fan in hell. Coalition had proved a failure and group government had broken down in Ontario.”²¹ Her enthusiasm for independent political action dimmed after her experience as a school trustee, and she realized that her support in 1917 and 1921 for erstwhile Liberal-Unionist Dr Robert J. Manion was pointless as long as he sat on the Conservative opposition benches. Her enthusiasm for disciplined political parties also dimmed as she realized how little influence women could exert within party ranks.

Unlike Mary Black, most women avoided party politics, preferring to achieve reform through lobbying, as they had been doing for years—what Anne Perry deplored as “the resolution habit.” The minority drawn into parties often found the experience frustrating. Independent federal candidate Edith Kerr Macdonald (1870-1957) told *Chatelaine* magazine, “Women soon saw that they were to be allowed by the machine no real part in the political life of the party—saw that they had no voice in the selection of delegates to the party conventions, no voice in the choice of the party candidates, they were not to be admitted to any party caucus. They had no voice in anything, and so many women who had thought and intended to be of some use in the national political life became discouraged, and gave up attempting to be a factor.”²²

The women candidates 1919-1929

would have mixed experience with the party machines. First though, a brief summary of Ontario politics in the 1920s as background to their campaigns.

The Ontario Political Situation in the 1920s

Under the hapless leadership of Sir William Hearst, the Sault Ste Marie lawyer, the Conservatives collapsed in the Ontario general election of 1919, dropping from 84 seats to 25. The Ontario Temperance Act (OTA) of 1916 was a major factor in this defeat. The Liberal Party of Ontario was in even worse shape, going through four leaders between 1917 and 1923, Newton Rowell, William Proudfoot, Hartley Dewart and Wellington Hay. It was a party split between “drys” and “wets,” rural and urban, with little appeal to city dwellers.²³

The winners in the Ontario election of 1919 were an agrarian party, the United Farmers of Ontario (UFO), who allied themselves with eleven members of the Independent Labour Party and three “loose fish,” to form a government under Ernest C. Drury (1878-1968), who became the eighth premier of Ontario. It was a harbinger of how unstable and shaky this alliance was that Drury had not even been a candidate in the 1919 election, and had to run in a by-election to enter the legislature following his appointment to the office of Premier. By

²¹ *Daily Times-Journal*, 23 June 1923.

²² “Why I failed to be elected,” *Chatelaine* (Oct. 1930), 17, 37-38, accounts from women candidates. Macdonald, daughter of Liberal Senator William Kerr, was the first woman elected to the Cobourg town council in 1926 and ran as an independent in the federal election of 1930 for Northumberland riding.

²³ Peter Oliver, “The Ontario Liberal Party in the 1920s: a Study in Political Collapse,” in *Public & Private Persons: the Ontario Political Culture 1914-1934* (Toronto: Clarke Irwin, 1975), 127-54.

1923, the farmers and urban labour men had no more in common than at the start, and had satisfied neither the agrarian nor the labour movements. Attorney-General Raney's enforcement of Hearst's Ontario Temperance Act had alienated everyone except strict prohibitionists. Meantime, in 1920 the Conservative Party elected a new leader G. Howard Ferguson of Kemptville, the controversial former Minister of Lands and Forests under Hearst, and he set the party on a new aggressive course of opposition to Drury and the Farmer-Labour alliance. The Conservatives had had enough of Methodist do-gooders like Hearst. Not so the feckless Liberal Party that replaced Hartley Dewart with pro-temperance Wellington Hay as their leader.

The Conservative party under Ferguson overwhelmed the unpopular Farmer-Labour alliance in 1923, even Premier Drury losing his seat. The Liberal Party won only 14 seats, with 21.8% of the popular vote. Its leaders Wellington Hay and Hartley Dewart lost their seats. Conservatives captured 75 of the 111 seats, including London, Fort William, and all ten seats in urban Toronto, where the electorate took so little interest that the total vote polled was slightly over 144,000 compared with a vote of over 224,000 in 1919.²⁴

In 1926, Howard Ferguson's Conservative party won 72 of the 112 seats, the Liberals under W.E.N. Sinclair only 14 seats (21 with Independent Liberals). The 1929 Ontario election was another

debacle for the Liberals. They nominated 87 candidates for the 112 constituencies, up from only 52 in 1926, and increased their popular vote from 24.8% in 1926 to 32.6% in 1929, but won only 13 seats. Howard Ferguson's Conservatives took 90 of the 112 seats (92 with Independent Conservatives).

The 1919 Ontario Election Ottawa West and Toronto Northeast

The October 1919 Ontario general election was the first in which all women could vote and be candidates. The contests in Ottawa and Toronto epitomize the tension between partisanship and non-partisanship, which Bashevkin argues was characteristic of politically engaged Ontario women.

It was Mrs. Ralph Smith, the first woman elected to British Columbia's Legislative Assembly in 1918, who galvanized the women of Ottawa into action. She was in town to attend the National Industrial Conference, and profited from the occasion to address the Local Council of Women and a mass meeting of women sponsored by the Ottawa Women's Club on "Woman's Part in the in the Industrial Life of Canada During the War and Since" in which she urged her audience to demand "equal pay for equal work." "Now that you have the franchise," she declaimed, "go right after what you want, and if the legislators do not do it for love of you, they will for fear of you."²⁵

The day after her address to the Lo-

²⁴ Toronto *Globe* 26 June 1923, 13 "Women Fare Badly in Ballot Battle."

²⁵ Ottawa *Citizen*, 16 Sept. 1919, 10; 19 Sept. 1919, 10 Smith.

cal Council of Women, the Ottawa District Women's Christian Temperance Union, representing 1400 women, met to discuss the issue of fielding a woman candidate. "There is an unnatural opposition to women in Parliament," said one woman. The District WCTU unanimously passed a resolution to remedy that situation: "That the Ottawa District Women's Christian Temperance Union is determined to support any woman brought forward by the woman's organizations of this city who pledges herself to support the following program (1) The Ontario Temperance Act (2) Mothers' Pension (3) The custodial care of the feeble-minded (4) The amendments to the Health Act (5) The principle of equal pay for equal work (6) The co-guardianship of children."²⁶

Following a "Grand Mass Meeting" 18 September 1919, a committee was formed to consider the feasibility of fielding a woman candidate and to suggest a possible name. Mrs. Justenia C. Sears (1859-1938) had already been mentioned by the WCTU, and at another mass meeting of women 30 September, chaired by Elizabeth Shortt, wife of economic historian Adam Shortt, Mrs. Sears was officially chosen as an Independent candidate for the riding of Ottawa West.



Justenia C. Sears, the first female candidate chosen legally for the Legislative Assembly.

A native of Glengarry, Mrs. Sears was a self-made woman, widowed at an early age, who "in the face of adversity has made her own way in the world, raised, educated and immolated on the altar of patriotism her only son." She toiled twenty years as a bookkeeper for the city of Ottawa tax collecting office, then after the death of her son Captain Archie Sears at the Battle of the Somme 1916, took over her son's in-

terest in the brokerage and insurance firm of Courtney, Sears and Brennan. In later years she would lend her business acumen to the Canadian Welfare Council, the Protestant Children's Village and the Ottawa Council of Social Agencies, and become a founding member of Ottawa's Women's Conservative Association.²⁷

The only basis on which Justenia Sears could run was as an Independent, since the other parties had already selected their candidates for Ottawa West. Women, said Mrs. Shortt, were not opposed to men or to party government. "Do not get in your minds the idea of a woman's party. We have asked and in fact we have secured the franchise as citizens in the full sense of the word. Woman's cause is man's cause, and I always feel that women as a whole wish to benefit the country as a whole. Co-operation with man is the best way... A party nominee

²⁶ *Ottawa Citizen*, 17 Sept. 1919, 12 WCTU.

