I worked for Doris Anderson and the Canadian Advisory Council on the Status of Women in 1980 and 1981, researching and writing about the impact on women of constitutional law, and the proposed new Charter of Rights. I met with Doris many times in that period, usually in a small conference room at the Council offices. I can see her still, a blue pen in those elegant fingers, slumped over my latest draft in an attitude of resignation and frustration. “Boring,” she would declare in her distinctive scratch, “it’s so boring.” The “so” would go on forever, the “boring” plunge her voice ever deeper. “Can’t you make it less boring?”

She pushed me to link the words and concepts of the law to women’s own lives, and to rid my papers of complicated phrases and arcane language. “Write it for the women,” she would urge, and so I did. Throughout that summer of 1980, and into the autumn, Doris marshaled all of her resources, and the Council’s, to draw women into the discussions on the patriation of the Constitution of Canada. With the help of her talented staff, she organized her team of experts, like myself, Bev Baines and Nicole Duplé; she toured and spoke; she published fact sheets on the Charter and women’s equality, and flyers with tear-off coupons on the bottom of them, urging women to put their opinions on the coupons and return them to Ottawa. Those coupons flooded in by the sackful, and women all over Canada became knowledgeable and active about the Constitution.

That summer and into the next year, Doris was applying to this new national challenge the genius for respecting, educating, and mobilizing women that had so illuminated her editorship of Chatelaine from 1957 to 1977. Those two decades were crucial in the emergence of the Canadian women’s movement. So was Doris’s leadership. While American women’s magazines were propagating the confining “feminine mystique” later blasted apart by Betty Friedan, Doris and Chatelaine were sparking Canadian women into a knowledge of our rights, and both the desire and the will to claim our full humanity.

The year Doris assumed the editorship of Chatelaine (which she later described as a “rather run-of-the-mill Canadian women’s magazine at that time”), Dwight Eisenhower was President of the United States, John Diefenbaker achieved a minority government in Canada, and Leslie Frost had been premier of Ontario since 1949. Diefenbaker appointed the first woman Cabinet Minister in Canada, Ellen Fairclough, to the position of Secretary of State in 1957, but the first woman Cabinet Minister in the Ontario government, Margaret Birch, would not be appointed until 1971. Feisty Charlotte Whitton had been elected in 1951 as the first woman mayor of a major Canadian city, Ottawa, and would be reelected several times thereafter, but she was only partially a feminist: although a Stalwart champion of women in public life, she opposed more liberal divorce laws and was critical of mothers who worked.

Although it was thought at the time that women had achieved the right to vote in Canada and the provinces, there remained one woeful exception. Indians registered under the Indian Act did not receive the federal franchise until 1960, leaving Indian men and women unable to vote in national elections. Registered Indian women had only won the right to vote in their Band Council elections in 1951. Registered Indians would not obtain the right to vote in some provinces until after 1960.

There were few women in the professions or on the Bench. The stock exchanges of Toronto, Winnipeg, and Calgary had by-laws prohibiting the appointment of women as members, which were still in place when the Royal Commission on the Status of Women reported in 1970. Women still had an inferior kind of citizenship
Doris engaged and rallied women, as well as educating them…. The pages of Chatelaine during Doris's two decades were vivid with calls to action, blueprints on how to act, and exhortations not to let up.

would be until 1969). Divorce was available through the courts in all provinces except Newfoundland and Quebec (whose residents had to petition Parliament to obtain one), but the only grounds were marital offenses like adultery and cruelty. Divorce was economically disas­trous for women, since Canada did not then recognize that marriage was an economic partnership and each spouse should share equally in the matrimonial home and property. People rarely spoke about wife battering and child abuse, but if they did, it was to suggest that the woman involved, not society, had failed.15

