

## Looking after Ourselves": Women Elementary Teachers and Their Federation

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Women teachers in Ontario have been looking after themselves for more than one hundred years.<sup>(1)</sup> One of the most concrete examples of their efforts was the creation, in 1918, of the Federation of Women Teachers' Associations of Ontario (FWTAO), a province-wide organization which brought together under one umbrella a number of locally based Women Teachers' Associations (WTAs). For eighty years, until 1998, the FWTAO represented female, public school elementary teachers who belonged to the Federation, first through a voluntary membership system and then, with the passage of *The Teaching Profession Act* (TPA) in 1944, through the compulsory membership requirement set out in by-laws made under that act.<sup>(2)</sup> After a series of lengthy and costly court battles and a decision in the *Tomen Case* by an Ontario Human Rights Commission Board of Inquiry that the by-laws made under the TPA compelling membership on the basis of sex were discriminatory, the FWTAO and the Ontario Public School Teachers' Federation (OPSTF), which represented male, public school elementary teachers, decided, in 1996, to form a new organization, the Elementary Teachers' Federation of Ontario (ETFO).<sup>(3)</sup> The transition to the new model was completed in 1998.

There is very little scholarly work on the history of teacher organizations in Canada.<sup>(4)</sup> However, a number of in-house histories of the FWTAO have been written.<sup>(5)</sup> These focus primarily on the organizational problems and policy challenges faced by the Federation as a whole. As a result, the voices of individual classroom teachers, the actual members of FWTAO, have been muted and we know little about

those women teachers who became active in federation activities at the local and provincial levels. To begin to fill that gap, this paper uses evidence drawn from interviews with women teachers who participated in one way or another in FWTAO activities in various regions of the province between 1938 and 1998, to explore why women came to be involved in Federation work, what they perceived the role of the Federation to be, and how they felt about being members of a women teachers' federation. The focus here is on how women elementary teachers describe their experiences, and their reflections emphasise the benefits and pleasures of Federation work, yet it is also the case that their recollections reveal some of the complexities and contradictions of women's organizing within a single-sex structure.

### **Taking the Plunge**

Getting involved in the teacher federation was not something that every woman teacher did. Vivien, who began teaching at the age of 18, was forthright in explaining that she was not active

*because I was so young, and again, I was wrapped up in the teaching, I was wrapped up in the studies [taking additional courses], you know, and for me, and then I had a social life and I had, I was in a badminton club, and so I was very busy (ACPID116).*

Like many other women, she left teaching to follow her husband when he took up employment in a new location and then stayed home to raise children. She felt, however, that "If I had remained in teaching, I think I would have become quite active."

Many women found that the double burden of paid employment and unpaid family and domestic work made it difficult for them to find any time for other pursuits. However, Lee suggested another factor was also at work. As someone who was very active in the FWTAO both locally and provincially, she heard many women say they could not participate because their husbands did not want them "to get involved with this women's militant group." Lee concluded, "So those that didn't [get involved], I think it came a little bit deeper than just the fact they

didn't want to and I think they were held back by their husbands." Speaking of the late 1970s and 1980s, Lee concluded,

*So that's the mentality that overflowed, not just sort of in the public generally but also into the school system and anything FW. If the male was (sigh) a male chauvinist in the family, then, then that woman suffered. Not physical abuse but this would be more emotional, I think (ACPID132).*

But if some women teachers did not participate actively in Federation affairs, significant numbers made contributions of various kinds to ensure that the on-going affairs of the Federation were supported and sustained. Several reluctant participants were "talked into" Federation work and then were surprised to find they liked it. Maura, who moved from a one-room rural school into an urban centre in 1939, noted that "I had to represent the school on Federation because I was new. I was given all the Joe jobs, let's say" (ACPID131). However, she soon went on to play a leading role on the executive of the local WTA, including a term as president. Sometimes when women joined a staff, they found that there was a peer expectation about involvement. Gina remembers that when she began teaching in a northern community, the women's group "was a very strong group" and they believed in

