

**Report of Louise Chappell
Ruth Wynn Woodward Chair
Spring Term 2005**

My appointment to the RWW Chair was for the Spring term, commencing January 2005. During my time in the position I have taught a course on Women's Human Rights, given talks and interviews at SFU and at the University of Victoria as well as run a day-long symposium on the topic 'Working Inside and Outside Government: Women's Strategies for Change'. This brief report outlines each of these activities and evaluates their success.

- **Teaching: Women's Rights as Human Rights: Activists, Institutions and Issues**

One of the main responsibilities in my role as the RWW Chair was to teach a senior undergraduate class on Women's Human Rights. This course introduced students to the central activists, institutions and issues involved in framing women's international human rights and critically analyzed mainstream human rights discourse from a women's rights perspective. Students were asked to consider the role of transnational feminist actors in shaping and enforcing international human rights instruments including the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) and the International Criminal Court. Attention was given to the experiences of women in western and non-western countries in accessing right and to the role that religion and culture play in the process. Specific women's rights issues relating to war and conflict, refugee status and trafficking were also discussed.

The 45 students in the class have been eager to learn and responsive to the subject matter of the course. In regard to assessment, the students were asked to engage with and analyze the issues from an activist perspective. For one talks, they worked in groups to study the effectiveness of CEDAW in selected countries and presented their finding to the whole class. A second task required them to individually prepare a research report directed to the Canadian federal government on a specific human rights issues of their choosing. Student feedback suggests that they learnt a lot from their in-country CEDAW analysis and, although many were initially daunted by the prospect of writing a report, the majority of the class did an excellent job of applying their analytical and writing skills to this task.

I was fortunate to have had Rahat Imran as a tutorial assistant throughout the term. Rahat supported me with tutoring, student marking and consultation.

- **Research Presentations**

During my time at SFU I have had the opportunity to present my research to a number of different audiences. On 16 February I gave a presentation in the Women's Studies Seminar program on 'Expanding Women's Rights Under International Law: Developments at the International Criminal Court'. I was also invited to the University of Victoria to present a public lecture on this topic 22 March. While I was at UVIC I gave a

workshop to graduate students in the Social Policy and Practice Program on my related policy-related research.

I have been interviewed by campus radio both at SFU and UVIC as well as by the SFU Campus News about my research on international women's rights and women and policy issues.

- **Symposium: 'Working Inside and Outside Government: Women's Strategies for Change'**

On 18 March I organized a symposium which brought together policy activists, practitioners and academics interested in questions related to the role of government agencies in addressing women's policy needs and concerns. The symposium consisted of 10 panelists from within BC and across Canada who addressed a range of questions including:

- How well have women's policy agencies been able to translate women's activist demands in policy?
- What factors shape the success or failure of women's agencies in terms of crafting women's policy and influencing policy debates more generally?
- Are women's agencies a long term and viable strategy for translating women's interests into policy?
- What effort should feminist activists put in to maintaining these agencies?
- What comparative lessons can be drawn from the experiences of women's activists and policy agencies at different levels of government?

The symposium, held at the SFU Harbour Centre, was well attended with over 60 registrants. Many members of the audience came from grassroots women's organizations and many young women were in attendance. Audience engagement with the panelists and their evaluation of the day suggests that they found it enjoyable, engaging and useful to their work.

The symposium was also very successful from an academic perspective. Panelists are keen to continue and broaden the conversation on this topic. Plans are now being made to hold a similar event in 2006 in Sydney, Australia and to publish an edited volume on the topic.

The success of the symposium was due in large part to the efforts of Nancy McCuaig, the previous Assistant to the Ruth Wynn Woodward Chair who helped organize the event.

My time at SFU has been busy but immensely rewarding. I've been made feel very welcome by the Department of Women's Studies and have enjoyed my contact with members of the department through departmental meetings and social events. I look forward to maintaining contact with the department members on my return to Sydney University and hope to be able to return their hospitality on their future visits to Australia.

Louise Chappell