



Who's Who of the Feminist Political Movement

In 1914 **Nellie McClung** and other Winnipeg suffragettes staged a mock Parliament—mimicking Manitoba premier Rodmond Roblin and other men who opposed women's vote, a hilarious performance which helped set the stage for women getting the vote in Manitoba in 1916. McClung was a Liberal member of the Alberta Legislative Assembly from 1921 to 1926.

Emily Murphy rallied Nellie McClung, Irene Parlby, Henrietta Muir Edwards and Louise McKinney to petition the Supreme Court of Canada for a clarification of the status of women. Murphy had faced opposition to her appointment as Commonwealth's first female police magistrate because she was not a "person" under the law, and women were being denied Senate seats on the same grounds. The Canadian Supreme Court ruled against the **Famous Five**, but they persevered, pushing their case to the Judicial Committee of Britain's Privy Council, which on Oct. 18, 1929, ruled women were "persons" and eligible for appointment to the Senate of Canada.

Therese Casgrain, leader of the League for Women's Rights in Quebec and campaigner for Quebec women's right to vote—achieved in 1940. She also founded the Quebec wing of Voice of Women, and was a founder of the Federation des Femmes du Quebec. A candidate for both the federal Liberal and Quebec social democrat parties, electoral success eluded her. But Casgrain was the first female leader of a political party in Canada, as leader of the Quebec wing of the Co-operative Commonwealth Federation opposing the government of Maurice Duplessis.

Doris Anderson—As editor of *Chatelaine Magazine* and feminist leader, she championed the election of more women, including in 1971, running a *Chatelaine* feature listing the names of 104 election-ready women. She herself ran unsuccessfully for election as a Liberal in Eglinton. Appointed chair of the Canadian Advisory Council on the Status of Women, she resigned in protest when women's demands were ignored during the 1980 Constitutional negotiations, sparking a nationwide women's protest that resulted in the inclusion of women's equality rights in the Charter of Rights and Freedoms. She was a key member of Women for Political Action and the Feminist Party of Canada, which had no success at the polls. Anderson studied women's success in 12 other countries in her book *The Unfinished Revolution* and concluded that Canada needed electoral reform—specifically proportional representation—before the numbers of women elected would rise dramatically, a cause she pushed for the rest of her life..



The 1970 Royal Commission on the Status of Women, chaired by **Ann Francis**, decried the unfair representation of women in Canadian politics, and put the spotlight on the parties, stating it was much more difficult for a woman to gain her party's nomination than to be elected to the House of Commons.

The Committee for '94, under its first president writer **Christina McCall**, formed as an advocacy group of prominent Toronto women who advocated for the election of more women. The Committee wanted women to occupy half the seats in the House of Commons by 1994, but after 10 years of agitation, publicity and conferences, it disbanded in discouragement, still far short of the goal.

Academic and activist **Sylvia Bashevkin**, Principal of University College at the University of Toronto, is best known for her research on women in politics, and her wide influence on a younger generation of women now practicing civic engagement. Bashevkin's latest book is *Women, Power, Politics: The Hidden Story of Canada's Unfinished Democracy*

Alberta political scientists **Linda Trimble and Jane Arscott**, authors of *Still Counting: Women in Politics Across Canada*, argue that a "political glass ceiling" is keeping women at less than 25 per cent representation across the country.

Elaine Hemond, co-founder of Groupe Femmes, politique et democratie, an organization promoting civic engagement and the election of women. Hemond has been a passionate and convincing speaker for the cause for more than a decade and has built le Groupe into an influential force in Quebec society for fairer representation of women in politics.

Equal Voice/A Voix égales: for the election of more women. Founded in May, 2001, Equal Voice has become an influential, national, volunteer organization for the election of more women to all levels of government. The organization is multi-partisan, working with all major political parties, and offers a bilingual on-line campaign school, *Getting to the Gate/Oser vous lancer?*. Founding chair **Rosemary Speirs** has said that the aim of the women's movement in the 21st Century should be getting women into power. With the Ontario Challenge, she persuaded Ontario's three party leaders to state in the Legislature they would henceforth run more women for election. Her successor as chair, **Raylene Lang-Dion** engaged the major federal party leaders in the Canada Challenge. Current acting chair **Donna Dasko**, a well-known pollster, and Executive Director **Francoise Gagnon** are leading Equal Voice at a time when Status of Women and private sponsors are funding a major effort to engage young women in civic life.



Kirsten Lund and Jeannie Lea of the PEI Coalition for Women in Government. The Coalition successfully persuaded the Island's major parties to run one-third women candidates, a first in Canada. They advocated for electoral reform in the province, but the referendum on proportional representation was defeated by popular vote.

The Edmonton YWCA launched One Woman One Vote under its original program director **Janet Buckmaster** to encourage women to become active participants in politics. A non-partisan initiative encouraging women to vote, the program was adopted by the national YWCA under Executive Director **Paulette Senior** for use in federal elections in which women are invited to make a difference.

The **Canadian Women Voters' Congress** is in its 10th year of offering women a practical, hands-on campaign school, with advice from seasoned politicians, to help women run for political office. The new president is Jennifer Sweeney.

Chi Ngyuen, youth leader, founded Women in House in 2001 matching students with a female leader for two days in Ottawa. In 2004, she helped found The 20,000 Project which aimed to get 20,000 young women to pledge to vote in 2004. She fulfilled half that goal. She now works in Toronto specializing in democratic public consultation.

Amanda Rheume, Vancouver, founder of Antigone Magazine, a non-profit, non-partisan twice-yearly publication about women in politics. She also founded WILLA, Women Involved in Legislative Leadership at the University of British Columbia.

Emmanuelle Hebert, a leading activist within Le Collectif Feminisme et Democratie, she was named by the Quebec government in 2002 to the Governing Committee studying electoral reform for Quebec. A political scientist, she is doing a doctorate at McGill University on the media's coverage of female politicians. She is an oft-invited, passionate speaker on women's representation, electoral reform and democratic inclusion.