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*Khrystyna SHOLOTA***UKRAINIAN WOMEN’S ORGANISATIONS OF CANADA  
AND THEIR PARTICIPATION IN GENDER EQUALITY  
MOVEMENT**

The history of Ukrainian feminist movement in Canada is an integral part of Ukrainian womanhood chronicle, the part of socio-political life of Ukraine and Canada. The suggested article analyses the participation of Ukrainian women’s organizations in their struggle for insurance gender equality – for increase in the presence of women in all structures of governance, for the equal rights to obtain work, equal opportunities for career advancement, equal pay for equal work. The article emphasizes the process of activity of Ukrainian women’s organizations in gender equality movement, their role in social, political and cultural life of the country.

*Keywords:* gender equality, Ukrainian women’s organizations, feminism, Canada

**INTRODUCTION**

Diaspora, living for a long time in Canada, had gradually accustomed to socio-economic and cultural life of this country. The Ukrainian community in the country of a Maple Leaf proved that effective participation in Canadian life would promote advocacy of political and legal status. Ukrainian women also demonstrated ideological and theoretical unity with general Canadian women’s movement, which had long-standing traditions and feminist achievements. In 1916 the struggle for Canadian women’s suffrage was crowned with success in a number of provinces: since January 1917 the right for women to vote was introduced in provincial election programs in Alberta, Saskatchewan, Manitoba, British Columbia, and Ontario<sup>1</sup>. In 1918 the federal parliament adopted a law granting women equal electoral rights with men all over the country.

Providing full civil rights priorities for women changed emancipative aspirations of Canadian women. The main problem remained concerning the women’s ability to take advantage of these rights. Therefore, in the 1930’s–1940’s of 20<sup>th</sup> century organized Canadian womanhood actively fought for equal pay for women and men, creation of training programs for women as well as equal health insurance program and improvement of pension legislation.

**MATERIALS AND METHODS**

Originally, the Ukrainian gender problem was the subject of interest of Ukrainian Diaspora researchers and only in the 1980’s-1990’s it became a sphere of scientific interests of domestic scholars. The works of I. Knysh, I. Pavlykovska, M. Bohachevska-Chomyak,

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<sup>1</sup> *Stebelskyi B.* Idei i tvorchist: zbirnyk stattei ta eseiv / B. Stebelskyi; red. O. Kopach. – Toronto: [b. v.], 1991. – P. 124.

F. Svyrypa on the history of emancipation competitions of Ukrainian women laid the foundation of further studies of Ukrainian women's movement in Canada. The issues of social and political activity of Ukrainian womanhood in Canada were analyzed later in the works of such Ukrainian researchers as Y. Balytska, O. Kis, T. Orlova, O. Malanchuk-Rybak and others.

The studies of genesis, organizational principles and the main directions of the Ukrainian feminist movement, in particular in the context of social and political life in Canada is a typical example of feminist studies, that should be naturally based on the usage of feminist and gender studies methodology. We apply gender analysis as the instrument of understanding social and political processes, and use a number of categories which serve as organizing forms of historical cognition (liberal, socio-Christian and socialist feminism, gender discrimination, legal, cultural, educational, professional gender equality etc). Using various modern methodological approaches allow to avoid subjective evaluations, and provide scientific credibility of the research results and complement the stated problems with a factual material. Thus, the historiographical base and the source base of these problems give enough materials for the studies of Ukrainian feminist movement history in Canada and is fully representative for a complex solution of the research objectives.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Development of Canadian women's movement took place in liberal feminist form. Consecutive liberal principles, respected by Canadian liberal ideologues, meant the following: the principle of legal activity within the current legislation and, consequently, the spread of legal ideology, liberal principles of justice and religious tolerance; evolutionary principle of civil society, non-interference in economic, social and cultural life. These liberal postulates were close to Western women's movement in the interwar period. A prominent researcher O. Malanchuk-Rybak considers Ukrainian Women's Congress in 1934 in Stanislav (Ivano-Frankivsk) as the culmination of ideological liberal feminism<sup>2</sup>. Therefore the ideology of liberal feminism gained understanding and support in Ukrainian women's movement in Canada.

