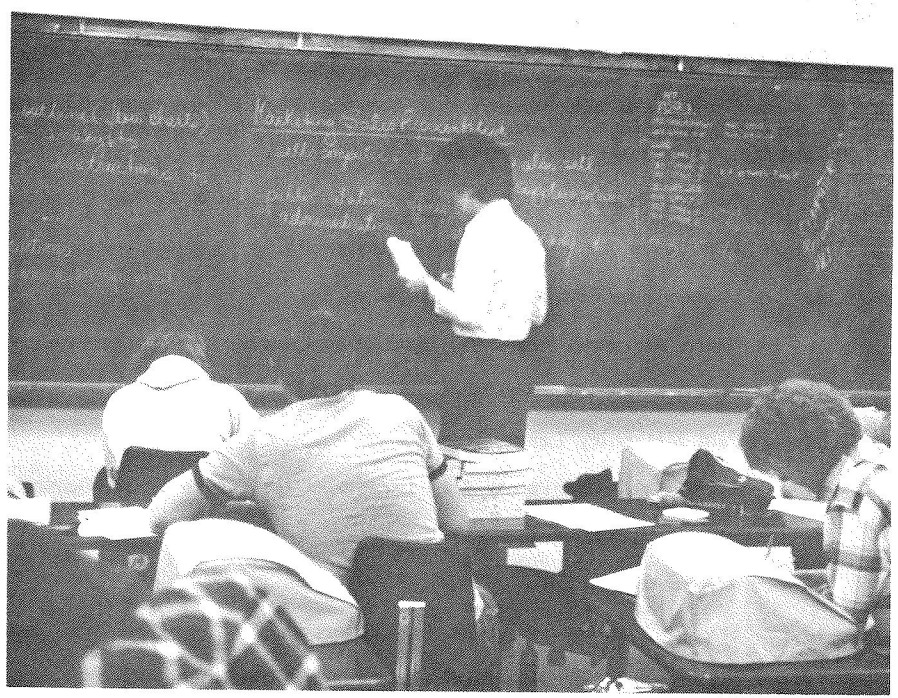


F. U. MAY 24/82



A SPECIAL INSERT
PREPARED FOR UPDATE
BY THE STATUS OF WOMEN COMMITTEE

At Assembly this year, provincial policy supporting affirmative action programs in Boards of Education was established. Overwhelming support was given this policy by that body, but uncertainty may exist in the minds of some members as to why such a policy is needed, and what affirmative action really involves.

The aim of any affirmative action program is equal employment opportunity for all. The current situation of women within the education system - their clustering in certain subject areas, in classrooms, and at lower grade levels, and their decreasing share in the profession overall - led the Status of Women Committee to bring this policy motion to Assembly.

Women are under-represented in leadership positions in the secondary schools, yet as a resource pool they provide talent, skills, expertise and commitment essential to our profession. We cannot afford to continue to bypass this resource pool, especially as our membership numbers decrease and the traditional source of leadership-men-becomes progressively smaller.

The need is clear for affirmative action. Let's take a look now at what affirmative action is not, and what it is.

Affirmative action is not quotas, for quotas imply a filling of positions with little or no attention given to qualifications. It is, however, the provision of special training and educational opportunities for members of a disadvantaged group, and encouragement and assistance for those individuals in gaining the necessary skills to enable them to compete for all positions on an equal basis.

Affirmative action is not reverse discrimination, for no attempt is made in such programs to curtail or halt the career development of qualified individuals. Successful affirmative action will, of course, increase the numbers of qualified applicants for hiring or promotion by tapping hitherto underutilized human resources. Appointments will, however, continue to be based on merit.

Affirmative action is not legislation compelling employers to conform to rigid and demoralizing regulations. In those Boards which already have such programs, it means focussing on education and awareness programs for both men and women; clarifying personnel, hiring and promotion practices; and leading all employees to consider career options traditionally restricted to one group.

With the support of our Federation, and our active involvement in every District, affirmative action programs can become the kind of cooperative and mutually beneficial ventures which improve the quality of the working environment for us all.

The Assembly passed a second motion asking that Districts and Divisions actively promote the establishment of affirmative action by Boards of Education. The provincial Status of Women Committee would be very pleased to offer suggestions or assistance to any Districts or Divisions interested in undertaking such action. We invite any members with concerns or questions about affirmative action to contact the Committee at 60 Mobile Drive, Toronto.

Shelagh Luka, Chairperson
Status of Women Committee