²⁷ For Justenia Sears (nee Mackenzie), see *Dictionary of Glengarry Biography*, and *Ottawa Evening Citizen*, 10 January 1938, obituary, photograph and editorial. She died in an Ottawa street car 8 Jan. 1938.

is more or less bound... Now if we have an independent woman candidate, she is untrammelled by party affiliations, line, policy or whip. She is a freelance." Mrs. Sears rather amusingly observed that "she had no politics, [because] in fact she had never had a chance to have any." She criticized the *Ottawa Journal* for labelling her a candidate of the Women's Party. "Men have come out as independents in the past ... were they called the Men's Party?" "Women candidates seem strange to you. You'll have to get used to them," was her blunt riposte.²⁸ The determination of the Sears campaign to avoid the label "Woman's Party" derived from the abortive 1918 attempt to form a Woman's Party in Ontario.²⁹ Mrs Sears had to finance her campaign personally, assisted by many WCTU women, and had no scrutineers.

Meantime, in the provincial capital, the Liberal Party in Toronto Northeast met 10 October 1919 to select two candidates, one for Seat A and one for Seat B. It was recognition of the party's weak-

ness in Toronto that Seat A was conceded to the Conservative candidate, the Minister of Education, the Rev. Henry J. Cody. The unanimous choice for Seat B was Henrietta Thompson Bundy (1868?-1941), known by her husband's name Mrs. J. Wesley Bundy, president of the Toronto Women's Liberal Association and a party activist for some years. The comfortably well-off wife of a businessman, Mrs. Bundy was educated at Kitchener model and high school, at Ottawa Normal school, taught for several years, married in 1895, and had the misfortune to outlive her children.³⁰

There were now two candidates in the province, one steering clear of party politics, and one representing a political party and a political platform. For women voters, the great issue of October 1919 was the maintenance of the Ontario Temperance Act, and the referendum on prohibition. Both Mrs. Sears and Mrs. Bundy supported the Ontario Temperance Act. Both favoured mothers' pensions, equal pay for equal work,



Mrs. J. Wesley Bundy

²⁸ *Ottawa Citizen*, 1 Oct. 1919, 16. *Ottawa Journal* 13 Oct. 1919, 2; 4 Oct. 1919, 18 riposte.

²⁹ Veronica Jane Strong-Boag, *The Parliament of Women: the National Council of Women of Canada 1893-1929* (Ottawa: National Museums of Canada, 1976), 334-35.

³⁰ "Henrietta Bundy," *National Reference Book on Canadian Men and Women* 5th ed., 134-35 photo. *Toronto Globe* 11 Oct. 1919, 8, "Liberals Nominate Woman for Seat B, N.E. Toronto." *Toronto Star*, 15 April 1941, 17, 28 & 33 photo., "Leader of Women Mrs. J.W. Bundy Dies." Mrs. Bundy would be convener of many committees for the Toronto Local Council of Women, and a supporter of the League of Nations.

a minimum wage, measures to reduce the high cost of living, and better housing. In addition to this, Mrs. Sears advocated co-guardianship of children, care of the feeble-minded, and proportional representation. There was a great deal of overlap between the platforms of Conservative, Liberal and Labor parties, as the *Ottawa Journal* noted in a long editorial comparing Mrs. Sears' platform to that of Conservative Hammet Hill.³¹

In accepting her nomination in Toronto Northeast in 1919, Mrs Bundy outlined what was probably the view of most women towards politics, on the threshold of their involvement as political actors.

"In accepting the nomination, I must confess that it was only after a great deal of hesitation, after consideration and reconsideration, after trying to get someone else, that I finally decided to allow my name to stand for nomination. The launching out into public life and going through an election is certainly a new era for the women. However, I do believe the hearty co-operation of women is



Dr. Caroline Brown

required in the Legislature, not only on the question of reconstruction measures, economic, industrial, but moral and social reform, particularly pertaining to women and children... We do not ever want to become party machines... If the entry of women into politics does not have the effect of uplifting and elevating politics it would have been far better that women kept out of it altogether."³²

At least one woman sought nomination in 1919 for the Conservative party, in Toronto Northwest Seat B. The feisty Dr. Caroline Brown (1862-1936), of Scotch Irish descent and a member of the politically important Loyal Orange Lodge, one of four women members of the Toronto Board of Education, withdrew at the last minute in favour of the Provincial Secretary, the Hon. W.D. McPherson. "I think I have demonstrated my right, or the right of any other woman, to enter a party convention without being made miserable about it... I have come into the convention as a party candidate, and I hope I will be labelled as such."³³ Dr. Brown would continue to seek elected office—as a Toronto alder-

³¹ *Ottawa Journal*, 4 & 9 Oct. 1919, 4 editorials on Mrs. Sears. Her campaign publicity columns in both the *Citizen* and *Journal* are worth reading, 10-18 Oct. 1919. The consensus on women's issues can be traced in the political platforms of the National Council of Women 1912, 1917, 1920 printed in Strong-Boag, *Parliament of Women*, Appendix III-V, 429-39.

³² *Toronto Globe*, 11 Oct. 1919, 8; 18 Oct. 1919, 10; 2 March 1922, 11, "Women with Sparkling Wit."

³³ *Toronto Daily Star*, 2 Jan. 1915, 4; 26 Sept. 1919, 3; 29 Sept. 1919, 13; 3 Oct. 1919, 12. "Dr. Brown was a former teacher in Alexander Muir School, and left teaching to take up the practice of medicine." In 1932 Dr. Brown was hauled by her housekeeper before the police magistrate and bound to keep the peace. She died at the Ontario Hospital Whitby from cerebral arterial sclerosis. Ontario death registration 1936-026516.

man for Ward 5 in December 1921, as the Conservative candidate for M.P. representing Toronto Northwest in October 1925.

The 1923 Election in London

In London, the Liberal Party was in disarray, squeezed between a star Conservative candidate and the Labour party. There was a concerted campaign in the *Free Press* to bring back Sir Adam Beck, the chairman of the Ontario Hydro-Electric Commission, as London's MLA. Once Beck agreed to stand as the Conservative nominee, the local Liberal party disintegrated. The coup de grace was delivered by the Liberal Toronto *Globe* in an editorial 6 June 1923 urging the voters of London to elect Sir Adam Beck and the Liberals to refrain from putting a candidate in the field. Die-hard Liberals met the next day and nominated lawyer U.A. Buchner. Within days, after stormy meetings, he withdrew because the party split into quarrelling factions.³⁴

Only on nomination day June 14, did the party endorse a candidate, forty-six year old journalist Miss Isabel Cowan Armstrong (1877-1951), the daughter of the former Liberal M.P. for Middlesex South, James Armstrong, and a Liberal party activist who had had a resolution adopted at the national Liberal leadership convention of 1919.³⁵ She immedi-



ately resigned her position with the London *Advertiser*. "There are a number of the party leaders," reported the *Free Press* ten days earlier, "who cannot quite reconcile themselves to accepting a woman as a leader. Several expressed objections to such today. They do not mind the women taking an active part in politics, but that part should be confined to voting and getting out the vote. When it comes to the women aspiring to the position of M.L.A., that is a different question entirely." Although she entered the campaign with little support from party bigwigs and minimal funding, she had the full news and editorial support of the Liberal *Advertiser*.³⁶ In the few days left to campaign, Miss Armstrong set out her platform "Better Homes" which

³⁴ London *Evening Free Press*, 6 & 14 June 1923.