Decisive role in Canadian women's movement was played by the most powerful women's organization of the country - the National Council of Women of Canada (NCWC). Throughout its long-term activity, (the organization was established in October 1893) NCWC proved to be a reliable defender of economic, social and political rights of women in the country.

The National Council of Women of Canada represented Canadian womanhood in the International Women's council and was accredited under Economic and Social Council of the United Nations. The organization closely cooperated with Canadian governmental agencies and established practice of annual reports of Prime Minister and members of the Cabinet at NCWC conferences.

NCWC had a wide network of organizations associated with local councils and provincial leadership of the National Council. Its representatives examined the status of implementation of the country's current legislation concerning the process of ensuring

<sup>2</sup> *Malanchuk-Rybak O.* Ideolohiia i suspilna praktyka zhinochoho rukhu na zakhidnoukrainskykh zemliakh XIX – pershoi tretyni XX st.: typolohiia ta yevropeiskyi kulturno-istorychnyi kontekst: monohrafiia / O. Malanchuk-Rybak. – Chernivtsi: Knyhy, 2006. – P. 285.

women's rights and made recommendations for improving the situation of women to the National Council. Cooperation with NCWC led Ukrainian women's movement to a qualitatively new level and it allowed to realize its ideas, and solve problems with the support of all Canadian women. The National Council was regarded as another channel of cooperation with international women's movement.

Cooperation with NCWC allowed representatives of Ukrainian women to become parties to international women's forums. In the 60's activists of Ukrainian women's organizations as a part of delegations of NCWC participated at the conferences of the International Women Council in Istanbul, Washington, Tehran. In 1966 among the ten delegates of NCWC at the conference of International Women Council were four Ukrainians: A. Tokaryk, K. Miskyv, E. Kozyar and S. Gavrish. Ukrainians actively used the floor of international conventions to express their views on topical issues of the women's movement, and actively support the struggle of Ukrainian people for democracy and independence<sup>3</sup>.

As a result of their active role, Ukrainian women gained respective reputation among Canadian women. At the beginning of 1967 NCWC rewarded its twelve activists, including a representative of Ukrainian womanhood G. Lazaruk –Henderson to mark 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Canada<sup>4</sup>.

In 1961 a well-known Ukrainian activist G. Hnatyshyn was elected a deputy chairman of NCWC and another activist O. Voytsenko became the Head of Art and Literature Committee at Windsor Convention<sup>5</sup>. In 1965 at the convention of NCWC in Nanaimo the delegation of representatives of Ukrainian Women delivered the copy of the brief on bilingualism and biculturalism, which was presented to the Royal commission. Since 1969 the deputy chairman of NCWC was M. Didur, the representative of the Union of Ukrainian Canadians (UUC)<sup>6</sup>.

In 1970–1973 H. Hnatyshyn was awarded the high honour to become the Head of the National Council of Women of Canada. G. Hnatyshyn was born in Canada in the family of Ukrainian patriots. She laid the foundation of UUC and was the Head of this respectful women's organization for ten years<sup>7</sup>.

In the second half of the 60–70's, women's movement in Western Europe, the USA and Canada came to a new level. This period is called the second way of feminism by a number of researchers. It was a decade of massive social upheavals named as revolutions in American historiography: students, Afro-American, ethnic, counterculture revolutions<sup>8</sup>. During this period the struggle for civil rights of black population of the USA, left student movement in the West, the campaign against the war in Vietnam intensified

<sup>3</sup> *Kohuska N.* Pivstolittia na hromadskii nyvi: narys istorii Soiuzu ukrainok Kanady. 1926–1976 / N. Kohuska; perednie sl. avt. – Edmonton; Vinnipeh: Zakhodamy i koshtom Soiuzu ukrainok Kanady z Fundatsii im. N. Kobrynskoï pry dopomozi dotatsii proviitsiinoho y federalnoho uriadiv ta Shevchenkivskoi fundatsii, 1986. – P. 80.