Women’s presence in the labour market was well established by the 1950s, but the labour force was segregated into male and female jobs, with the female jobs offering far less pay, benefits, and job security. Equal opportunity legislation and human rights codes protecting women would not be introduced until the 1970s. Although equal pay laws had begun to be passed in most Canadian provinces in 1951, they were “virtually inoperable.”14 Working women were paid one-third less than men for doing the same job, and most people, including many women15 accepted that. Farm wives and women working hard in other family businesses often received no pay at all, since the Income Tax Act of the day did not permit the husband to deduct his wife’s salary as a business expense.16

There was no maternity leave, and no day care.17 It was common for women to be forced to resign upon becoming pregnant; Maclean Hunter, the publisher of Chatelaine, had such a rule, forcing resignation at the five-month mark. Doris achieved the compromise solution of working from home in the last weeks of her first two pregnancies so that she would not be seen in the Maclean Hunter premises and the rule was no longer in effect by the time of her last pregnancy.18 Nonetheless, she observes quite correctly that the “right” of women with children to work outside the home was a controversy that raged all through the ‘50s and ‘60s and even into the 1970s.19

I am actually wincing as I make this sketch of women’s lives in the fifties. My mother was not a Chatelaine reader; as an immigrant, she preferred the women’s magazines from “home” sent by her mother and sister. It does not take a great deal of imagination, though, to appreciate how welcome Chatelaine was in Canadian households, where women were grappling with the daily lived reality of these restrictions.

Doris observes in Rebel Daughter that through Chat-
Doris Anderson reviewing an issue of Chatelaine with Associate Editor, Ruth Schwartz. Photo: Paul Rockett.

Other editorials in Chatelaine and a host of columns in Toronto Star bear witness to Doris’s enduring belief that more women should enter politics, because one obvious way to get more action on women’s concerns is to increase the number of women in Parliament. She described Canada’s political system as difficult for women to penetrate, and remained caustic about the triumph of men’s self-interest over women’s inclusion in politics. Writing about the difficulty of getting women candidates into good winnable ridings, she growled, “Whenever there is a possible landslide, women are elbowed out of the way in the stampede of men to grab good seats.” She was a champion of major electoral reform; through Fair Vote Canada, and independent advocacy into the last months of her life, she pressed for the implementation of proportional representation in Canada, and continued to encourage women’s political action through Equal Voice. In keeping with her belief that feminists should not align themselves with any one political party, she sought multi-party and systemic solutions that would give women more power to effect change.

Doris ventured only once into electoral politics. She ran for the Liberals in a 1978 by-election in Mitchell Sharp’s old riding of Toronto-Eglinton. The campaign was ill-fated from the start; and she was unsuccessful. This experience sharpened her perceptions of the barriers facing women in politics, but did not stop her from urging women to run. It is undeniable that electoral politics lost a great deal when Doris was rebuffed in Eglinton: she was an excellent strategist, and deployed these talents again and again in her mobilization of women, through Chatelaine, through the Advisory Council for the Status of Women, and through the National Action Committee on the Status of Women.

Doris’s prominent campaigns at Chatelaine included those on behalf of the Royal Commission on the Status of Women, access to abortion, divorce, and family law reform, and rights for women in the workplace. At the Advisory Council, she continued this advocacy. Under her leadership, the Council brought out the first study on battered women in Canada, by Linda McLeod just as years before Chatelaine had published the first article in North America on battered babies Chatelaine had pioneered divorce and family property reform; at the Council, Doris turned her energy to mobilizing women to resist Trudeau’s gesture of returning divorce jurisdiction to the provinces. Barely ten years after passage of the very first national divorce legislation, such a move would have reintroduced the old patchwork of laws that had prevented women from getting divorces and enforcing support and custody orders. A campaign by grassroots activists stopped this transfer before it really got off the ground.

But Canadian activists had learned an important lesson about how casually male constitutional maneuvering could disrupt improvements for women that had taken years of lobbying to accomplish. They would remain vigilant. The Council’s work on the Charter in late 1980 and early 1981 led the Trudeau government to concede several significant improvements to section 15, the Charter’s main equality guarantee. These improvements would provide the basis for an entirely new interpretation of equality with a distinct “made in Canada” character: equality in substance rather than merely in form; equality that respected the differences between persons as well as their equal claims to human dignity; an approach that often would require distinctive treatment or special measures to realize true equality.

