

POGG CANADA

REPORT

IN DEFENSE OF

**THE REPUTATION AND LEGACY OF
DR. CHARLOTTE WHITTON**

Prepared by

**THE CHARLOTTE WHITTON RESEARCH COMMITTEE
OF POGG CANADA**

POGG Canada Report
in
Defense of The Reputation and Legacy
of
Dr. Charlotte Whitton

TABLE OF CONTENTS

1. Submission Letter
2. POGG Canada Defends the Reputation and Legacy
of Charlotte Whitton – a summary - *Page 1-2*
3. Charlotte Whitton – a brief history - *Page 3-4*
4. Charlotte Whitton was not an anti-Semite and racist
– a Rebuttal - *Page 5-9*
5. Conclusions and Recommendation - *Page 10*

POGG CANADA
610 – 415 Greenview Avenue
Ottawa, Canada K2B 8G5

www.@Poggtalk.org

August 29, 2011

Mayor Jim Watson and
The Council of the City of Ottawa
Ottawa City Hall
110 Laurier Avenue
Ottawa, On., K1P 1J1
Jim.Watson@ottawa.ca

Re: **POGG CANADA 's Defense of Charlotte Whitton**

Dear Mayor Watson,

I am writing on behalf of POGG Canada. Enclosed is POGG Canada's Report of the Charlotte Whitton Research Committee in support of naming the new City of Ottawa archive building after Ms. Whitton.

After extensive research to prepare the report and consideration of the information found, the Committee found no evidence to substantiate the allegations against Ms. Whitton of anti-Semitism, anti-French, and anti-Ukrainian racism. The Report will show that Ms Whitton was supportive and friendly towards Jews, not only in Ottawa, but around the world. She was an avid supporter of the State of Israel. The anti-French and anti-Ukrainian allegations were found to be only the personal opinion of a few. The Report will show that all these accusations of racism were baseless.

Charlotte Whitton is undeserving of these allegations. Her reputation and legacy are highly deserving of recognition. We ask that City Council with the information now in hand, commemorate the contributions of Ms. Whitton and assign her name to the new archives building.

Respectfully submitted,
POGG CANADA

Edgar Simpson

Edgar Simpson
Chair, POGG Canada Charlotte Whitton Research Committee
613-730-5398 (Off)
gecsimpson@rogers.com

Respectfully submitted,
POGG CANADA

Harry Weldon

Harry Weldon
Chair, POGG CANADA
harry.weldon@POGGtalk.org

**POGG CANADA
DEFENDS THE REPUTATION AND LEGACY
OF CHARLOTTE WHITTON**

POGG CANADA is a not-for-profit Ottawa based, non-partisan, small “c” conservative grassroots think-ing tank. We discuss and explore the many public issues that affect our community, province, country, and the world. Our members, from time to time, delve deeper into an issue. After extensive research and study, a position paper is prepared by interested members. Each research paper formally determines and addresses the issues and sets out its conclusions and recommendations.

It is in this spirit that we have taken up the defense of Charlotte Whitton’s memory and honourable legacy against allegations of being an anti-Semite, anti-French, anti-Ukrainian racist. Our position paper will show that the three specific events cited in support of these serious allegations do not fall within the widely accepted definitions of anti-Semitism and racism. Allegations such as these cannot be based on opinion; they must be based on fact. The facts are as follows.

Ms. Whitton thought the Canadian Immigration Policy should serve the economic interest of Canada; Canada should not admit immigrants who would be a burden on Canada’s economy or on its taxpayers. To this end, she supported those who could assimilate the easiest into Canadian society and economy – those with similar language and culture.

During the late depression years, Ms. Whitton, in common with the Canadian Government, did not support adding thousands of needy immigrants/refugees, regardless of their nationality and race, to an already economically ravaged society. To this end, at the 1938 Canadian Refugee Conference, she voted against a recommendation that Canada receive thousands of European refugees. It is only with historical hindsight that Ms. Whitton, Canada, and the rest of the world could have known the holocaust was to come and that they should have opened their doors to provide refuge to as many Jewish and other refugees/immigrants as possible.

