Handout for McGill Hour: “Are equal rights enough?” (Monday, April 18, 2011)

Given: Extraordinary dysfunction in government

Premise: We don’t just need equal access to the halls of power, we need equal participation in them

excerpt from "Unbought and Unbossed" (1970) by Rep. Shirley Chisholm: “It is not female egotism to say that the future of mankind may very well be ours to determine. It is a fact. The warmth, gentleness, and compassion that are part of the female stereotype are positive human values, values that are becoming more and more important as the values of our world begin to shatter and fall from our grasp. The strength of Christ, Gandhi, and Martin Luther King was a strength of gentleness, understanding, and compassion, with no element of violence in it. It was, in short, a female strength, and that is the kind that often marks the highest type of man.” “If we reject our restricted roles, we do not have to reject these values of femaleness. They are enduring values, and we must develop the capacity to hold them and to dispense them to those around us. We must become revolutionaries in the style of Gandhi and King. Then, working toward our own freedom, we can help the others work free from the traps of their stereotypes. In the end, antiblack, antifemale, and all forms of discrimination are equivalent to the same thing - antihumanism. The values of life must be maintained against the enemies in every guise. We can do it by confronting people with their own humanity and their own inhumanity whenever we meet them, in the streets, in school, in church, in bars, in the halls of legislatures. We must reject not only the stereotypes that others have of us but also those we have of ourselves and others.”

from Gender and Sustainable Development: Maximising the economic, social and environmental role of women; OECD 2008

“Surveys show that women tend to be more sustainable consumers. Women are more likely to recycle, buy organic food and eco-labelled products and place a higher value on energy-efficient transport (OECD, 2008a). They make more ethical consumer choices, paying closer attention to issues including child labour and sustainable livelihoods and are more apt to buy socially labelled goods such as Fairtrade. For example, in Sweden, statistics indicate that the group that is most concerned about eco-labelling and green purchasing includes some of the poorest members of society: single mothers. Women also use public transportation, even in households with cars, more often than men and travel short distances closer to home, while men more often travel in their own car and for greater distances (Johnsson-Latham, 2007).”

“These patterns of consumption not only reflect the differing financial means at the disposal of men and women, but also their broader orientations towards society and conceptions of self-identity. Assessments find that girls more than boys report higher levels of concern for the environment and a greater sense of responsibility for sustainable development starting as young as 15 (OECD, 2007e). Although consumer choices are influenced by income levels, social conditions and biases, gender is also a major factor. In their consumption choices, women throughout their lives affirm their reproductive role and concern about the longer-term well-being of families and children (UNEP, 2004).”

“... give greater emphasis to social welfare, legal protection and transparency in government and business”
Figure 15. Share of Parliamentary Seats held by Women 2005 or latest year (from Gender and Sustainable Development: Maximising the economic, social and environmental role of women; OECD 2008)

How many women in the US Senate and House? (only 17% !!!) How would government operate differently, both in form and substance, than it does now with an equality of women? Is the extraordinary imbalance causal and/or symptomatic of pathology?

John Ralston Saul: "But is the nature of civilization “speed”? Or is it ‘consideration’? Any animal can rush around a corral four times a day. Only a human being can consciously oblige himself to go slowly in order to consider whether or not he is doing the right thing, doing it the right way, or ought to be doing something else... Speed and efficiency are not in themselves signs of intelligence or capability or correctness."

From American Psychological Association, Invited Address, 2007
Is There Anything Good About Men? Roy F. Baumeister
(http://www.psy.fsu.edu/~baumeistertice/goodaboutmen.htm)

“A second thing that makes men useful to culture is what I call male expendability. This goes back to what I said at the outset, that cultures tend to use men for the high-risk, high-payoff undertakings, where a significant portion of those will suffer bad outcomes ranging from having their time wasted, all the way to being killed.”

“Any man who reads the newspapers will encounter the phrase “even women and children” a couple times a month, usually about being killed. The literal meaning of this phrase is that men’s lives have less value than other people’s lives. The idea is usually “It’s bad if people are killed, but it’s especially bad if women and children are killed.” And I think most men know that in an emergency, if there are women and children present, he will be expected to lay down his life without argument or complaint so that the others can survive. On the Titanic, the richest men had a lower survival rate (34%) than the poorest women (46%) (though that’s not how it looked in the movie). That in itself is remarkable. The rich, powerful, and successful men, the movers and shakers, supposedly the ones that the culture is all set up to favor — in a pinch, their lives were valued less than those of women with hardly any money or power or status. The too-few seats in the lifeboats went to the women who weren’t even ladies, instead of to those patriarchs. Most cultures have had the same attitude. Why?”