In 1981, Doris made a dramatic transition from being a feminist executive, in charge of first a magazine and then the Advisory Council, to being an outright activist, when she resigned from the Advisory Council over government interference with its plans to hold a women’s conference on the proposed Charter. It is widely believed that the drama of the resignation is what galvanized women to get themselves to the Ad Hoc Conference of Canadian Women on the Constitution in such gratifying numbers. I think that Doris’s thorough preparation of the ground from 1980 onwards, with her speeches, the publications, and those persistent little coupons, created such a level of constitutional literacy and urgency among Canadian women that they really could not do anything but respond to the crisis of her resignation.

When women came to the conference in Ottawa in February 1981 to debate and discuss the constitution, they came with an awareness of issues and needs that Doris herself had been instrumental in cultivating. They stayed in Ottawa after the conference had concluded, negotiating
with government to draft a new women's equality guarantee for the Charter of Rights. Section 28 of the Charter, providing that notwithstanding any other provision, the rights referred to in the Charter are guaranteed equally to men and women, is the lasting contribution of grassroots women to Canada's Constitution.

Doris described one of the achievements of Canadian women as the creation of one of the strongest women's movements in the western democracies. Among the achievements of that movement she identified section 28 of the Charter, putting women's concerns into political discourse (if not women into Parliament!), including the 1984 and 1988 nationally televised debates on women's issues, changing attitudes of men and women, family law reform to recognize marriage as a partnership of equals, the beginnings of some success in winning human rights cases for women despite the weakness and underfunding of human rights commissions, pay equity laws, reforms to the law of sexual assault and the creation of rape crisis centres and shelters for battered spouses.

Doris became editor of Chatelaine 50 years ago this year, and any account of women's achievements over that

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**WE’VE BEEN “EMERGING” LONG ENOUGH**

*Chatelaine*, Editorial, October 1958

...The word most often used to sum up the position of Canadian women is “emerging.” We are “emerging” in political life, “emerging” in public affairs, “emerging” as full-blown citizens. It’s true that a complicated change in society cannot be accomplished in a single dramatic moment, like the birth of a baby, but it surely doesn’t have to go on and on like the endless debate about a Canadian flag either. For the facts are uncomfortable.

We have had the vote for a good long forty years. We have had equal educational opportunity with men for much longer than that. Yet, out of two hundred and sixty-five members in the House of Commons at Ottawa, only two are women, and last year for the first time in our history a woman was appointed to the cabinet. It’s true that women sit on city councils, library and hospital boards all across the country but the number of women per board or council rarely exceeds one. Too often women are appointed as “token” members to represent their sex, and not because they have a valuable, useful contribution to make.

“But it takes a long time,” is the conventional answer.

It needn’t take long at all.

In Israel, a country barely ten years old, nine percent of the members of the Knesset are women. The same percentage of women is to be found in the parliament of West Germany. In Great Britain almost one third of the London County Council is composed of women. In Japan there are eleven women in the lower house and thirteen in the upper house....

We seem to be stuck at an awkward halfway point. We’re constantly being praised for advances that were made by women almost two generations ago. It’s true that we have some of the most elaborate kitchens, the sleekest figures and the best clothes in the world. But it’s incredible that we are not serving our country as effectively as other women do where the right to vote is as new and remarkable as a push-button stove.

