

# Campus Women

This past weekend, a conference took place in North River, P.E.I. that was the first of its kind to be held here. Winning Women P.E.I. -- A Political Skills Forum was a nonpartisan sharing of ideas and information on how to increase the effectiveness with which women work in politics. These vibrant and lively discussions between such women as Sheila Copps, Pat Mella, Catherine Callbeck and Nancy Guptill showed wonderful insight and were very informative.

Women face different realities than men do when they decide to enter politics, and the strongest message coming out of this conference was that while these realities should be recognised, they should in no way stop any woman from becoming involved in politics. Some changes need to be made in practices which were set up without considering the realities women face. Women can get elected on their own merits, but the system also contains internal barriers. Generally speaking, women have different ways of approaching most issues than men do. Sometimes women may consider these differences to be drawbacks. On the contrary, women can bring a different experience that is enriching to any group they join. There is a major under-representation of women in most power structures. This hampers the effectiveness of those structures since they are not tapping the resources of a very large percentage of the population. Correcting this under-representation is the object of some debate, but a thorough discussion of these questions is a

topic for another article. The Winning Women conference was a chance for women to learn about what they can do on their own to get to where they want to be.

One of the greatest problems a woman can encounter is that of her family, especially if she has been running the household for a number of years. Some women experience pressure from their husbands and children. Others find when they decide to run for office that, unlike the laws surrounding actual elections, there are no spending limits on the nomination campaign. This can cost up to \$75,000. Thus, structural changes need to be made to make the political process more open to women. As another example, most political meetings start at 7:00PM. This closeness to the dinner hour is fine if you don't have to consider doing the dishes and getting the kids set up with their homework, but these things can make getting to a meeting a hassle. No change as simple as moving meetings to 8:00PM makes them accessible to those people with home organizational concerns, and is no inconvenience to those without them.

But one of the most important things that women must achieve is self-confidence. They must avoid the victim role and take on a "Yes I Can" philosophy. The road to political success is not a smooth one yet, but it is not impassable either. To quote Lieutenant-Governor Marion Reid, "No philosophy won't work, if you work won't work."

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