*getting together and making sure they were all aware of what was going on. And so we just, everybody automatically went [to meetings]. And if you didn't go, you were kind of questioned as, you know, what was your reason for not turning up for our meetings? It wasn't, we weren't what I would call a militant group at all. We were just a very committed group (ACPID195).*

Wanting to know 'what was going on' seemed to be a strong motivator for many women to get involved. They took particular advantage of FWTAO meetings to learn about new developments in curriculum or new school board or ministry policies that would have an impact on their work lives. The Federation provided many professional development opportunities and this element attracted and involved classroom teachers. Sharon, in noting the strengths of the seminars, workshops and courses offered by the FWTAO, also commented on an

additional benefit for women living outside the Golden Horseshoe. "And so when we went to Toronto and attended those things it was, it was really pleasurable to find out that, hey, we were, maybe lived way up north, but we weren't so backward as some people thought we were" (ACPID156). In other words, not only did the Federation keep teachers informed of new developments, it validated the work that women were already doing in their classrooms around the province.

While women teachers got satisfaction from having their work recognized by colleagues, they also engaged in Federation activities for the pleasure they got from social relationships with other women. FWTAO work was especially important to teachers working in one-room or small schools or who felt isolated in rural schools. As Margaret put it, she "didn't have a lot of contact with other teachers, and it was part of my wanting to have more contact, and I started off by going to FW" (ACPID134). Lee observed that Federation "provided us with our fellowship, camaraderie, our closeness, a bit of a social life, and we did enjoy the trips that were allowed to Toronto, you know, whether it be for Federation business or whether it be for professional development or whatever" (ACPID132).

For many women, too, getting involved with the FWTAO was a matter of "giving back" to an organization that had been of benefit to them personally or to women teachers more generally. Hannah recalled that while she was at teachers' college,

*I almost had to quit at the end because I'd run out of money, and the principal of the college informed the Federation evidently and got me a loan free of interest, which I paid back. In fact, I paid it back by the next Christmas since I started teaching in September. I got it paid back quickly and I was always sort of thankful for the teachers' Federation for that, but it was about a year after that before I really got involved, because the first year teaching, you know, I felt as if I really had to get down to teaching, you know, teaching and preparing my lessons thoroughly. So I felt I didn't have time, but once I felt I had more time to give it, then I joined (ACPID129).*

Hannah acknowledged that she was always very busy because she was working full-time, caring for two children and taking university courses to earn her undergraduate degree but she made time for Federation commitments even though “it cost me many sleepless nights, or short nights’ sleep.” She made this sacrifice because the Federation “had done a lot for me, you know, and I felt that we were doing some good for the teaching profession and for children in particular.”

Caroline indicated that initially she “became involved in small ways,” but then went on to become president of a large local from 1995-96, the first year of Ontario’s Conservative Government under Mike Harris. Terming the experience “interesting” but “not one I’d care to repeat again” because of that government’s attacks on teachers and the public education system,<sup>(6)</sup> Caroline went on to observe:

*I’m glad I did it. And I’m glad I was able to offer my services, because I came right from the classroom into the politics big time, and it was quite a leap [laughter] because many of my former colleagues who became president had more administrative experience than I did, but it was a good learning experience and I was able to feel at the end of the year that I had given back to my Federation what I was given as a female teacher in the system. And looking at our history as females, how we were paid and how we were respected and not respected, I think, I mean, when you think of some people like that lady who was 95, how little they receive in pension, and for how much work they did, it’s just unconscionable, and we were able to work to be able to equalize our payments, for instance, and the maternity leave and all of those kinds of benefits that young people now take for granted in some ways. I’m glad I was part of that, that I was able to be part of that whole movement really, and even in my own small way, so it was very exhilarating, very tough, but a lot of fun at the same time (ACPID125).*

