



EDITOR'S COLUMN

This issue of the *Canadian Journal of Communication* is dedicated to Thelma McCormack, professor and chair of the department of sociology at York University who was chosen to present the Southam lecture at the June Canadian Communication Association meeting in Windsor. She is the first woman to receive this honor which recognizes those who have made significant contributions to Canadian communications scholarship.

Professor McCormack's interest in communication issues goes back to 1942 and Columbia University where she embarked on a Ph.D in sociology with Robert Lynd but was "converted" by the ebullient Paul Felix Lazarsfeld to participate in Bureau of Applied Social Research activities. Here she was involved in the famous war bond study with Robert K. Merton, investigated stereotypes with Bernard Berelson and worked on persuasion projects for the Office of War Information.

Like so many women, Thelma McCormack's initial career path became "jagged" and was lived out on the margins of the academy after she met her future husband Robert. When he graduated in English literature the couple left New York for Washington, the first of four job postings followed by stays at Northwestern, Montreal and Toronto where he was to establish a CBC research branch. During this time Thelma McCormack did what she still loves doing most: "practical research". In Washington (1948-50) this included a stint with the Division of Special Surveys doing survey research for the US Department of Agriculture and job satisfaction studies for the Civilian Personnel Research Branch of the airforce. While at Northwestern (1950-54) she worked in Paul Hatt's Laboratory for Social Research. Montreal, where she lived from 1954-57, was the birthplace of her twin daughters and the site for part-time teaching in McGill's Sociology department where she met Robert Elkin.

She credits Elkin with persuading her to become an academic despite her reservations. She joined York University's Sociology department full time in 1964 and offered one of the first courses in communications at a Canadian university. Five years later the experience of widowhood, which McCormack explains makes one into a "non-person", led her to the discovery of feminism. Since then two preoccupations have oriented her research: a desire to understand the role of communication in the political process, in social movements and in social change, as well as a concern for questions raised by feminism. Foci here (as a philosophy BA from Wisconsin) are feminism's philosophical foundations, its relationship to civil liberties, and its ability to explain forms of social stigmatization.

As a "doer" Professor McCormack has contributed to every Royal Commission inquiry from Fowler through Caplan/Sauvageau, yet without visible acknowledgement. In spite of this official neglect, public honours have increased over the years indicating the powerful ripple effect her teaching and scholarship have had on others. We join her in celebrating such accomplishments as the Vilas and McLuhan

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Teleglobe Canada awards. We also feel honored that the person who "feels proud to be working on what she believes in" has raised our consciousness about our responsibility as human beings and as scholars to support the rhetoric of peace in a media world attracted to the metaphors of war and domination.

The other contributors to this issue echo these same sentiments and join in tracing other social effects of war-like speech. John Allan Lee analyzes the contending forces in the seal hunt controversy. Stuart Allan inquires into the construction of the disarmament debate and Sharon D. Stone chronicles how the Canadian peace movement is framed as socially unacceptable by Toronto newspapers. Together these essays serve as signposts that in research as in life "the personal is political".

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Thelma McCormack

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