<sup>4</sup> *Voitsenko O.* Litopys ukrainskoho zhyttia v Kanadi. – Edmonton: KIUS, 1986. – T. 7: Doba zavershenykh konsolidatsiinykh protsesiv i zmahannia za konstytutsiine vyznannia – 1960–1969. – P. 337.

<sup>5</sup> *Encyclopedia of Ukraine* / [ed.by Danylo Husar Struk]. – Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1988. –Vol. 2. – P. 81.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibidem.* – P. 83.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibidem.* – P. 371.

<sup>8</sup> *Vvedenyie v hendernye yssledovanyia.* – Kharkov: KhTsHY; SPb.: Aleiteia, 2001. – Ch. 1: Uchebnoe posobyie / [pod red. Y. A. Zhrebkynoi]. – P. 636.

greatly. Social and economic changes in Western society in the middle of twentieth century, among which we should note a significant increase in employment of women and increase in their representation in higher education sphere, played a great role.

A well-known researcher of history of feminism D. Dahlerup pointed out that a new stage of women's movement was a protest of women against patriarchal society (a society of male domination). This "women's revolution" took place under the slogan: "If a woman has a right to half of a paradise, she has a right to a half of the power on the earth"<sup>9</sup>.

Women participated effectively in the struggle for increasing their presence in all structures of governance, for the right to obtain work, equal opportunities for career advancement ladder, equal pay for equal work<sup>10</sup>.

The beginning of the second phase of feminist movement in Canada, scientists consider women's conference, which took place in May 3, 1966 in Toronto, where representatives of 32 women's organizations, including NCWC discussed the situation of womanhood in the country and made a decision about the establishment of the Committee on Gender Equality in Canada (CEW). Women also appealed to the government to take legislative actions to improve the status of women in the country<sup>11</sup>.

The movement for women's rights in Canada followed the objectives of social feminism of the 1930's. The basis of its moderate wing, as in the previous period, was formed by ideological and political concept of liberal feminism. The left wing of the women's movement that emerged in the wake of the youth movement united different radical ideas aimed at either legislative reform or the change of female consciousness and socio-cultural practices. Moderate wing was the most influential in the legislative and executive structures because of its ideological attitudes and organizational forms.

In February 1967, Prime Minister L. Pearson announced the creation of the Royal Commission on the Status of Women. This organization was mandated to develop measures that were transferred to the federal government to ensure equal opportunities for women in all spheres of Canadian society. The Commission was headed by F. Bird, a TV journalist from Ottawa<sup>12, 13</sup>.

The establishment of the Royal Commission was the turning point in women's movement in Canada and the symbol of the second wave of feminism. "According to Canadian researcher of women's movement, N. Chorny" the key point of the second wave of Canadian women's movement was the period from 1967-till 1970. The activity of the Royal Commission led to a significant increase in public awareness of women's situation in Canada. During this period, some legislative acts concerning improvement

<sup>9</sup> *Dahlerup. D.* The New Womens Movement. Feminism and Political Power in Europe and the USA / D. Dahlerup. – London: Sage. 1986. – P. 26.

<sup>10</sup> *Stechyshyn S.* Korolivska komisiia vidbuvaie pereslakhannia / S. Stechyshyn // Ukrainskyi holos. – 1968. – Ch. 20. – P. 11.

<sup>11</sup> *Dawn J.* Women and Social Change. Feminist Activism in Canada / J. Dawn, J. Ristock. – Toronto: Lorimer and Company, Publisher, 1991. – P. 4.

<sup>12</sup> *Binder S.* Participant M. Making the Personal Political. The Royal Commission on the Status of Women and the National Action Committee on the Status of Women / S. Binder [URL]. – www.faw.nf.ca/.../royal%20commission%2. – P. 1.

<sup>13</sup> *Dawn J.* Women and Social Change... – P. 5.

of the status of women were adopted. That period was characterized as a period of increasing radical feminist ideas in Canada as well<sup>14</sup>.

