

Is it possible to pursue the goals we set for ourselves as feminists?

Studying Women, Power, And Stress

Rosemary Brown was sitting contentedly in a corner, reading. "I always try to get somewhere early, so I'll have a few extra minutes to read," she says as she puts her book aside. It was a science fiction novel, Anne McCaffery's *The Crystal Singers*. Brown loves science fiction and has just finished McCaffery's *Dragon* series.

Despite — or perhaps because of a busy, public life, Brown has always set aside time to read — a pursuit she will continue at SFU. In January, the former Burnaby MLA will become the second person to occupy the Ruth Wynn Woodward chair in women's studies.

At Simon Fraser, Brown will teach a graduate course on women, power and policies, a course she designed. As the one-year appointment is regional, Brown will continue to teach a course at the University of Victoria on women and human services, a course she also designed. She also will research the subject of women and power.

"We need to look at the price women have paid if they achieve power. What are the emotional, psychological and health costs? What are the effects on family and other relationships?"

"We are trying to find out whether it's possible to pursue the goals we set for ourselves as feminists, without being scarred by the experience."

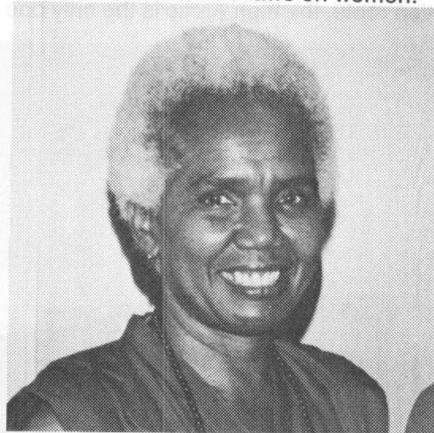
"Men have long been aware of the price that power can exact — ulcers, heart attacks, alcoholism and family break-up. But do men respond to family

break-up the way that women do?"

Popular culture, as reflected in television, poses the question of whether women would be better off remaining at home, because the price that women pay for power is too high.

"I see that perception as very dangerous," Brown adds.

Brown, an NDP member of the B.C. legislature for 14 years, says that politicians understand very little about women's lives. "So many laws have a negative impact on women, because the legislators have no clear understanding of the effects of some laws on women."



Brown

Brown hopes the women's studies chair will bridge the analyses of women's experience and the forming of public policies to enhance women's lives.

"I'm looking forward to making contributions toward an established chair with teaching and research responsibilities. I see it as an innovative instrument to

search out areas in women's lives that need to be examined and analyzed."

Brown, who represented the Burnaby Edmonds riding, is familiar with the stress that accompanies public life. She is a popular speaker, continually sought for keynote addresses to conferences and groups.

"The stress that goes with power is something women have not experienced. Until we can address this phenomenon, more women will stay away from power and the changes that are made from positions of power."

A humanist, her philosophy is rooted in human, environmental and peace issues, for which she is an active advocate. That was how she got her start in politics.

As a representative of SFU's counselling department at a conference on women's issues in 1970, she became involved in the Status of Women council. She designed and established Canada's first ombudsman's service and was one of three women endorsed by the council for political office.

She continued to work at SFU until her election as an MLA in 1972 and was involved with early work on women's studies.

"I've come full circle," she says.

Awarded an honorary doctorate from Mt. St. Vincent University in 1980, Brown earned a BA at McGill and an MSW from UBC. She has received numerous honors, written a number of publications and is involved in a variety of community activities. She also held a visiting lectureship at Dalhousie University and a UN human rights fellowship. □