

Reply from Professor Strong-Boag:

I am pleased to hear that matters are proceeding more happily in Concordia's Simone de Beauvoir Institute and Women's Studies Department. The new principal, Elizabeth Sacca, seems well able to make the Institute and the Department the presence it promised to be in its early days. Certainly the entire women's studies community in Canada will welcome a strengthening of the Concordia centre. Although the present situation looks very hopeful, I would nevertheless be, especially as an historian, remiss in failing to attempt to locate women's studies in Canada, and in this instance at Concordia, in terms of past events. My contribution to JET's Special Issue on Women's Studies and Higher Education, "Mapping Women's Studies in Canada: Some Signposts" set forward my own understanding of a decade and more of women's studies. This interpretation was shaped fundamentally not only by much reading, reflection and discussion, but also by my own experience as an historian and scholar of women's studies at the University of Toronto, Concordia and Simon Fraser, and my close association with the Canadian Women's History Committee and the Canadian Women's Studies Association. Such credentials are far from perfect and others may claim more authority in commenting on women's studies. I would welcome, as I indicated in the article, additions from new perspectives to the account. I do, however, stand by the substance of what I wrote. For all our wishing, feminist scholars have their differences and so much their interpretations of the past. To demand, as some critics of the article have, that disagreements be ignored or at least not reach the state of publication presents a fundamental obstacle to intellectual progress. Feminists need to debate publicly their understanding of the past. Only this will allow us to deal creatively and non-destructively with present and future controversies. Whatever the perspective on what happened at Concordia in the late 1970s, perhaps it can be agreed that it was paid for in the hard coin of lost good will and trust from some at least in the feminist community. Mistakes were made, no doubt on every side; not thinking about them will not make them go away nor help us deal with the here and now. Learning our history is not always edifying or reassuring, it is, however, essential to self-understanding and thus to the better future we all desire.

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Editor's Note:

A recent communication from Ms. Verthuy states "co-operation with CRIAN and other national and regional groups in holding one of the organizational meetings for what is now the CWSA during our international conference in July/August 1982" (and) "arranging for APFUCC to co-host the CWSA meeting" at the forthcoming 1984 Learned Societies Conference. For further information see *Annual Report* (1979-80), Simone De Beauvoir Institute/*Institut Simone de Beauvoir*, Conference Proceedings, 1-2/6/1980.