

Remarks On Receiving The Larry Sefton Award

Shirley Goldenberg
March 28, 2001

To say that it is a pleasure to be here, and an honour to receive this Award, would be an understatement. I am absolutely thrilled.

The Larry Sefton Award is particularly meaningful to me because of the very special person in whose memory it was established. I also consider it a unique honour, and it means so much to me, to be the recipient of an award granted jointly by Woodsworth College and the Centre for Industrial Relations, both of which do such great credit to this University.

I'll always feel proud, and very honoured, to have been considered worthy of this Award by Woodsworth – a College named for a saint in Canadian politics, and committed to carrying on, in addition to its fine academic programs, the J.S. Woodsworth tradition of caring – a home and a help to many students who, for a variety of reasons, may not be quite ready to plunge into the mainstream of academic life, as well as to many other students who enter the mainstream in the normal course.

Other universities would do well to have a Woodsworth College.

And now, let me say how very much it means to me to be the choice, for this year's Sefton Award, of the Centre for Industrial Relations – a nationally and internationally respected Centre for graduate studies and research, and staffed by some of the finest and the best in the field.

I have been privileged to have colleagues and friends at the Centre for as long as I can remember. I have admired, and continue to admire, their contributions to teaching, scholarship and practice. The recognition from them that this Award represents is a tribute I shall always cherish.

I must say also that I was extremely pleased when I learned that the Selection Committee for this Award included representatives from Labour and Management along with representatives from Academia. The fact that the Labour and Management representatives agreed with each other, and that they agreed with the academics on the Committee, that I should be the recipient of this Award is particularly gratifying to me.

If, as I hope, this reflects their confidence in my integrity and their judgment that I have been fair and open to both parties, as I have always tried to be, whether in teaching, research or practice, there is nothing that could mean more to me.

And now I would like to conclude with a few words about that very special person in whose memory this Award is made – and what that means to me.

We all know of Larry Sefton as a giant in the labour movement. But I doubt whether there are many, if any others in this room, apart from his daughter Laurel – and myself – who had the privilege of knowing him personally – she of course, much better than I.

I had the good fortune to meet Larry Sefton because I had the particularly good fortune – the wonderfully good fortune – to be Carl Goldenberg's wife.

I met Larry when Carl was mediating a labour – management dispute at Stelco. The Union at the time had a weak local leadership and a split bargaining team – hardly a recipe for productive negotiations. So Carl brought Larry Sefton into the picture and although Larry no longer had formal responsibility for local bargaining, he put his all into those negotiations. That is when I first met him.

The next time, again with Carl, was a few years later, in an entirely different context. It was on the campus of this University, following Convocation ceremonies. Larry was with his young daughter who had just received her B.A. degree. A prouder father I've never seen.

So Laurel, my congratulations again – I did congratulate you then – on that first academic degree that gave your father such pleasure, and in which he took such pride. And congratulations too, if I may, on the degrees that followed and on your accomplishments, since then, as a scholar and professor of Labour History.

You have demonstrated what an inspiration your father was to you by the interests you have chosen to pursue in your academic career. I find that very impressive – and it says a lot about Larry Sefton.

He was a great man, a remarkable union leader, a fine human being, and obviously an inspirational father. I am so moved, and so honoured, to receive this Award in his memory.

My very warm thanks to everyone who made this possible.