Caroline’s understanding of her involvement in Federation work as a political responsibility and part of a larger movement for women was reiterated by Deborah who was president of a large WTA from 1989-1992. Deborah recalled:

*As a B.Ed. student, I didn’t know anything about the*

*Teachers' Federation and somebody came into sort of a home room class, I guess. Someone came in one day and said, "There's a dinner being sponsored by the Women's Federation and we need a representative to go to it." And at the time I was going through a separation from my husband and he wasn't paying any alimony and I had no money and I said, "I need a free dinner." And that's how I went. When I'd worked at the post office, though, and I'd taken time out from doing my undergrad degree, I had been asked, you know, I'd been involved in union matters. So the idea of a union was a mentality that I already had and when I discovered that this was the union for teachers and more importantly, for women teachers, I was really excited by it. And so I made the connection then, ...and then I started teaching. In my first year of teaching I think I was the key teacher [Federation representative in the school] as they called it. And I became involved from there (ACPID157).*

Whatever their route to getting actively involved in the FWTAO, none of the women expressed any regrets about the time and energy they had volunteered to the organization. As they looked back on their work with the Federation, they expressed considerable satisfaction, both personal and professional, with that part of their teaching careers. Only one woman shifted her allegiance from the FWTAO to the Ontario Public School Teachers' Federation when a personal conflict arose within her local WTA. The rest of the women who had been Federation activists found the experience rewarding. They were not uncritical participants but they recognized that through the Federation they developed leadership skills, improved conditions for women teachers, and exercised considerable power in shaping educational policies in Ontario.

### **Defining the Federation**

Just as women had different reasons for becoming active in Federation work, so, too, was the nature, purpose and role of the Federation seen differently by different women. Unlike many of her fellow teachers, Deborah had no compunction about calling the

FWTAO a union.

*I mean I couldn't distinguish for you the difference between a professional organization and a union because it seems to me that if you've got the right to grieve and you've got a, a body that's going to do that grieving for you, that that's a union, not just a professional body. So, no, it didn't vary much. It certainly ... FW was involved in all aspects of a woman teacher's career, in society in general, but I certainly thought one of their important roles was advocacy and bargaining (ACPID157).*

However, the majority of the women teachers saw the FWTAO as a professional association and wanted to distinguish it quite explicitly from a union. Of course, debates which set up an opposition between professionalism and unionism are not uncommon and the literature on teaching and nursing is replete with discussions of this dynamic.<sup>(7)</sup> Nonetheless, the vehemence with which some former local and provincial presidents denounced unions was surprising. Mavis, speaking about the 1950s and 1960s, stated very forcefully that:

*The Federation was not a union. It was a professional federation. You're speaking to a Londoner who was a teacher federation president, and we considered ourselves not a union. We were not the postal workers, we were not the automobile workers, or anything like that. I never heard the word strike when I taught. [It] never was suggested to me (ACPID130).*

When asked to distinguish between a union and a professional association, Mavis responded,

*Well, the professional association to me, like the College of Teachers now,-- the standards of the profession, they kept the standards of certificates up. They published articles that they thought, you know, this would help you, you'd be respected. The Federation, when it was a professional organization, sort of [made you feel] obliged to dress this way. There was no 'dress down day'. The standards were high. The people that were in the office would always dress beautifully. You'd look*

*up to them. Anytime you had a meeting, that sort of thing, it wasn't well, let's have it at the such-and-such and we'll all have a beer. There was none of that whatsoever. And I think that's the difference. Now it's too much like the postal workers. And, you know, "solidarity forever, the union makes us strong."*

*And I'm sorry, I guess I'm not a union person. ... Now, I said I could strike if somebody, the government or someone was doing something detrimental to the children, and then I'd be the first one out there carrying the sign. But not for me, for a little more money, for me for prep time – I thought prep time was what I did before and after school and what I took home at night. And see, I guess I'm too far removed (ACPID130).*

Like many teachers, Mavis appeared to draw clear lines between what the Federation did and what unions do. For her, the Federation was about a professionalism that emphasized teacher learning, a commitment to children and certain normalized standards of feminine behaviour and appearance. Indeed, Mavis observed "I still can't bring myself to go out in jeans or track pants or something like that, when I go shopping. I don't know, it's just ingrained in me. And so they kept up the standard that way."