³⁵ London *Evening Advertiser*, 13 June 1923, 13 & 19, "Isabel Armstrong. Her Story and Her Purpose." Ottawa *Citizen*, 11 July 1947, 26; 27 Oct. 1951, 4 obituary. Armstrong worked for the London *Echo*, London *Free Press*, Regina *Leader*, and Toronto *Star*. Marjory Lang, *Women Who Made the News: Female Journalists in Canada 1880-1945* (Montreal: McGill-Queens University Press, 1999).

³⁶ *Evening Free Press*, 4 June 1923, 2. "In 1922, Andrew Haydon, a lawyer who headed the National Liberal Council, King, and Joseph Atkinson purchased the London *Advertiser* to compete with the Con-

included “the advocacy and support of mothers’ allowances, workmen’s compensation, minimum wage, old age insurance, equal education, adequate care of the feeble-minded, efficient prohibition by strengthening the OTA and by its clean and impartial enforcement, and the protection of public ownership by retaining non-partisan control of all public utilities, including the hydro-electric, and by preserving the principle that no paid servant of the people should engage in party politics.” Characterized by the *Free Press* as the “sacrifice candidate,” she sought out the female and labour vote at the CNR car shops and the Penman and McCormick factories, noting that 54% of the electorate were women, and that she “was not only a practical labor woman and a daughter of a farmer, but had worked for others all her life and knew what it was to work long hours without extra remuneration.” The city clerk estimated that between 60-70% of the ballots cast on election day 25 June were by women. They obviously did not vote for Isabel Armstrong.³⁷

The 1923 Election in Fort William

The Fort William Liberal nomination was openly contested unlike those in other ridings where the women were handed the nomination. The first names mentioned as possible Liberal candidates



Sarah Elizabeth Allen

were men. Then came the surprising news that Liberal women had their own candidate in mind. The local newspaper dramatized it as a battle of the sexes. “Thrills are expected at tonight’s meeting of the Fort William Liberal Association, when an unprecedented number of women is expected to turn out and claim heavy representation as delegates to the district convention, where they will back the candidacy of Mrs B.O. Allen... Hearing this, the men are drumming up their forces, and it would not surprise those who have studied the situation if a lively meeting developed at which the advocates of a “man only” standard bearer would clash with members of both sexes who believe in the prospects of Mrs Allen.”³⁸

servative London *Free Press*.” Mark Bourrie, “The myth of the ‘gagged clam’: William Lyon Mackenzie King’s press relations,” *Global Media Journal* (Canadian ed.), 3 (2) (2010), 13-30, http://www.gmj.uottawa.ca/1002/v3i2_bourrie_e.html.

³⁷ London *Evening Free Press*, 14-22 June 1923. London *Evening Advertiser*, 14-26 June 1923.

³⁸ *Daily Times-Journal*, 27 April, 3 May 1923. *News-Chronicle*, 3 May 1923, 1-2.

The *Daily Times-Journal* estimated that not more than ten women belonged to the Fort William Liberal Association. This did not deter the women. They arrived at the April 27 meeting to select delegates "early and in numbers." A committee of three men and three women selected the names of 51 delegates, in addition to the 20 members of the executive, who were to choose the candidate. At the Liberal convention held May 2, said to be the largest gathering of Liberals in years, forty-three year old Mrs. Elizabeth Allen narrowly won the nomination over three men on the second ballot, with 33 votes, against 31 for two men who moved and seconded a resolution that the nomination be made unanimous by the convention. By month's end, third place candidate, lawyer D.R. Byers reneged on his promise to support Mrs. Allen. He announced that he would run as an independent, free of "group or clique."

Mrs. B.O. Allen (nee Sarah Elizabeth Jarrell) was raised on the family farm, not far from the village of Armow, the geographical centre of Kincardine township. She attended the town of Kincardine high school, and qualified as a teacher.

Women Voters Ignored By All Parties EXCEPT LIBERALS

True to tradition, the Liberal Party of the riding of Fort William has lent itself to the influence of new forces and is the only party in the field, for political honors in the coming elections, which, as far as can be learned, gave the slightest consideration in convention to the great question of

EQUAL SUFFRAGE BETWEEN MEN AND WOMEN

There is nothing uncommon about this for it is only natural to associate "Liberal Ideas" as favorable to change or in support of political freedom and equal suffrage of men and women.

Will Women Vote For Her Sex, Or Sneer At The Idea Like The Other Parties Are Doing ?

Women! You have it within your power to elect a woman representative in the coming election. You control the greatest number of votes, you have an able woman to represent you, and not only you, but the whole district. Come on out, stick up for your rights, roll up a vote for your candidate that will make every woman in Canada proud of you.

Vote and Work for Mrs. B.O. ALLEN

Sometime after her marriage in 1904 and the birth of her only child in 1906, the Allens moved to Fort William in Thunder Bay District where they joined hundreds of former Bruce County residents who had settled at the Lakehead. Her

WOMEN AS REPRESENTATIVES IN PARLIAMENT

It is said that canvassers for candidates in the coming election, opposed to Mrs. B. O. Allen, are using questionable arguments to discount a woman's right to representation in Parliament, and particularly the Fort William Riding.

Regardless of sex we wish to make this answer to those candidates, and for the benefit of the women voters who control 90% of the votes and who alone can elect Mrs. Allen if they desire.

The humblest woman in all Ontario has as much right to go to Parliament as any man if her cause is a righteous one, and where is the man who dares to come out, in the open, and challenge her cause, which is just as sacred as the cause of Liberty "EQUAL SUFFRAGE"?

We challenge any candidate to question Mrs. B. O. Allen's ability to represent the Fort William Riding, as capable as any of the three men, despite their contemptuous deriding of a woman representative and ridiculing the idea.

Women Voters---You Are On Trial!

The cause you have to defend in the coming election is vital to your interests. Your future right to take your place and play your part in the destinies of your country is at stake. Drop your daily duties now, put on your hat and coat and go out and

Vote and Work for Mrs. B. O. Allen

GIVE HER A CHANCE!

Women of Fort William and District we earnestly solicit your vote for one of your own sex.

Mrs. Allen's kindly sympathy and ready smile, her persistent "GET THERE" determination will do for you what no man can do in getting sound Legislation.

You Women will be proud of her—GIVE HER A CHANCE, and VOTE FOR MRS. B. O. ALLEN.

She has declared her determination to work in the interests of widows and orphans, for the laboring girls and women and underprivileged children.

Mothers allowances should be a living allowance, not a miserable pittance.