The Commission carried out its activities in the following areas:

- Women have the right to choose their occupation freely
- Childcare is a shared responsibility of the mother and the father;
- the society takes responsibility for women, especially during their pregnancy and childbirth period;
- women require special treatment to overcome the negative effects of discriminatory practices in some provinces.

In 1970 the Commission prepared a report of its work, which included 167 recommendations on such burning issues as equal pay for men and women for the same work, birth control issue, state aid to pregnant women and mothers with newborn children, women's access to leadership positions, the right of mothers to work part-time etc. This document significantly accelerated implementation of reforms to improve the situation of Canadian women<sup>15</sup>.

Canadian women's organizations started an active work on the integration of women in the political movement. In order to join efforts in the process of implementation of reforms that reflected the interests of womanhood, both at the federal and the provincial levels in the middle of 1971 a powerful national organization called the National Action Committee of the Status of Women (NAC) was created. This Committee united 23 women Canadian associations, including women's sections of three most influential political parties.

Women's organizations developed special programs on insurance of equal rights and opportunities for women in the country, among which "Women's Program" took an important place and was adopted by Canadian parliament in 1973<sup>16</sup>. Its aim was to provide support and improve social position of women in Canada. More than 2000 projects were realized under the auspices of Women's program for the last ten years<sup>17</sup>.

Another influential organization Status of Women of Canada (SWC) was established in 1976. This Agency promoted gender equality and equal participation of women in economic, political, social and cultural life of the country. Its activity was based on the following principles; economic independence and security of women, improvement of their position in the society, eradication of women and child abuse. The turning point in the work of SWC was fruitful cooperation with women's non-governmental organizations. The Agency informed Canadian society about governmental priorities concerning women's issues and its activity resulted in adoption and ratification of a great number of international documents on gender equality<sup>18</sup>.

<sup>14</sup> *Black N.* The Canadian Women's Movement: The Second Wave in S. Burt, L. Code, L. Dorney, eds. *Changing Patterns: Women in Canada* / Naomi Black. – Toronto, 1988. – P. 83.

<sup>15</sup> *Binder S.* Participant M. Making the Personal Political... [URL]. – [www.ffaw.nf.ca/.../royal%20commission%20](http://www.ffaw.nf.ca/.../royal%20commission%20). – P. 2.

<sup>16</sup> *Shvedova N. A.* Zhenshchyny v Kanade: kak deistvuet mekhanizm hendernoho ravenstva / N. A. Shvedova // Zhenshchyna v rossiyskom obshchestve. Rossiyskiy nauchnyi zhurnal. – 2008. – N 2. – P. 64.

<sup>17</sup> 50-littia SFUZhO: yuvileina knyha Svitovoi federatsii ukrainskykh zhinochykh orhanizatsii, 1948–1998 / [red. M. Shpir]. – Toronto: Vyd-vo Svitovoi federatsii ukrainskykh zhinochykh orhanizatsii, 2002. – P. 496.

<sup>18</sup> *Shvedova N. A.* Zhenshchyny v Kanade... – P. 58.

## CONCLUSION

Ukrainian women's movement in Canada demonstrated that one of its essential tasks was persistent struggle for ensuring women's rights in Canadian society. Ukrainian women's organizations, being an integral part of democratic society, supported ideology and practice of liberal feminism and were active representatives of second wave feminist movement. Their activity contributed to implementation of political and legal systems reforms in Canada and improvement of socio-economic and political situation of Canadian women.

### **Христина Шолота. Участь українських жіночих організацій Канади в гендерному русі**

Історія українського феміністського руху в Канаді є складовою частиною літопису українського жіночого руху, частиною суспільно-політичного життя України і Канади. В пропонованій статті проаналізовано участь українських жіночих організацій Канади в боротьбі за гендерну рівність – збільшення присутності в урядових структурах, рівні можливості працевлаштування, кар'єрного росту, оплати праці. Підкреслено особливу активність українського жіноцтва в гендерному русі, їх присутність в суспільному, політичному та культурному житті Канади.

*Ключові слова:* гендерна рівність, українські жіночі організації, фемінізм, Канада.