On the face of it, Mavis is speaking from a position we might call domesticated professionalism, a professionalism almost guaranteed to promote conformity in gender specific ways. As author Loren Lind put it, it was the sort of professionalism that "tries to play the other side of unionism" and is "a very housebroken form of professionalism"<sup>(8)</sup> that emphasises duty, responsibility, obligation. Indeed, this approach is very clear in the FWTAO's 1981 booklet of advice for new teachers called *Professionalism: The Heart of the Matter*.<sup>(9)</sup> The very first entry is about appropriate dress for the woman teacher. This is followed by advice on being sensitive and listening to others, having a good attitude and being positive—the traditional womanly virtues. The booklet then concludes with a large section on teachers' obligations and responsibilities as they are detailed in the statutes and regulations of the Province of Ontario. Despite the FWTAO's record of social justice work on behalf of women and children, there is no hint here that



teachers might act as transformative intellectuals in their schools or engage in political action on their own behalf or in the wider community.

Sawaya has argued that the desire for professional status served to contain women's potential to act for radical change<sup>(10)</sup> and there is certainly evidence to suggest that this was often the case in the FWTAO. At the same time, there is sufficient evidence to demonstrate that many women teachers, especially those in leadership capacities, used the quest for professional status as one strategy to achieve broader equity and social justice goals. In fact, while the theme of professionalism is pervasive in the accounts of all the women leaders interviewed, how they talk about and understand the meaning of "professional" varies. In every case, however, we can see the women struggling to "look after themselves," refining their understanding of equality and what it means to be a woman and a teacher.

Even Mavis was willing to go on strike, to become in her eyes, a unionist, to protest anything that would hurt children. In admitting this, she retains a commitment to nurturing children but combines it with a more explicitly militant edge. In fact, when she was active in her WTA, she fought to improve pensions for the retired women teachers she saw living in poverty and argued for maternity leaves even though at the time she herself had no intention of marrying and having children. She also participated in the struggle to achieve opportunities for women to apply for and hold administrative positions, something she was not interested in for herself. When asked if these were not all traditional union issues, Mavis replied in a way that returned her to her anti-union stance.

*They were. They were. But I think that the Federation could have handled those, we always managed to handle them quite professionally without going to a rally and having somebody unionize all the workers there. We didn't need that (ACPID130).*

Hannah, who was both a WTA president and then a provincial president in the 1970s and 1980s, shared Mavis' antipathy towards unions. Hannah had this to say about professionalism:

*Well, I think it's a status. You know, you've spent a certain*

*number of years training for a position, and there should be some respect going with that position, and there should be a standing that each person who's in that position should have, and a responsibility of that role that that position places you in. Like the doctors' code of honour, you know, and that's what I think. But I feel as if that's very sadly lacking now. They're treated as a trade union rather than a professional organization, and that's what we used to get away from. Several times I've had trouble, when I was president in Toronto, [hearing people say] "Oh yes, you're from the union," and I said, "Beg your pardon, I'm not from a union, I'm from a Federation of teachers." I said, "We don't just negotiate salaries. We're concerned more, just as much, with the standing of teachers and further training of women assistants in the classroom, and assistance with the children, and better ideas for teaching." So I said, "That doesn't make us a union, it makes us a Federation, a professional organization (ACPID129).*

Hannah saw a conflict between union and professional goals and believes the public does, too. In her view, unions were primarily interested in salaries and working conditions and thus were self-interested. She proudly observed, "The year I was president, one of the slogans I brought out was that 'working conditions for teachers were learning conditions for children'. That's one of the slogans I asked to have. We put that on a banner, and that's true" (ACPID129). And it is true in important senses, but it is also a spin that allowed women teachers to camouflage some of the traditional union demands as demands for improved learning environments for children.