She will fight, and fight fearlessly for suffering humanity, matching her ability with those of the opposite sex.

**Mark Your Ballot Opposite the
First Name on the Ballot**

| | |
|-------------------|---|
| ALLEN, Mrs. B. O. | X |
| BYERS, D. R. | |
| MILLS, Harry | |
| SPENCE, Frank | |

husband Benjamin Oswald Allen worked as a carpenter and millwright for a small contractor, then as agent for Massey Harris agricultural equipment. None of the addresses she lived at suggest affluence.³⁹ A supply teacher from 1914-1920, she was employed as a lecturer by the Ontario Department of Agriculture for Women's Institutes, locally and elsewhere in the province, and served as recording secretary of the Federated Women's Institutes of Ontario 1918-1920. The Fort William Women's Institute recognized her leadership qualities by proposing in 1920 to nominate her for alderman in Ward 3, but as a supply teacher she thought it unwise to seek the office.⁴⁰ In early April 1921, she was appointed assistant to Mrs. Florence Horner Sherk, editor of the *Daily Times-Journal* women's page, like her a former teacher, and in 1925 became women's page editor. She was convener of household economics, agriculture, and employment for women for the West Algoma Local Council of Women 1919-21, first vice president 1921-23, and president 1923-25, where she lobbied for an old folks home, a sanatorium, and district school nurses.

³⁹ Largely based on a family website <<http://www.jarrell.ca>> and the census for Bruce South 1881, Bruce West 1891 and 1901, Fort William 1911 Allen. Ontario marriage registration 1904-004798. Born 24 April 1880 Kincardine Township, married 24 Feb. 1904 Kincardine, died 16 Nov 1926 Fort William.

⁴⁰ *Daily Times-Journal*, 9 & 23 Dec. 1920; 2 April 1921; 28 Dec. 1925 Sherk; 16 Nov 1926 obituary. Margaret Kechnie, *Organizing rural women: the Federated Women's Institutes of Ontario, 1897-1919* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2003), 57, 76 Allen.

Unlike Isabel Armstrong in London, Mrs. Allen had the support of local Liberal executives, like grain and shipping magnate Norman Paterson, called to the Senate in 1940 by Mackenzie King, who stumped, spoke and canvassed for her throughout the campaign. Perhaps the highlight of her campaign was her masterful speech at the “rousing meeting” held June 2 in the Fort William city hall auditorium attended by over a thousand people. Wellington Hay noted it was the first time he had been on the political platform with a woman candidate. A despatch to the Toronto *Globe* reported that Mrs. Allen “proved herself a better speaker than most men... Speaking entirely extemporaneously, with a clear voice, which could be heard all over the vast building...there were grievances”, she said, “which only women could right, and she asked the electorate not to let a matter of mere sex influence them against her.”⁴¹

As in London, the Liberal Party was competing for votes with the Independent Labour Party, who in 1919 had elected Harry Mills, a likeable Welsh-born CPR locomotive engineer, whom Premier Drury appointed Minister of Mines, Thunder Bay’s first cabinet minister at the provincial level.⁴² Campaign managers had Mrs. Allen avoid talking about the OTA. Only one Liberal campaign advertisement even mentioned it, “The OTA is not an issue in this election.”

Both Mrs Allen and Harry Mills told the WCTU that they would support the full enforcement of the Ontario Temperance Act, and legislation calculated to make more difficult the production, sale and consumption of liquor. Byers came out in favour of government control of liquor sales. Fort William prohibitionists could vote for either the Drury candidate or for the Liberals, so the Liberals could not count on their votes.

The most devastating attacks on her came from a woman, French-Canadian Madame Ernestine Saucier Hamilton (1868-1940), the affluent widow of former Liberal candidate Dr. W.H. Hamilton, who could afford to publish advertisements in support of disgruntled ex-Liberal D.R. Byers. Without ever naming her, she dismissed Mrs. Allen as “the clever little woman who is carried away by her ambition.” “For the woman who leaves her school, or office, to aspire to man’s honors, I have a singular repulsion.” In another advertisement, she asked, “In the name of common sense, what is to become of the children whose mothers are away doing, or apparently “trying to do” men’s work when her own duties are neglected?” Was the childless Madame Hamilton alone among women of her age in thinking that a woman’s place was in the home?⁴³ The Conservative candidate, Frank Spence, a forty-year old pharmacist, born in Bruce County like Mrs. Al-

⁴¹ Toronto *Globe*, 28 May 1923, 2; 4 June 1923, 2, “Audience captured by lady candidate.”

⁴² The dilemma of labour members like Mills within a farmer-dominated government is analyzed by James Naylor in “Ontario Workers and the Decline of Labourism,” in *Patterns of the Past* (Toronto: Dundurn, 1988), 278-300. See also the mean-spirited editorial Port Arthur *News-Chronicle*, 31 May 1923, 9.

⁴³ *Daily Times-Journal*, 21 & 23 June 1923, Ernestine Hamilton advertisements.

TO THE ELECTORS OF FORT WILLIAM:

These letters may tire you, dear Public, for I cannot write on political subjects. My first attempt would expose my ignorance. But, I do know an honorable, clever man when I see him, and on the subject of women I am a past mistress.

I have all the respect and admiration possible, for the women who earn their own living in any respectable way; but, for the woman who leaves her school, or office, to aspire to man's honors, I have a singular repulsion. The femininity of woman is her strongest charm and the Home (with a capital H) should be her sanctuary, the place she brightens, in which she shines and where she practises with such cleverness that home rule I was hinting at the other day, that the dear men have not the least idea they are being "bossed".

If women attend to their home and social duties they have very little time to spare and none to dream of political achievements. I can understand the clever little woman who is carried away by her ambition. But what puzzles me is that intelligent men are encouraging and supporting her. I hate puzzles.

So again, I repeat, voters of the Conservative, as well as of the Liberal persuasion, vote for Mr. Byers, give him his chance. I am Liberal to the limit, but there are times when one must take a detour to arrive at the good roads.

Let us take that detour with Mr. Byers, who, not being permitted to represent the Liberal party, had to take an "Independent" detour to reach his aim. Do you not admire him for that bold step? He is today the best man on the platform.

Yes, indeed, I believe that some women have as much (if not more) brains than some men. For that very reason I am positive that not two per cent of the women voters will cast their vote to elect a female member of Parliament. Even the Honorable (?) Mr. Mills would be better than any woman. And from him, I say most fervently—

O Lord, deliver us!

Ernestine Hamilton

337 E. Syndicate Ave.

Fort William, Daily Times Journal, 21 June 1923

len, but raised in Prince Albert, Saskatchewan, slid up the middle to win.

The 1923 election in Toronto

In Toronto, independent voters favourable to Premier Drury's temperance policies coalesced to field candidates calling themselves Progressives. In mid-May 1923, they chose dentist Dr N.S. Coyne and fifty-three year old Mary Elizabeth Becker, "a prominent worker in women's organizations," and the wife of a modest life insurance agent, as candidates for Northeast Toronto. A teacher before her marriage to William Henry Becker in July 1893,

NORTH-EAST TORONTO.

