

Book Reviews

THE PUBLIC AT PLAY: GENDER AND THE POLITICS OF RECREATION IN POST-WAR ONTARIO

Shirley Tillotson
Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2000.

BY ABBY BUSHBY

There were three outdoor skating rinks at the municipal park near my childhood home in northern Ontario. Two were boarded hockey-game size rinks, well lit and regularly flooded. Winter evenings brought teams of boys in colourful uniforms bearing the names of local sponsors, together with their coaches, service-club volunteer timekeepers, and parent supporters to the hockey rinks. Interloping free skaters, such as myself, moved onto the smaller, bumpier, darker rink.

A summer in early adolescence brought a welcome relief from endless craft activities in the park. The first girls' baseball teams organized enough players to play some games between parks. In one season we became participants, not mere spectators to boys' baseball. Lacking sponsors, I designed a paper pin-on nameplate that my team-mates wisely refused to wear. Anonymous to the casual observer, we did have a name: the "Minnesota Park Frills."

We could have guessed then what Shirley Tillotson has documented in

her carefully scrutinized history of the development of urban public recreation in post-war Ontario—that in public recreation, gender matters. We would have nodded our heads gratefully for the confirmation, despite dismay over the certain knowledge that during the critical period of policy formation—less than ten years following WWII—gender equality failed to advance and even took steps backward in public recreation. Tillotson's view of why and how this happened, however, would unsettle common ground amongst my baseball team mates.

In this intensely complex story, gender tells little of the tale. Gender is marginalized in its own story. Here the gender perspective is subordinated to an illustration that, in public recreation, the politics of economic class struggle matters more.

To her credit, Tillotson takes no short cuts to get there. Highly interesting is her treatment of clearly distinct historical perspectives on the nature and purposes of public recreation, woven with a gendered view of each: from the settlement-house, social-welfarist, crime-preventing role of public recreation, through to the dominance of liberal, market-demand-driven orientation over a failed attempt to enhance community identity and integrate social groups through public recreation—which was briefly promising after WWII. These themes weave through her labourious transfer of an academic thesis into an exhaustively referenced, yet readable work. The publication is well edited. A few photos carefully selected to enhance themes and an excellent explanation of the limitations of privacy law help. While

the endnotes are many, accessible organization does satisfy obsessive curiosity.

Tillotson's focus is the failure of the recreation movement to transform society into citizen-led regimes responsive to community policy networks. Instead, she critiques public recreation as an instrument for making democracy function as a liberal state. Thus the replacement of volunteers by bureaucrats and the substitution of professional standards for community responsiveness is lamented: the status of girls and women became solidified as weak members in the liberal state; women community activists remained relegated to wife and mother roles. The question: Would gender equality have fared better in a community responsive regime?, is suggested, but not examined.

The selection of a case study illustrates the difficulty. The post-war recreation movement in Brantford ignited community interest amongst ordinary citizens under the skillful direction of a Saul Alinsky—trained director of public recreation. Working-class men and women were recruited as service volunteers and community leaders in organized networks. But by 1953 the promise had failed when a diverse, citizen-led group lost all decision-making authority to a male, corporate-driven municipal advisory body. "What," my baseball team mates would ask, "happened in one of those few communities—how many were there anyway—with a woman recreation director?"

The chapter on the feminine mystique in community leadership is more on the mark. My team mates

on the baseball field would probably have cheered to hear that leisure services are politically serious, but they would not believe it was necessary to wait for a social and economic revolution across society before girls and women could do better in public sports and recreation. A little more respect for distinct interests would have done. And with that, another nod would go to Tillotson for concluding with an introduction to the politics of equity and diversity.