The efforts of women teachers to hang on to what they saw as "proper" and "professional" is reflected even in their descriptions of how they participated in protests and job actions. In speaking about the one-day walk-out of teachers that occurred in 1973 to protest the introduction in the Ontario legislature of Bills 274 and 275 to restrict teachers' job action,<sup>(11)</sup> Hannah commented that she was "very pleased" with the way teachers used to protest because "it was always very well controlled. We never got into any fisticuff, fights or anything like that. I thought it was done in a very professional way"(ACPID129). Cynthia

described her discomfort with strikes and other job actions:

*I always have trouble with this. I can't judge a teacher who does decide to take job action. We only need to look at groups where they don't have some kind of protection, and we see they are taken advantage of, but it is really hard when you are in the public sector serving, whether it's kids in school or people in hospitals or whatever. It's really hard to know the answer to that one. Quite different from depriving a company of their profit (ACPID026).*

Cynthia resolved her ambivalence in her own way.

*Now we were on the edge of a, what we thought was going to be job action, and I was, I think, second vice-president, which put me in a very difficult situation, and so I talked it over with the executive, and I was going to be in charge of babysitting for the teachers, so I didn't have to be on a picket line [laughter]. Now that's kind of a cowardly way out, I guess, but I felt comfortable with that.*

Cynthia's case is interesting because she recognized the need for a collective organization to protect teachers' rights, she respected the decision of other teachers to strike, and she was willing to support teachers on strike by providing the necessary service of child care, albeit one closely connected to a traditional female role, for those on the picket line. She resolved her ambivalence by holding on to her femininity and looking after children, but in doing so she enabled other women to demonstrate a militancy she could not allow herself.

Members of the FWTAO struggled over their identity and over choices among political strategies to use to achieve their goals. This is not surprising since, as women teachers seeking professional status, they occupied contested ground where they were situated within a matrix of contradictions. In the first instance, by seeking careers, women challenged dominant norms about femininity and domesticity, norms which set women in the home and not the hurly-burly of the paid work force. Yet teachers used arguments that drew on those very norms to justify their work as teachers, emphasizing how women's natural nurturing and caring suited them for classroom work, especially with

younger children. Furthermore, by choosing education, teachers entered a field that was profoundly implicated in formation and the maintenance of the existing social order, a social order that was patriarchal and hierarchical. Women thus occupied contradictory territory: their role as teachers was to perpetuate the *status quo* but their very presence in large numbers challenged the established gender regime, a key element of that order. Finally, because the professions were constructed as male domains, women teachers seeking professional status were both “outsiders” trying to get in, and “insiders” willing to participate in the very culture they often criticized.<sup>(12)</sup> These multiple contradictions posed substantial strategic and political challenges that were played out in the local WTAs and in the larger Federation.

Women teachers often talked about federations being professional associations rather than unions, even as they worked hard to improve salaries, working conditions and pensions for their members. They were most comfortable seeing their Federation as an organization that enhanced professional growth and leadership options for women, made life better for women and children, and contributed to the creation of a more just society. In particular, many of the Federation activists either participated in or were influenced by the second wave of the women’s movement, just as earlier generations of women teachers had been instrumental in the suffrage struggle. Judith recalled how, when she was president in the early 1970s, the WTA worked with the local school board to open up opportunities for women teachers to become administrators. In fact, the FWTAO increasingly focussed much of its energy on getting more women into leadership positions. Judith also explained how the FWTAO supported women and children.