RETURN DRURY

Every Person Has TWO Votes, Elect




DR. N. S. COYNE
SEAT "A"

MRS. W. H. BECKER
SEAT "B"

WE STAND FOR:

1. Drury's Radial Policy and Common Sense.
2. An HONEST Timber Policy.
3. Public Ownership of Public Utilities, With the Fullest Measure of Hydro-Electric Development.
4. A Progressive Educational Policy.
5. Advanced Social Legislation, including Mothers' Allowances, Workmen's Compensation, Care of the Feeble-minded, etc.
6. Biggs' Good Roads Policy.
7. Doherty's Aggressive Agricultural Policy.
8. Increased Representation For Toronto in the Legislature.
9. Sound Financing and Good Business Administration.
10. The O. T. A. and its Present Vigorous and Fearless Enforcement.

VOTE TO ELECT REAL REPRESENTATIVES

who will guard Toronto's interests as well as Ontario's interests in general.

she was the daughter of the Rev. David B. Sherk, a minister of the United Brethren in Christ in Waterloo County. She was particularly active in the Toronto Local Council of Women as convenor of important committees, and in the Home and School movement founded by Ada Mary Courtice. She served as executive secretary of the Ontario Federation of Home and School Clubs 1922/23-1926/27 and edited its newsletter in 1924. In Northwest Toronto, the Progressives fielded school trustee, Mrs. Edith Lelean Groves (nee Ed-

ith Lillian Lelean), a widow, former Toronto teacher and the author of twenty-one theatrical works for children. Both women attended meetings of the Toronto District Women's Christian Temperance Union and "declared themselves staunch supporters of the OTA and its enforcement" and appeared in Massey Hall with Premier Drury. Neither woman had a chance in the disaster which overwhelmed the unpopular Farmer-Labour alliance.⁴⁴

As for the four women candidates, the Toronto prohibitionist women polled more votes than the two Liberal women. Mary Becker (1869-1961) continued to be active in Home and School Clubs, and as a speaker at women's clubs. She was still urging members of the WCTU to use "every influence and the franchise in doing away with the liquor traffic" in 1937. Edith Lelean Groves (1870-1931) continued advocating for sub-normal children as a school trustee, and had a school on Dovercourt Road named after her. Isabel Armstrong moved to Ottawa to work organizing women in the National Liberal headquarters, as director of the Women's Division, eventually returning to journalism with

the Ottawa *Citizen* in 1928 as music and drama critic until her retirement in 1947.⁴⁵ Mrs. Allen would meet a tragic end three years later, dying at only 46 of "sub-acute bacteraemia" following a tonsillectomy for a retropharyngeal abscess.⁴⁶

Disillusionment Sets In: The 1926 and 1929 Ontario Elections

Nine years after enfranchisement, Liberal and Conservative women were equally disillusioned about the prospects of women candidates at either the provincial or federal level. The novelty of women candidates had worn off, and it was no longer possible to be elected simply because one was a woman. They had experience now in two provincial elections (1919, 1923) and four federal (1917, 1921, 1925, 1926), prior to the December 1926 Ontario general election. The Toronto *Globe* interviewed former presidents of women's associations, including Constance Boulton, Mrs. Grant Needham and Caroline Brown, in July 1926. "There is hardly a chance that any

⁴⁴ Toronto *Daily Star*, 18 May 1923, 1, "Drury Friends Enter Fight in This City." Toronto *Globe* 26 May 1923, 19 Becker photograph; 1 June 1923, 17 WCTU; 8 June 1923, 15, "Raney and Drury are Complimented"; 15 June, 1923, 15; 26 June 1923, 13 "Women Fare Badly in Ballot Battle." For a general discussion of the issues in 1923, see Toronto *Daily Star*, 8 June 1923, 12 "Politics Debated by Women Praise Political Parties," speeches by Mrs Becker, Mrs Needham, Miss Gilmore, Mrs Andrew Glen, each representing a different party.

⁴⁵ LAC Mackenzie King papers MG26 J1 contain several letters and memoranda exchanged with King by Isabel Armstrong in her capacity as Director of the Women's Division, National Liberal Bureau.

⁴⁶ For Becker, see census Waterloo North, Berlin, 1891 Sherk, 1901 Becker; Toronto city directories; Mount Hope cemetery Kitchener; *Daily Star*, 18 Jan. 1921, 10; 16 & 22 Feb. 1921; 5 Dec. 1923, 20 Home and School Clubs; *Globe*, 20 Feb. 1935, 5; 20 Feb. 1936, 5; 29 May 1937, 10. Kitchener-Waterloo *Record*, 11 April 1961, 7. Her obituary says she was born 3 Dec. 1869 in West Montrose, Woolwich Twp, Waterloo County, but her birth was registered in Oxford County. For Edith Groves, see Toronto *Globe*, 23 Feb. 1925, 9 "Laudable Efforts of Earnest Woman Bring Own Reward;" 19 Oct. 1931, 1-2, 14 obit. For Allen, see *Daily Times-Journal* 16-17 Nov. 1926 and death certificate.

woman will run in any Toronto riding in the coming [federal] election, and there is not even the faintest ray of hope that she could secure a majority," they said. "Toronto is a man's town, and the federal campaign a man's business. He will let her sit on the Board of Education; he has even been known to give her a place among the city fathers, but he definitely does not like her flirting with provincial or federal possibilities. He wants her vote—to elect him, but not to represent him."⁴⁷

The experience of Conservative Dr. Caroline Brown in 1924 and 1925 is instructive on this point. The provincial seat of Toronto Northwest Seat A became vacant in May 1924 with the resignation of long-time Conservative MLA Thomas Crawford. The *Toronto Star* reported, "Northwest Toronto women are out with their war paint on and it is a possibility that Dr. Caroline Brown, school trustee, may jump into the conflict." The Conservative convention would not admit delegates from the Toronto Women's Conservative Association who were behind Dr. Brown. Only women from the Ward 5 Conservative Women's auxiliary were eligible. Said a member of Dr. Brown's association, "Women's auxiliaries were all right in the old days when women didn't have a vote, but now that they have the franchise they are entitled to equal rights and representation at conventions with the men. We certainly resent the treatment that we have received."⁴⁸ She was rebuffed again

in October 1925. The Toronto Women's Conservative Association nominated Dr. Brown to oppose the sitting Tory M.P., former mayor, Tommy Church, who had already been nominated at a convention called by the Central Conservative Association of Toronto. Once again the central body would not recognize the women's association. The women were not alone in opposing the party machine that engineered Church's nomination. Male dissidents formed a rival Toronto Northwest Conservative Association, but even with three Conservative candidates on the ballot for Toronto Northwest, Tommy Church easily took the seat, with Dr. Brown taking only 545 votes. Reflecting on her experience, Dr. Brown told the *Globe*, "I would like to see a good woman get to Ottawa, but I am sure there's no chance for a Conservative woman in a Toronto riding. The men won't support them; they don't want them. Last year when I ran, they didn't lift a finger to help me. They're hidebound by tradition."⁴⁹ The reluctance of male-dominated party associations to accept delegates chosen by women was not limited to the Conservative Party. In December 1929, the West York Women's Liberal Association passed a resolution requesting "equality of representation for women at the coming Liberal convention" and urged the Ontario Women's Liberal Association to "to do their utmost to establish the status of women in this respect throughout the Province."⁵⁰

⁴⁷ *Toronto Globe*, 14 July 1926, 11-12, "No Opportunity for Woman to Contest Toronto Seat."