*Doris Anderson, Editor*
period must deal with the harsh reality of unrealized goals and backlash that has reversed or weakened what we have succeeded in obtaining. Poverty and violence continue to plague women’s lives, exacerbated by oppression based on race, inadequate recognition of the needs of women living with a disability, and the failure of Canada to reconcile with its Indigenous peoples. Doris faced these shortcomings unflinchingly. She reflects in *The Unfinished Revolution*, “Slowly we have come to realize that bringing about fundamental changes is going to take much longer than some of us have left in a lifetime. Understanding the problems ourselves, and explaining them as clearly as we can, which we naively believed was all we had to do, certainly is only a beginning.” Her status report was blunt about poverty, “parsimonious” maternity leave provisions, child abuse, violence and rape, the pressing

**CHANGE THE ABORTION LAW NOW**

*Chatelaine*, Editorial, September 1970

A year ago we got a new abortion law making it possible for a woman to have a legal abortion in Canada if she could (a) convince a board of three or more doctors that her health, mental or physical, would be in danger if she had a baby and (b) find a doctor willing to perform the operation. (In a town with only one doctor or only a Catholic hospital—lots of luck.)

The government admitted the law really just legalized what had been going on for many years. Then the legislators settled back complacently, convinced that a nasty subject had been taken care of in a typically cautious, Canadian way for, say, twenty years.

What they didn’t expect was an immediate clamorous campaign to have the law made much more liberal. *Chatelaine* published an article, last November, pointing out that nothing had changed. In fact the new law probably made it harder to get an abortion than before. Often by the time a woman got through the cumbersome and humiliating experience of getting a board to agree on her condition, it was too late to have an abortion. And the law changed nothing for the raped and pregnant teenager, or the mother carrying a mentally or physically impaired fetus.

Recently twelve U.S. states have liberalized their abortion laws. New York, with the most liberal law, allows any woman to get an abortion if she can get into a recognized hospital or clinic. Scandinavia, Japan, the Iron Curtain countries, and Britain all have more-liberal laws than Canada.

Prime Minister Trudeau when confronted with an angry women’s Liberation group who demanded abortion be taken out of the Criminal Code and be made a matter between a woman and her doctor, said their quarrel was not with the law but with public morality.

But who speaks for public morality?

Such groups as the Women’s Liberation Movement, the Just Society, the National Council of Women, the National Council of Jewish Women, the Canadian Psychiatric Association have all urged more-liberal abortion laws.

What is the opposition then?

Some people sincerely believe abortion is murder. Some people believe girls who get pregnant out of wedlock (but half the abortions are performed on married women) should be punished. Certainly people who don’t believe in abortion must follow the dictates of their conscience. But they should not be able to force their beliefs on others—any more than vegetarians should be able to stop other people from eating meat. In our Canadian “double think” we make safe abortions available to the wealthy and influential (as they always have been) and force the poor and uninformed to take their chances with ugly, dangerous, back-street butcher shops. It also seems illogical in a country with thousands of neglected and unadopted children that we worry so much about the welfare of unborn babies.

*Doris Anderson, Editor*
need for child care in Canada\textsuperscript{40} and the withholding of abortion services in many parts of the country.\textsuperscript{40}

A quick review of where women are in 2007 makes me wince almost as much as my sketch of our situation 50 years ago. There remain useful laws on the books, to be sure, starting with the Charter itself; human rights codes protecting women in every Canadian jurisdiction; equal pay laws in several; a relatively modern Divorce Act and egalitarian family property legislation. As recommended by the Royal Commission, pregnancy and maternity leave were included in the Employment Insurance Act, and parenting leave is now available to both mothers and fathers. But judicial interpretation of the Charter's equality guarantees has effectively gutted them of all meaning; the New Government of Steven Harper has abolished the Court Challenges Program which has funded Charter equality litigation (the second time in its short history it has been defunded by a Conservative government); human rights commissions are starved of funding and many have huge backlogs; civil legal aid is virtually non-existent, leaving women without funding for family law cases; women and girls who experience violence and sexual assault cannot obtain justice; and women who work part-time (voluntarily or not) do not qualify for maternity leave. Funding to women's groups has been slashed once again. The movement's flagship organizations are barely staying above water. We have rights without remedies, rights in rhetoric only.

