

Mary Heinzlmeir, Shirley MacDougall and Ann Devlin. You have my since thanks and appreciation.

It is very important to make personal contact with local members of parliament, senators and members of our provincial legislative assemblies. On issues of importance, each voice needs to be heard on an individual and personal basis.

The coming year will be challenging. It is vital that councils monitor what bills are before federal and provincial governments, while keeping in mind current and past resolutions.

One bill in particular before the federal government is from Member of Parliament Francine Lalonde: Bill C-384 *An Act to amend the Criminal Code (right to die with dignity)*. It has been placed on the order of precedence in the House of Commons and will be brought forward when parliament reconvenes from its summer break on September 14th. This is the third time she has introduced this bill; she introduced it during the second session of the 39th parliament and the first session of the 38th parliament.

Please read the entire bill. Encourage all parish members to write personal letters or e-mails or telephone their members of parliament with a clear, concise request to defeat the bill and to ask for a response on how they will vote. This bill is a great danger to the most vulnerable in our society.

Our first line of defence needs to be our concern for the vulnerable, our mentally and physically ill, and our accident victims. Our second line of defence is good palliative care. At the 2nd International Symposium on Euthanasia and Assisted Suicide, attendees were told how euthanasia supporters use videos of patients wandering the halls of hospitals in hospital gowns. This plays on people's fears of being helpless, abandoned and losing their dignity. Remember, silence means we agree with the action proposed even when we know the proposed action is wrong and harmful.

My goals for the coming year: to keep members aware of what bills are being introduced before the federal government that are related to current and past resolutions, keeping an eye on what will be of harm or what will benefit society; to encourage all members to contact their members of parliament, members of legislative assemblies and municipal representatives; to review the requirements for position papers in the *National Manual of Policy and Procedure* with the national chairperson of resolutions; and to encourage all members to use the *CWL Day of Peace & Hope Activities Kit* as it pertains to palliative care.

I would like to share with each of you today the excitement and the energy that I felt when I had the privilege of sharing lunch with six legislation chairpersons. The room vibrated; I could have gone on for the whole afternoon. Their enthusiasm will carry me through the coming year. ✚

LAWS



Lorette Noble
Candiac, Quebec

Most past presidents probably think that they will have a whole less League "work" to do once their term as president is over. Well, that has not exactly been my experience so far! However,

one thing is sure: there is much less pressure and fewer urgent deadlines to meet.

At the national level, as you know, there is one duty added, that of chairperson of laws, which involves being called upon from time to time to interpret the *Constitution & Bylaws (C&B)* and the *National Manual of Policy and Procedure (P&P)*. And this has been a really interesting experience. The questions asked this past year show that this is a dynamic organization; we are alive and open (sometimes) to change in order to improve how we function.

Our first C&B came into existence in 1920; it was the size of our prayer leaflet, seven pages long. I imagine that questions were always asked about how does one interpret one or other of its articles and so, over time, the P&P came into existence. It gives a fuller description of how to bring the C&B to life in councils at all levels.

The challenge we face is our diversity. We are united in spirit and faith but not always in how we think things should be done! And therein lies the tale of how a national past president is kept busy. Of course every question asked reveals some interesting aspect of how League life is lived. One question posed recently was, "How much money should a council have in its treasury?" This could indicate one of two things, couldn't it? Either that particular council never has enough money to carry out its functions or it always has tons of money and the council doesn't know how to spend it. This is why it is always important and quite an education to get to the root of why a question is being asked. We learn from each other in this dialogue; it is a form of mentoring.

The most frequently asked questions revolve around holding office: who is eligible, and for how long; how to entice members to hold office; and how to encourage and make sure that those who are elected understand their role and what is expected of them. We often face an interesting dilemma, caught between those members who absolutely do not want to hold office and those who absolutely do not want to let go! Although you might think that constitutions and bylaws and policies and procedures should cover such issues, they really cannot address every single situation, except to say what



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offices are deemed necessary for the good functioning of our councils and what responsibilities fall under each office.