⁴⁸ *Toronto Star*, 11 June 1924, 13, "Strong Probability a Woman Will Run."

⁴⁹ *Toronto Globe*, 14 June 1926, 11-12.

⁵⁰ *Toronto Globe*, 2 Dec. 1929, 13 "Equal Representation Asked by Women for Liberal Parley."

The two women candidates for the 1926 election were long-time Liberal party activists. Mrs. Florabel Dilworth (1876?-1942) was a life-time resident of Toronto, whose widowed mother Henrietta Fletcher, left with three teenage girls, took in lodgers in the 1890s to survive. In 1893 Florabel married drug-gist Arthur Fielding Dilworth when she was only 16. Both were Methodists. They would have only one child.⁵¹ Between 1911 and 1926, Florabel Dilworth had moved from Bleecker Street east of Sherbourne to Normandy Avenue in eastern Toronto just north of St. John's Cemetery Norway in the provincial riding of Toronto Woodbine. She was a constituency vice-president in the Toronto Women's Liberal Association by 1917. In line with Liberal party policy, she strongly defended the Ontario Temperance Act. "I have never seen a drunken man on the street and before the O.T.A. I met them by the dozens... It is the women and children who will suffer by the removal of the O.T.A...There are thousands of families in Toronto today who will go beneath the poverty line if beer and liquor are made more available."⁵²

Even the Conservative *Hamilton Herald* welcomed the candidacy of Liberal Annie C. Carpenter (1875-1949), known as Mrs. Harry Carpenter, in 1926, "Complete political equality with men in-

volves the right of women to be elected as well as to vote... And yet it will probably be some time before the popular prejudice against the election of women of women to public office will be removed. In this respect Canadians are more conservative than are our friends across the line." Nee Annie May Cascaden, she came from a political family. Her father Liberal Dr. John Cascaden represented Elgin West in the Legislative Assembly 1879-1886. Her brother Dr. John H. Cascaden was the Liberal candidate for Toronto Centre East in the federal election of Oct. 1925. Her husband Henry Carpenter, a lawyer, was defeated as Liberal candidate in Hamilton West in the Sept. 1926 federal election. Like Mrs. Grant Needham, she was a party activist, being one of the charter members and presidents of the Hamilton Women's Liberal Association formed in April 1914. At the March 1922 Ontario Liberal convention, she became the first woman elected to a position on the executive of the Ontario Liberal Association as vice-chairman. She was also nominated for the party leadership; in declining she said that she appreciated the honour. "But women were just on the threshold of politics, and for many years yet the men need have no fear of women candidates for the leadership."⁵³ She was on a first name basis with Mackenzie King, addressing personal notes to him

⁵¹ Based on 1881, 1891, 1911 Canadian census for Toronto, U.S. Census 1900 St Paul MN, Ontario marriage registration Toronto 1893-#15330 where her age is given as 19, though the census records suggest a birth date of May 1876 or 1877. *Toronto Globe*, 27 April 1917, 10; 29 April 1921, 6. Buried Mount Pleasant cemetery, Toronto.

⁵² *Toronto Globe*, 23 Nov 1926, 11 photograph. *Toronto Star*, 15 Nov. 1926, 23 OTA.

⁵³ *Toronto Globe*, 2 March 1922, 1-2 executive; 3 March 1922, 2 leadership, where she is mistakenly called "Mrs. Hamilton."

as “My dear Rex.”⁵⁴ Her biographer John Best suggests that she to some extent politicized the Hamilton Local Council of Women and that during her presidency “the council’s pronouncements and resolutions became increasingly progressive and politically activist in tone.” Like Mrs. Bundy and Mrs. Needham, she was active in the Local and National Council of Women. The *Herald* characterized her as “a figure of outstanding interest, not among Liberal women necessarily, but among all liberally-minded women who are seeking the betterment of social and moral conditions and the upholding of high principles.” The only reason she consented to run was because she believed that continuance of the Ontario Temperance Act was a “moral question.” She was critical of Conservative Premier Ferguson’s intention to permit the sale of liquor under government control, and his opposition to the federal Liberal party’s program of old-age pensions.⁵⁵ In February 1926 she admitted to Mackenzie King that “with no Liberal press, no Liberal members locally, and a Liberal Riding Association inactive and dead... it is hopeless to gain a seat in Hamilton.”

Four women ran in the 30 October 1929 election, days after Black Tuesday and Black Thursday, the start of the New York stock market crash that ushered in the Great Depression. Two candidates

are atypical. Rebecca (Becky) Buhay (1896-1953), the English-born Jewish Communist candidate in industrial Windsor, presages the women candidates of the Depression-era 1930’s who would face new social and economic problems. “A short stout woman... slovenly in her dress,” she was idealistic, sentimental, intense, introspective, and highly emotional, as well as “one of the party’s most impressive orators.”⁵⁶ The patrician Independent Conservative in 1929, Helen Whitfield Currie, a lawyer, was a nuisance candidate, running as a surrogate for her father, former MLA Colonel John Alistair Currie (1868-1931), to draw votes away from the man who had snatched the nomination from him.

The respected Dr. Minerva Reid (1872-1957), the independent candidate for Toronto High Park, a suffragist and former president of the Women’s Conservative Auxiliary of West York, had been long identified with temperance and prohibition. But it was as one of the founders of Women’s College Hospital and its chief of surgery, that she achieved fame. As a prohibitionist, Dr. Reid was hardly welcome in the distinctly “wet” Conservative party of Howard Ferguson. Echoing fellow Conservative Dr. Caroline Brown, Dr. Reid lashed out at her erstwhile party - “a distinct inferiority of representation is being accorded women

⁵⁴ LAC Mackenzie King papers MG26 J1 (1926), 110055-110074, mfm reel C2287.

⁵⁵ For an excellent biography of Annie May Cascaden, by John C. Best, see *Dictionary of Hamilton Biography*, III (1925-1939), 24-26. *Toronto Globe*, 28 April 1914, 2, Women’s Liberal Association; 12 May 1917, 10, speaker. *Hamilton Herald*, 9 Nov 1926, 4-5, 8. *Hamilton Spectator*, 9, 23 & 26 Nov 1926. She signed her letters to Mackenzie King as “Annie C. Carpenter.”

⁵⁶ Lita-Rose Betcherman, *The Little Band: the Clashes Between the Communists and the Canadian Establishment 1928-1932* (Ottawa: Deneau, [1982]), 9.

by the Conservative machine, and it ought not to be tolerated by Toronto womanhood." Two days earlier the Men's Central Conservative Association angered Conservative women by refusing to accept the women's list of delegates for the St. Andrew's riding convention.⁵⁷ Dr. Reid managed to secure one of the highest percentage of votes for a woman in this decade, 35.61% in Toronto High



Dr. Minerva Reid. *Toronto Daily Star* 5 Oct 1929.

Park, as an independent for the dying prohibition cause. Nearly 400 supporters of prohibition gathered at a banquet in High Park United Church in Dec. 1929 to honor Dr. Reid for her work on behalf of the cause.⁵⁸ A Toronto school trustee for Ward 7 in the 1930s, she would run again in the federal election of 1935 as the Reconstruction candidate for Toronto High Park.