In 1964, Ms Whitton rejected the Loeb donation to build a new wing on the Civic Hospital because there was no corresponding operating budget to run its daily operation and she could not support a tax increase to fund it. Until adequate funding could be obtained, Ms Whitton would not accept the donation.

She did not implement an official bilingualism policy in Ottawa because, at the time, the city did not have the budget to do so and there was no written provincial or federal precedent.

In researching Ms. Whitton's life, we have come to truly appreciate her wisdom and vision. Her stated enemies in government were, "greed, sloth, waste, and incompetence." Her prudent fiscal conservative policies should be recommended reading for Canadian politicians at all levels of government. She was a natural born leader, a visionary, and a woman of great accomplishments. We encourage the reading of "Charlotte, The Last Suffragette," by Dave Mullington. We believe the reader will be inspired by her deeds and actions.

We call on all residents of Ottawa to support the legacy of this great woman. Her reputation and legacy should not be unfairly and posthumously tarnished. We ask Ottawans to take to heart the immortal words of Martin Luther King, Jr., "Our lives begin to end the day we become silent about things that matter." Charlotte Whitton's reputation matters – for if hers is so easily ruined and baselessly attacked, who among us may be next?

We also call on Mayor Watson and all councilors to honour Dr. Whitton's contribution to the citizens of Ottawa and beyond by assigning her name to the new 'archives' building. It is appropriate to note that in 1969, City Council UNANIMOUSLY voted to name its Council Chamber "Whitton Hall" for her extensive contributions to civic life.

CHARLOTTE WHITTON

1896-1975

Dr. Charlotte Whitton, OC, CBE, M.A., D.C.L., LL.D. was a woman of numerous and truly impressive accomplishments. She graduated with a Master's Degree from Queen's University and subsequently received Honorary Doctorate degrees from several other Canadian and American universities. She was awarded a Commander of the Order of the British Empire. Ms. Whitton was a lifetime member of the Canadian Federation of Business and Professional Women. She was a founding Director of the Canadian Council on Child Welfare and a pioneer and leader in Canadian professional social work. During the 1930's depression, Ms. Whitton recommended and helped organize work camps across Canada to house, feed, and create work for over 300,000 unemployed men. In the 1920's and 30's, she was influential in Canada's Immigration Policy. She became a widely-read newspaper columnist in the 1940's by tackling all of the controversial public issues of the era.

Throughout her varied careers, Charlotte was an outspoken feminist, a staunch fiscal conservative, and woman of action. Her last career began in 1951 as a civic councilor and first woman mayor of the city of Ottawa. Ms. Whitton was Canada's woman news maker of the year six times. City council in 1969, unanimously voted to name its Council Chamber "Whitton Hall" for her extensive contributions as a five term mayor and longtime Alderman/Councilor.

Who was Charlotte Whitton?

Charlotte Whitton grew up in Renfrew, Ontario. She was an outstanding student, athlete, and all-star hockey player on the Queen's University Championship team. Continuing her "tom-boy" lifestyle, she played golf, curled, skied and played badminton when time permitted. She was an active member of the Anglican Church. As a strong supporter of her family's British heritage, she became a lifetime member of the Imperial Order of the Daughters of the Empire. After graduation, she was hired by the fledgling Canadian Council on Child Welfare. Over the next twenty years she single handedly built the organization by sheer willpower and sweat, traveling across Canada and the world on Council business.

Charlotte Whitton, especially as a politician, was a staunch fiscal conservative. She was no stranger to controversy. She expressed her opinions on all topics openly and honestly without concern for political correctness. You got the truth and nothing but the truth and she was not necessarily polite when expressing it.

Her stated enemies in government were, “greed, sloth, waste, and incompetence.” She did not suffer fools gladly and had no tolerance for the idea that what always had been, must continue to be.

In 1955, of every dollar the city of Ottawa spent, 80 cents came from taxpayers and residents (51 cents in property taxes and 29 cents in service charges, another form of tax). As a city councilor and mayor, Charlotte made the “financial interest of taxpayers her primary goal.” She fought to control the city’s spending and borrowing. At the time, most real estate developers, including Campeau and Minto Developments, wanted and expected the city to facilitate their developments and pay all of the servicing costs. Whitton believed developers should pay these costs and not the taxpayer.