Quite a number of ideas have come up during the course of this past year to change or add to the P&P. Much thought must go into this, as you can imagine, since the challenge is to suggest ideas that will work in every circumstance no matter where the council is situated, how many members it has, and a multitude of factors that make each council almost unique. In other words, it's a constant challenge to have the P&P be a "one size (one solution) fits all" manual.

And then there is always the human factor: is it the policy or procedure that needs to be changed, or how we interact with each other? Remember, we are being called to be *Women of Peace and Hope*.

Nevertheless, in this past year we have made a few clarifying changes. For example, there is now a growing number of women who are being appointed as spiritual advisors at various levels. Some of these are members who have been well trained, often benefitting from the National Bursary Fund. One previous criterion stated that women spiritual advisors do not pay membership fees. In the case of a member, this would mean that she would not accumulate years of service, so this criterion has been updated and changed to say that a member may indeed continue to pay her membership fees while acting as a spiritual advisor.

Another role of all past presidents is being responsible for archives and history. This is a very important aspect of League work and it is not a given that every past president has a natural affinity for such work. We are, however, blessed with members who are keenly interested and such are those who have worked this past year to bring our national archives up to date and ready to be sent for safekeeping in the provincial archives of Manitoba and the national archives in Ottawa. They had to catch up with about 15 years of accumulated documents and are now near to reaching what may be called a "state of maintenance". In order that we keep our national archives up to date the committee is now a permanent one. Incidentally, if there are any of our members who are trained archivists, do drop me a line through national office. We would love to know about you in case we need your help.

I cannot end this report without thanking all of you from the bottom of my heart for your prayers during my recent and unexpected health issue. I have always been terrified of being in hospital and could hardly believe how calm I was during this experience. It was your prayers that sustained me; your stories that you shared with me cheered me up and surrounded me with incredible love. Every one of your cards is hanging up in our house and the grandchildren think it looks better than Christmas. What a caring sisterhood we have. †

Danielle McNeil-Hessian
Bedford, Nova Scotia

I will defer the report of international relations to World Union of Catholic Women's Organizations (WUCWO) Vice-President for North America Agnes Bedard. While Agnes is coming to the microphone, I will report that from July 1, 2008 to June 30, 2009, through donations from councils and individuals, \$11,279.88 was collected for WUCWO. This was an increase from \$8,000 last year and I would say is due, in no small part, to Agnes.



Agnes Bedard: I thank you for supporting my participation in WUCWO, which is so important for the League. The world is small and becoming smaller, and as we walk with our sisters, we are indeed affected by what is going on all over the world. Before I was a League member, I was a member of Birthright International, and I knew that any Catholic woman who was not a member of Birthright needed to be. Once, when I needed something for Birthright, I went the local CWL parish council and asked it for help. I was asked why I was not a member of the League, so I joined.

When I became president of the CWL parish council, probably six days after I joined, I knew it was absolutely necessary that every Catholic woman become a member. The most important thing was the parish; we didn't need the diocesan or regional councils. We wanted everybody to focus on the parish.

But then you know what happened? I was past president and became a part of the diocesan council. I became a diocesan president and now the question was, "Why isn't there a council in every parish in the diocese? What's wrong with the parishes that there isn't a council in every single parish?" – and that became my focus.

Well, that lasted until I became a part of the provincial council. And then I looked around and said, "The dioceses really need to pick it up so that we grow as a group," and everything was so important.

But as part of the provincial council, you end up on national. And that lasted until I was national president. And I got to go visit you. And you were so nice to me because I was part of the CWL. And we had wonderful times. But then those passed too and guess where I am now?

As I look at a globe I know that all over this world there are Catholic women with whom we have to communicate and for whom we have to be voice. Some have a voice and some don't:



For God and Canada