Mrs Janet Grant Needham (1866-1939), the only woman Liberal candidate in 1929, had been a Liberal Party workhorse since 1913 and would continue to work tirelessly for the Liberal cause to the eve of the Second World War.⁵⁹ A true daughter of the manse, she was the daugh-

ter, granddaughter, niece and wife of Presbyterian ministers. Her father the Rev. George Grant (1837-1925) became inspector of public schools for Parry Sound and Nipissing Districts. After the death of her husband, the Rev. George Needham in 1892, she would remain a widow and assume the name Mrs. Grant Needham, combining her maiden and married names.⁶⁰ An alumna

of the Brantford (Presbyterian) Young Ladies College and the Toronto Conservatory of Music, she was principal of the Ottawa Presbyterian Ladies College 1905-08. Thereafter she found her calling as a women's organizer for organizations like the Red Cross and Liberal Party. It is unclear how she supported herself, unless she lived off an inheritance. As early as 1914, she toured ridings to organize and speak to women on behalf of Liberal leader Newton Rowell. She was a charter member and former president of the Toronto Women's Liberal Association 1923-25, the Ontario Women's Liberal Association, and a founding member of the National Federation of Women's Lib-

⁵⁷ *Toronto Daily Star*, 5 Oct. 1929, 33, photograph, "Contesting High Park in Independent Cause"; 7 Oct. 1929, 21, "Says Tory Machine Not Giving Women Chance." *Toronto Globe*, 5 Oct. 1929, 17 "Women Walk Out from Tory Session Over List Dispute."

⁵⁸ *Toronto Globe*, 5 Oct. 1925, 18; 16 Oct. 1929, 14; 10 Dec. 1929, 17; 12 Oct. 1935, 8 photo. Reid. *Toronto Star*; 10 Sept. 1925, 16. Letter of Dr. Reid to Agnes MacPhail, cited in Doris Pennington, *Agnes MacPhail, Reformer* (Toronto: Simon & Pierre, 1989), 228.

⁵⁹ *Toronto Daily Star*, 4 Oct. 1929, photo., "Ontario's Only Woman Candidate is Veteran of Many Campaigns." *Toronto Globe*, 31 Oct. 1929, 13-14, "Women candidates accept their defeat in sportsmanlike way."

⁶⁰ *Toronto Globe and Mail*, 2 Oct. 1939, 4. Census for North Norfolk 1881, Huron County 1891, Orillia 1901, 1911. Ontario death registration 1892-007351 Needham. She is buried in Egmondville cemetery, Tuckersmith Township, Ont. with her husband.

eral Clubs organized in Ottawa in June 1923.⁶¹ Unlike Annie Carpenter, she was not close to the party hierarchy. Socialized to defer to patriarchy, she was the epitome of the political woman scorned by Charlotte Whitton.⁶²

Prohibition as a Woman's Issue

Research and polling indicate that women are more likely than men to be interested in social issues and differ in their ideas about what issues should be of legislative concern. Toronto suffragist Mrs. Constance Hamilton, speaking to women voters in Willard Hall in Dec. 1919 on the eve of her election as an alderman, "had been struck by the fact that in almost all their speeches, the men talked only of things, of railways, abat-toirs and hydros, rather than of people. Women deal with human life much more than men do. In the public institutions, the children's shelters, the Homes and the like, it is the women who meet the daily problems as they arise." In a report on Mrs. Allen's meeting in the Oliver Township town hall, Murillo, in 1923, "The women speakers appealed to the women for support of a woman who would be interest-

ed in social affairs, women and children, rather than mines, pulp wood and good roads, while the men spoke on the sins of omission of the Drury administration, on the paltry sum of money spent on roads in the north in comparison with the money spent in eastern Ontario, on the Shevlin-Clarke and Backus timber deals."⁶³

Ten of the twelve women who ran 1919-1929 were supporters of prohibition,⁶⁴ even though it was a divisive issue at all levels of government, and not all women were prohibitionists.⁶⁵ Janet Grant Needham at her nomination meeting in October 1929 told her fellow Liberals, "The liquor question is almost exclusively a woman's question."⁶⁶ Prominent women outside the party machines also supported prohibition. Mrs. Elizabeth Kennedy, past grand mistress of the Ladies' Orange Benevolent Association of British America, gave consideration to running as a prohibition candidate in York West in 1929 against the minister of Health, Dr Forbes Godfrey.⁶⁷ Conservatives Dr. Minerva Reid and Charlotte Whitton, executive director of the Child Welfare Council of Ontario, and years later the first woman

⁶¹ Toronto *Globe*, 27 June 1914, 12 "Mrs. Needham's Tour of Ontario"; *Globe*, 2 March 1922, 11. Ottawa *Citizen*, 4 June 1923, 18 National Federation meeting which Mrs. Needham and Mrs. Carpenter attended.

⁶² LAC Mackenzie King papers MG26 J1, 115990, 148996, 154022-154027 illustrates her deference to party managers and their lack of appreciation for her efforts. Whitton, *Saturday Night*, 26 Jan. 1946.

⁶³ Toronto *Globe*, 27 Dec. 1919, 10. *Daily Times-Journal*, 16 June 1923, 15 Murillo.

⁶⁴ See Carol Lee Bacchi, *Liberation Deferred? The Ideas of the English-Canadian Suffragists, 1877-1918* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1983), chapter 5 Temperate Beginnings.

⁶⁵ Toronto mayor Hiltz and two school trustees attributed their defeat to their support for prohibition and the Ontario Temperance Act, Toronto *Globe*, 2 Jan. 1925, 19 & 27. Hamilton men viewed with alarm the rumour that "Ban the bar" Newton Rowell might join King's cabinet in 1926, LAC Mackenzie King papers, telegram Sept. 18, 1926, 116004. For Bundy, see Toronto *Globe*, 25 April 1919, 4; 1 Oct. 1919, 8. Dilworth, Toronto *Star*, 15 Nov 1926, "Girls won't be safe if O.T.A. is removed."

⁶⁶ Toronto *Star*, 4 Oct. 1929, 1, "Woman Candidate, First in Campaign, Scores Liquor Law."

⁶⁷ Toronto *Star*, 7 Oct. 1929, 21, "Says Tory Machine Not Giving Women Chance."

mayor of Ottawa, parted company with the Conservative party in 1926 over the Ontario Temperance Act. Whitton announced in Hamilton that “from now on until election day she will devote all her time outside of her official duties to preserving the OTA.” If prohibition was a woman’s issue, it was a millstone around their neck. This would seem explainable to McCormack - “the responses of women are moral rather than pragmatic.”⁶⁸

Conclusion

Very few Ontario women were in a position to pursue electoral politics at any level up to 1930. Finding commonalities between those who did is not easy, beyond the obvious—they were older and unencumbered by child or parental care, more likely to be financially secure (Brown, Bundy, Carpenter, Hamilton, Reid, Small) though many were not (Allen, Armstrong, Buhay). They often had familial connections to party politics (Armstrong, Carpenter, Currie). What they did share were roots in organizations which Jill Vickers characterizes as “an arena for political debate and a conduit for political pressure more authentic and meaningful for many women than political parties”⁶⁹—feminist interest groups

like the suffrage associations, WCTU, IODE, the Local and National Councils of Women (Allen, Becker, Bundy, Carpenter, Needham, Sears), the Women’s Institutes (Allen), and the Home and School movement (Becker, Groves). Most women candidates worked tirelessly in these organizations, prior to and after their candidacies, for the values and reforms that they believed politicians should implement, be it some form of prohibition, support for mothers, pensions, or equitable pay and management positions for women teachers. What success Ontario women had achieving the noble goals of the platforms enunciated by the National Council of Women, by Mrs. Sears and others in 1919, in a province led by a premier who believed in a limited state, was due to the pre-suffrage work and later the lobbying of the Women’s Institutes and the Provincial Council of Women, rather than the work of women involved with political parties, according to journalist Anne Anderson Perry.⁷⁰

As able as these women candidates were, Perry was not alone in believing that Ontario lacked women of real leadership ability and “the women leaders who have arisen within the party folds, so far have not been persons of any national

⁶⁸ Hamilton *Herald*, 13 Nov 1926, 1, “Miss Whitton deserts party.” McCormack, *Another Voice* (1975), 26.