*You see, I had become in, I think, '73, the Regional Convenor for the Status of Women Committee provincially, so my area was southwestern Ontario, and I met with colleagues in Toronto—there were five of us. So we did a lot of things. We worked with, with Rosie Abella reforming the family property law, and we were lucky, we were the only women’s group that had money, so all the things that happened, all, the formation of PFLAG [Parents and Families of Lesbians and Gays] and all that was the result of work I could do because of the money. See, I could do all the mailings, so in a way the*

*Federation of Teachers [had] an absolutely pervasive influence around the province with any women's groups that were going, because the others didn't have money. Whether it was setting up a women's shelter or whatever, we were always called in because we could get, you know – "Yes, we can get money for mailings; yes, we can get...; yes, we'll bring in a speaker", and I brought in all kinds of speakers, like Flora MacDonald and Judy LaMarsh and Laura Sabia (ACPID023).*

Hannah also commented on the ways in which the FWTAO funded shelters for battered women and how women teachers always contributed money and goods to local shelters. She saw protecting mothers as a way of also protecting children and commented, "I think that was one of the great things of Women's Federation. We were far more interested in the care of the children than we were in the care for teachers in lots of ways. But I don't think the public saw it that way, which was a shame...."(ACPID129).

Just as so many Federation activists struggled to avoid the unionist label so, too, did feminism present challenges to the ways in which women teachers saw themselves. Where Judith was committed to the women's movement and identified herself as a feminist working to eliminate structural inequities, Hannah quickly re-defined similar activities as "caring for children." Lee, who accepted some of the feminist analysis of women's experience, claimed, however, that

*there were still some times when we'd go down to Toronto, come back and say, "No, no. Some of these issues are too strong for us. We can't..." You can internalize them, but a lot of times you couldn't act upon it in the North in the small communities because ... it doesn't fit with that lifestyle (ACPID132).*

The introduction by the FWTAO of affirmative action policies as a strategy to get more women teachers into administration was resisted to some degree at the local level. Gina was clear that she "wanted to know that if I got a position, I got it because I earned it"(ACPID195). Beth remembered the challenges which confronted her.

*I became president of Women Teachers' Federation at a time when affirmative action came into being. And I hardly knew anything about affirmative action and here I was president of a, of an association, a large association of women and [wondering] how to introduce the concept to them. [It] was very challenging because most women, most women teachers were very against affirmative action. They had the American model which was bra burning and hate men. They really had difficulty with it and they were very challenging sometimes in comments and behaviours and so on (ACPID227).*

Deborah also commented on the challenges she received from women teachers who argued that all the FWTAO did was talk about women's issues when there was far more to teaching than that. Deborah observed, however, that many women teachers would say, "I'm not a feminist. I'm for equal opportunity' or 'I'm a humanist' or 'I'm no women's libber but...' and then they would go on to explain their feminist philosophy even though they didn't know they had one"(ACPID157).

Like all organizations, the FWTAO had its internal struggles about the role it should play and what its goals and objectives should be. Women from different political backgrounds and regions of the province, working in different social circumstances across a variety of decades, debated the meaning of professionalism and supported or eschewed unionism and feminism. Large numbers of women teachers saw the wisdom and utility of a women's federation, while many others did not. Lee, who was a strong supporter of the FWTAO, nonetheless observed that in the north, of necessity, women and men worked relatively well together. Comparing her situation to that of teachers in the southern parts of the province, she said,

*Our issues were different in the north because our concerns were more about travelling, more getting families out to, say, the orthodontist, to dentists, to doctors, to specialists. Those were our concerns which involved our family. Then there were the working issues but the working issues were the same for both [women and men](ACPID132).*

At the same time she "loved the FW because of their support" and when she became a principal and had to leave the Federation in accordance

with new legislation, she claimed "It was like losing a child! 'I can't -- how can I survive? I don't have that support there. I don't have the help. I don't have the assistance. I don't have, you know, the collective bargaining behind me.' That was scary."