It is hard to remain optimistic about the future of women when we have struggled so hard to achieve so little, and lost so much of what little we had managed to accomplish. Yet, Doris has provided me with a reassuring moment to which I return again and again. It was in 1995, the night of the provincial election. The Common Sense Revolution of Mike Harris's Conservatives was rolling over the province, and the Common Sense Revolution campaign literature made us aware that we were in for a really bad time in Ontario. What little was left was after the federal government had finished ripping up the social safety net by abolishing the Canada Assistance Plan was surely in peril. Doris and I were somber, in the company of other disappointed campaign workers, trying to pretend that there was life in the election night party. In the gloomy pub, I asked Doris, "What do we do now? What do you do when your life's work is on the block?" She didn't even have to think for a moment. "Well, she drawled in her rusty voice, "My brother wants me to move to Mexico, but I won't. I will just stay here and fight."

Later, she even provided a blueprint for that fight. In the Unfinished Revolution, Doris calls for a strong, autonomous worldwide women's movement, and the mounting of pressure for major reforms to the electoral system. These campaigns are already underway, and Canadian women are deeply involved. As we struggle forward, let's remember Doris's confident optimism: "In the past one hundred years women have come so far in this revolution of ours that I am convinced there is no going back."\textsuperscript{40}

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\textbf{HOW TO LOOK BUSY WITHOUT REALLY DOING ANYTHING} & \\
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Chatelaine, Editorial, May 1973 & \\
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Once upon a time there was a Royal Commission on the Status of Women. Six years ago, in February 1967 when Lester Pearson set it up, was when it all began…. The commission made 167 recommendations—sensible, modest recommendations that a government might easily do something about…. All three parties seem stuck in a Victorian mental rut of “compliment-them-on-their-hats-and-they'll-be-quiet" about the Royal Commission on the Status of Women. The speech from the throne didn't have a single word about the commission. Recently, John Munro, the Minister now responsible for the Royal Commission, announced that an advisory committee would be set up to report to him. But do we really need 40 to 50 women traipsing to Ottawa once or twice a year at his invitation and public expense? No, we don't. What we do need is an independent autonomous council whose reports will be made public, and directly to Parliament and debated there—which is, incidentally, what the Royal Commission recommended…. Let's get the royal Commission out of the welter of red tape and into law. & \\
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Doris Anderson, Editor & \\
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I would like to thank Samantha Scott, B.A., for her considerable help in researching Doris Anderson's columns in Chatelaine and the Toronto Star, and Kasari Govender, B.A., LL.B., for her work on my women's voting rights project which has provided footnote 7 to this paper.

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\textsuperscript{1}The papers prepared in the summer of 1980 were published in Audrey Doerr and Micheline Carrier, eds., Women and the Constitution of Canada, Minister of Supply and Services Canada, 1981 (henceforth “Doerr and Carrier”)

\textsuperscript{2}Betty Friedan, The Feminine Mystique (Tenth Anniversary Edition) N.Y., Dell Publishing, 1974. In her introduction to this anniversary edition, Friedan describes a world of magazine writing that was light years away from Chatelaine
(at 4): Even the years of writing for women’s magazines (henceforth “Rebel”)


3 Doris Anderson Rebel Daughter (henceforth “Rebel”) (Toronto, Key Porter Books, 1996) at 157

4 Royal Commission on the Status of Women in Canada, Report (henceforth “RCWS”) (Ottawa: Information Canada, 1970) at 29

5 Federal legislation which came into force February 15, 1977 was intended to give Canadian women’s citizenship the same effectiveness as men’s: Citizenship Act, S.C. 1974-75-76, c. 108. However, it took a Supreme Court of Canada decision twenty years later (brought by a man!) to remove lingering inequality: Benner v. Canada (Secretary of State), [1977] 1 S.C.R. 358

6 RCWS at 44-45

7 RCWS at 25

8 Rebel at 153

9 Rebel at 156

16 Rebel at 43

17 Rebel at 86 and 271

18 Rebel at 134-138

19 Rebel at 139

20 Rebel at 174

21 Rebel at 176

22 Rebel at 151

23 Rebel at 219

24 Rebel at 230


26 Revolution at 209

27 Revolution at 199

28 Revolution at 210

29 Revolution at 286