⁶⁹ Jill McCalla Vickers, “Feminist Approaches to Women in Politics,” in *Beyond the Vote: Canadian Women and Politics* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1989), 16-36. Veronica Strong-Boag, *The New Day Recalled* (Toronto: Copp Clark Pitman, 1988), 196-207, describes the importance of these organizations.

⁷⁰ Perry, *Maclean’s* (1928), 63, credits Mrs. R.W. Lang, convener of the legislative committee of the Women’s Institutes, which she characterizes as the most powerful body of women in the province. James Struthers, *The Limits of Affluence: Welfare in Ontario, 1920-1970* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1994), notably Chapter 1 Mother’s Allowances and the Origins of Income Security in Ontario. Peter Oliver, *G. Howard Ferguson: Ontario Tory* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1977), chapter 11 The Limited State, 213-30.

importance.”⁷¹ The Ontario electorate’s preference for Ferguson’s Conservative party which marginalized its women partisans meant that the only successful nominees had to be independents, socialists, or Liberals. The six Liberal women were the candidates of a demoralized and uncompetitive party. That they won the nomination was a reflection of how unattractive the nomination was to ambitious men, and how exhilarating it was for women Liberals, new to practical politics, to demonstrate their power. The absence of nominations for Conservative women, their systematic exclusion from competitive Toronto ridings held by prominent men, confirms Bashevkin’s thesis that women are more likely to gain access to local party office and political nomination in uncompetitive party areas than in competitive party areas.⁷²

Feminists like Anne Perry and Charlotte Whitton could not understand why women preferred “organizations built for *indirect influence*, not for *direct action*.”⁷³ They, like Ramsay Cook in his introduction to Cliverdon’s *The Woman Suffrage Movement in Canada*, believed that “men and women were very much alike. A few of each sex were highly political and reform-minded; most were not.” Suffragists like Fort William trustee Beatrice Harvey argued that women

were up to the bloody fights of politics; they believed in theory that “woman’s power of endurance was equal to, if not greater than man’s,” but in practice suffragists like Stowe-Gullen and Harvey did not endure.⁷⁴

A more satisfactory explanation for the gender gap in political participation might be that women become discouraged by the intimidating and exclusionary nature of male-dominated party politics—the *L’État, c’est moi* attitude of men in McCormack’s brilliant simile. Yes, women of the time were socialized to defer to men and forced to choose between personal development and marriage and motherhood. Yes, women bore the burden of household and family, leaving little time for anything else. Yes, most women were economically dependent on men. Yet today after some of these barriers have been alleviated, women continue to shun electoral politics. Thelma McCormack was deeply suspicious of pollsters and academics who explain women’s political behaviour in relation to male norms. “A distinction therefore must be made between party politics (where women’s participation is limited) and extra-parliamentary political action where women have more control... To the extent that women’s political activity largely takes place outside of convention-

⁷¹ Perry, *Maclean’s* (1928), 7 & 58. *Toronto Globe*, 14 July 1926, 11-12 citing Liberal Mrs. Elizabeth Kiely.

⁷² Bashevkin, *Toeing the Line*, 148. Oliver, *Public & Private Persons*, 127-54.

⁷³ Italics used by Perry, *Canadian Comment* (Sept. 1933), 15. Whitton, *Saturday Night* (26 Jan. 1946) quoted on page 7. See Vickers’ take on first wave feminism and Charlotte Whitton in her “Feminist approaches to women in politics,” (1989), 18-23.

⁷⁴ Port Arthur *Daily News* 8 Feb. 1913, 3, “Votes for women?” by Mrs. B.M. Harvey. Wayne Roberts notes Dr. Stowe-Gullen’s disillusionment with school board politics, in “Six New Women: A Guide to the Mental Map of Women Reformers in Toronto,” *Atlantis*, 3 (Fall 1977), 148-50.

al political channels—by necessity rather than choice—it is less routine, less visible and ... less partisan.”

The early evidence of women’s political participation in Ontario at the school board, municipal council and Legislative Assembly level lends empirical support to McCormack’s contention that “women are much more problematic politically than men; it is more difficult to predict how we will vote and, since we have low expectations about what can be gained from electoral politics, it is more difficult to predict if we will vote at all.”⁷⁵ It lends credence to Cherie Werhun’s proposition

that women’s “preference is to work within the non-traditional political system, outside of the hierarchical traditional system, where collective community work is emphasized to a greater degree, and there are numerous women visibly working to create social change.”⁷⁶ Historians can contribute to this debate by documenting and explaining how women achieved their social goals in Ontario since 1892, whether by lobbying or getting elected, particularly through local case studies at the school board and municipal council levels, and assessing their ideas and impact on society.⁷⁷

⁷⁵ Both quotations from McCormack, *This Magazine*, 28 (March-April 1989), 32. A useful UK study is *Gender and political participation: research report, April 2004* (London: Electoral Commission, 2004.) Two Ontario studies illuminate women’s political behaviour. Psychologist Cherie D. Werhun, *The Relationship of Social Dominance Orientation and Political Efficacy to Political Participation of Women*. M.A. thesis, Wilfrid Laurier University, 2000, contains an excellent review of the literature and critique of the methodology employed by previous researchers. Sandra D. Burt, *The Political Participation of Women in Ontario*. Ph.D. thesis, York University, 1981 (Canadian theses on microfiche; 51364) concluded, “women use politics for the distribution of goods and services rather than for the acquisition of power” and “because they want to improve representative democracy either federally, provincially, or municipally.”

⁷⁶ Werhun (2000), 3-4, 49, 78-82 attributes this preference to women’s dislike of group hierarchy (social dominance orientation) and their belief that they are less efficacious than men in influencing the political system. Thesis MQ53276.pdf digitized by Library and Archives Canada.

⁷⁷ An analysis of Ontario women candidates 1919-1945 similar to that by Jill McCall Vickers might be useful. She analyzed 1145 women candidates 1945-76 at the provincial, federal and municipal level in her “Where are the Women in Canadian Politics,” *Atlantis*, 3 (Spring 1978), 40-51. See also Barbara A. Crow, *Female Mayors in Ontario*, Ph.D. thesis, York University, 1995 (Canadian theses on microfiche; 97632).