For many women, their Federation work provided important personal and professional development opportunities. For Beth (ACPID227) the WTA offered new challenges when she reached a level in the school system where there was no more growth potential. Caroline observed that in her day, the WTA "was the only place where women could really exercise their brain power, and not be, not worry about being quoted" or put down because they were smart (ACPID125). Genevieve, who became a very senior administrator in a school system, acknowledged that the Federation offered women experiences they would not otherwise have had. She noted that being on a WTA executive helped "to give them [women] exposure and to give them opportunities to meet people in the system, and to help them to develop leadership skills and to make them more confident"(ACPID136). Gail became an acting vice-principal twice but got no training, which was not a problem, she said, "because I had my leadership through the Federation." Noting that she had once been a "mild, meek person," Gail now boasted that she had changed and was prepared to speak up for herself (ACPID133). She and Beth both felt that young women teachers were willing to give up the FWTAO and establish the joint Federation in 1998 because they did not understand that the rights they took for granted – maternity leaves, advancement opportunities, a well-funded retirement – were the result of decades of struggle by the women's Federation.

### **Saying Good-bye to the Federation**

When the FWTAO disappeared in 1998 and the women and men elementary teachers established a new union, the Elementary Teachers' Federation of Ontario, the female teachers who had been activists and leaders in the women's Federation mourned the loss of their organization. Caroline described her feelings in this way: "I was devastated. I was so sad. I cried. I must say I was angry. I'll admit I cried for half a day." She regretted the loss of the FWTAO because "for

the group of women in my cohort, that was our only opportunity to learn leadership skills externally, and to work in the big picture, as opposed to being a leader in the home. That was our only opportunity to start that -- working for the Federation”(ACPID125).

When Hannah heard that the FWTAO would no longer be a separate organization for women,

*[she] felt dreadful, felt very hurt and upset, and I felt frustrated because I felt they just don't know what they're letting themselves in for. You know, I felt they'd suffer in the end and I feel in some ways they have. I've had more than one teacher complain to me and say, "Gee, you know, things are not the way they used to be" (ACPID129).*

Although it has now been six years since the FWTAO closed down, Deborah commented, “My heart still aches that it's not there today”(ACPID157). This is a sentiment that was echoed over and over again. Even the women who had come to believe that some form of amalgamation was inevitable were troubled and upset at the loss of a strong, separate women's organization.

Throughout its eighty year history, the FWTAO had provided a structure that allowed women teachers to look after themselves. Within their organization, they debated with one another over the role of their Federation and their identities as women, as teachers, and as women teachers. But saying farewell to an organization that had provided an independent voice for women teachers was a painful event, particularly since the FWTAO, as we have seen, provided a setting for many teachers to define and re-define their subjectivities and engage with the political and social questions which inevitably shaped the lives of all classroom teachers. As Hannah succinctly recalled, the Federation “had done a lot for me... and I felt that we were doing some good for the teaching profession and for children in particular”(ACPID129).



## End Notes

1. For a discussion of teacher organizing in nineteenth- and early twentieth-century Ontario see Alison Prentice, "Themes in the Early History of the Women Teachers' Association of Toronto," in *Women's Paid and Unpaid Work: Historical and Contemporary Perspectives*, ed. Paula Bourne (Toronto: New Hogtown Press, 1985), 97-121 and Harry Smaller, "'A Room of One's Own': The Early Years of the Toronto Women Teachers' Association," in *Gender and Education*, eds. Ruby Heap and Alison Prentice (Toronto: Canadian Scholars' Press, 1991), 105-126.
2. Following the formation of the FWTAO in 1918, public secondary school teachers founded the Ontario Secondary School Teachers' Federation (OSSTF) in 1919 and male public elementary school teachers set up the Ontario Public School Men Teachers' Federation (OPSMTF) in 1920. The OPSMTF later dropped the "men" from its name to become the OPSTF. These three federations, along with the Ontario English Catholic Teachers' Association (OECTA) which represented anglophone elementary and secondary teachers in the publicly funded Roman Catholic schools and the Association des enseignantes et des enseignants franco-ontariens which represented teachers in the francophone schools, were the five affiliates that coopearted under the umbrella of the Ontario Teachers' Federation as set out in *The Teaching Profession Act, 1944*.
3. The membership case against the FWTAO was initiated by Margaret Couture, later Tomen, with the support of the OPSTF. For this reason it is often called the Tomen Case. For background see, Mary Eberts, Florence Henderson, Kathleen Lahey, Catherine MacKinnon, Sheila McIntyre and Elizabeth Shilton, *The Case for Women's Equality: The Federation of Women Teachers' Associations of Ontario and the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms* (Toronto: FWTAO, 1991). See, also, D. J. Baum, *Final Decision, Board of Inquiry in the Matter of a Complaint Made by Margaret Tomen and Linda Logan-Smith* (Toronto: Ontario Human Rights Commission, 1994).
4. The best review is still Andrew Spaul, "Fields of Disappointment: The Writing of Teacher Union History in Canada," *Historical Studies in Education/Revue de l'histoire de l'éducation* 3, no.1 (1991): 21-47.