WOMEN, SPORT AND PHYSICAL ACTIVITY: SHARING GOOD PRACTICE

Darlene A. Kluka, Christine Melling, and Deena Scoretz, Eds.
Berlin, Ger.: ICSSPE/ CIEPSS, 2000

BY JEANNE MARANDA

Les bureaux du Comité international olympique (IOC) à Montréal ont reçu ces jours derniers in document en anglais, *Women, Sport and Physical Activity, Sharing Good Practice*, publié conjointement par le Conseil international d'éducation physique et de la science des sports (CIEPSS/ ICSSPE) et l'Organisation des Nations-unies pour l'éducation, les sciences et la culture (UNESCO).

La présidente du Women Sport International, est enthousiaste face au contenu de cette monographie qui selon elle répond aux attentes et aux besoins de tous les organismes destinés à promouvoir la place des femmes dans les sports et ajoute que ce document sera une inspiration pour les femmes et les jeunes filles qui auront à leur disposition des ressources qui donneront à leur vie et à leur travail une autre dimension.

Et Madame Margaret Talbot OBE, présidente de l'Association en éducation physique et les sports pour les femmes et les jeunes filles, écrit dans sa préface :

This collection shows how much physical education and sport have to gain from the contribution of women. Their work and experience in the various types of family units; in education, health and social justice, enhance, extend and enrich the ways in which activity programmes, competitions, training and education can be made more accessible to more people—women and men, girls and boys, people with different abilities and of different ages, people from different cultures, religions and regions of the world.

Cette importante monographie qui a exigé deux années de recherche regroupe près de cent réalisations et initiatives provenant de groupes internationaux et nationaux tout comme des organismes gouvernementaux et non-gouvernementaux (ONG) impliqués dans la promotion du sport chez les femmes. Il est divisé en trois parties qui se partagent une centaine de pages. D'abord les politiques qui ont été déterminées lors de congrès mondiaux tels la Conférence internationale des femmes à Beijing en 1995, les déclarations de principes de Brighton, de Manille, de l'Australie entre autres. Ainsi qu'un éventail des dispositions prises pour encourager la pratique des sports chez les femmes et les filles dans le monde.

Une deuxième partie est consacrée aux participantes, c'est-à-dire toutes les associations, les groupes de femmes qui ont initié des activités pour sensibiliser les femmes et les filles aux bienfaits du sport dans leur vie. On cite la Nouvelle-Zélande, l'Afrique, l'Angleterre, la Suède et j'en passe. On y trouve même des offres de bourses pour les jeunes filles qui veulent se spécialiser dans les sports. Dans la troisième partie ce sont les organismes qui chapeautent tels les confédérations, les associations régionales qui favorisent la formation de guides, de mentors,

préparent des séminaires pour la promotion des sportives et leurs entraîneuses.

Le tout est couronné par un bottin qui donne les noms et les adresses des personnes responsables et de leurs groupes implantés à travers le monde.

Les quelques pages de la fin de cet impressionnant travail sont consacrées à la publication de sept prises de position de la Women's Sport Foundation qui traitent de sujets aussi variés que les vêtements appropriés aux athlètes, le harcèlement et le sexisme, les femmes au baseball et le dopage. Une étude du Collège américain pour la médecine sportive (ACSM) sur la "Triade de la femme athlète" i.e., l'anorexie, l'aménorrhée, et l'ostéoporose ne manquera pas d'intéresser toute entraîneuse auprès des sportives.

Le mot de la fin revient aux présidentes des organismes internationaux impliqués dans la promotion de la femme dans les sports qui assurent que de grands pas ont été accomplis dans le monde du sport et des femmes mais elles regrettent qu'il se trouve si peu de femmes dans les postes décisionnels. Elles font des recommandations en ce sens, mais le facteur crucial pour l'implantation et l'initiation au changement permanent demeure l'individu, insistent-elles. "Chaque personne, une seule à la fois, peut créer une tapisserie souple, chatoyante, diversifiée qui représente la force de toute l'humanité."

BLOOD RELATIONS: ANIMALS, HUMANS, AND POLITICS

Charlotte Montgomery
Toronto: Between the Lines Press, 2000

BY STACEY C. MORTIMER

In *Blood Relations*, Charlotte Mont-