5. The three in-house histories are Doris French, *High Button Bootstraps: Federation of Women Teachers' Associations of Ontario, 1918-1968* (Toronto: Ryerson Press, 1968); Pat Staton and Beth Light, *Speak With Their Own Voices* (Toronto: FWTAO, 1987); Mary Labatt, *Always a Journey: A History of the Federation of Women Teachers' Associations of Ontario, 1918-1993* (Toronto: FWTAO, 1993).

6. For discussions of the impact of the government of Premier Mike Harris on education and teachers, see, for example, Patricia McAdie, "The Declining Commitment to Equity in Education," in *Confronting the Cuts: A Sourcebook for Women in Ontario*, eds. Luciana Ricciutelli, June Larkin and Eimear O'Neill (Toronto: Inanna Publications and Education Inc., 1998), 62-67; Rebecca Coulter, "School Restructuring Ontario Style: A Gendered Agenda," in *Teacher Activism in the 1990s*, eds. Susan Robertson and Harry Smaller (Toronto: James Lorimer, 1996), 89-102; Alan Sears, *Retooling the Mind Factory: Education in a Lean State* (Aurora, ON: Garamond Press, 2003)

7. See, for example, Pat Armstrong, "Professions, Unions, Or What? Learning from Nurses," in *Women Challenging Unions: Feminism, Democracy and Militancy*, eds. Linda Briskin and Patricia McDermott (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1993), 304-321.

8. Loren Lind, "Judge Reville and Ontario Teachers," *This Magazine is About Schools* 6, no. 4 (Winter 1972-73): 23-24.

9. Federation of Women Teachers' Associations of Ontario, *Professionalism: The Heart of the Matter* (Toronto: FWTAO, 1981).

10. Francesca Sawaya, *Modern Women, Modern Work: Domesticity, Professionalism, and American Writing, 1890-1950* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2004).

11. Bills 274 and 275 were introduced in 1973 by the Progressive Conservative government of Bill Davis and were designed to restrict the use of mass resignations, deny access to collective bargaining and introduce compulsory arbitration. After teachers' protests, the bills were withdrawn and in 1975, the government introduced The School Boards and Teachers Collective Negotiations Act giving teachers full bargaining rights. S. B. Lawton, G. Bedard, D. MacLellan and X. Li, *Teachers' Unions in Canada* (Calgary, Detselig, 1999), 31-2.

12. For a fuller discussion of these issues see, for example, R.D. Gidney and W.P.J. Millar, *Professional Gentlemen: The Professions in Nineteenth-Century Ontario* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1994); Anne Witz, *Professions and Patriarchy* (London and New York: Routledge, 1992); Sawaya, *Modern Women, Modern Work*; Sandra Acker, *Gendered Education: Sociological Reflections on Women, Teaching and Feminism* (Toronto: OISE Press, 1994), especially Part 2; Elizabeth Smyth, Sandra Acker, Paula Bourne and Allison Prentice, eds., *Challenging Professions* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1999).