Whitton was a feminist. She was a leader in the fight for equality across Canada. Her definition of feminism did not fit well with the more aggressive attitudes of 1960’s and 70’s women like Betty Frieden and Gloria Steinman. In the later 1960’s Whitton wrote, “The discussion of women’s rights per se is somewhat out of date.” From her viewpoint, equality of the sexes had been accomplished. She thought the future should be, “That all women must insist that it is all human beings now, the humanity of us, the essence of the spirit of each, male and female that is paramount.”

In the spring of 2011, the great legacy of Charlotte Whitton was tarnished by slanderous accusations of anti-Semitism and racism. There is no family to defend her reputation and legacy. POGG CANADA has taken up the challenge on Ms. Whitton’s behalf and on behalf of all fair-minded Ottawans. In our Rebuttal we will show that the accusations and allegations are not supported by facts.

CHARLOTTE WHITTON WAS NOT AN ANTI-SEMITE AND RACIST

IN DEFENSE OF THE REPUTATION AND LEGACY OF

DR. CHARLOTTE WHITTON

1896-1975

A REBUTTAL by POGG CANADA

August 2011

To honour Charlotte Whitton's legacy, Mayor Jim Watson put forth her name for the new Ottawa archives. Immediately, a few individuals attacked her reputation and legacy. They labeled her unfit to receive such a civic honour. Ms. Whitton was accused of being an anti-Semite, anti-French, anti-Ukrainian racist. On behalf of Dr. Charlotte Elizabeth Whitton's memory and honourable legacy, POGG CANADA undertakes to defend her from these accusations. In doing so, we urge Mayor Watson and Council to formally dedicate the new archives in her name.

Accusation One: Charlotte Whitton was an anti-Semite

The first and most harsh accusation against Ms. Whitton is that she was an anti-Semite. Two examples are cited in support.

The various definitions of anti-Semitism include the following words, "Hatred towards, hostility towards, an intense dislike for and prejudice against Jewish people; one who discriminates against Jews; an attitude or policy of hatred and hostility towards Jewish people." We will show that the examples cited clearly fail to fall within these widely accepted definitions.

In "Charlotte, the Last Suffragette," Dave Mullington's learned 2010 biography of Charlotte Whitton, her numerous actions and statements indicate that she privately and publicly supported the right of Israel to exist; she sought out relationships with Jewish people and applauded the contributions that citizens of Jewish faith made to Ottawa and Canada as a whole.

The following examples, selected at random, do not show, in any way, hatred towards, hostility towards, an intense dislike for, and prejudice against Jewish people:

- At the beginning and throughout her career, Charlotte gave numerous seminars and speeches to various Jewish groups across Canada.
- In 1964, on a vacation trip to Europe, she toured Israel with stops in Jerusalem and Tel Aviv where she arranged to meet with leading Israeli women, such as Golda Meir.
- On her return from vacation, the Canadian Jewish News featured a full page paid article from Charlotte Whitton. In this article, she enthused about her visit to Israel and remarked that, "Ottawa's Jewish Community was into its third generation and had made a contribution beyond easy recording to every phase of our community (Ottawa) life."
- Throughout her life and career, she supported and wrote of Israel's right to exist.
- In 1974, in failing health, Ms. Whitton was the first to nominate Lorry Greenberg for mayor. On the evening of Mr. Greenberg's election as the first Jewish mayor of Ottawa, he visited Charlotte's extended care room to thank her for her support. It is reported that her spirits brightened that evening, not only by his visit but by his victory.
- In the last move before her death, Ms. Whitton hired a Jewish tradesman, Flesher's Upholstery, to redo her prized furniture.
- As a columnist for The Citizen in the 1960's, Charlotte vigorously defended Israel's right to exist and supported Israel in its war with Egypt during the Suez crisis.
- In 1962, a leading Jewish businessman, Reuben Palef, was Whitton's chief fundraiser for her re-election campaign.
- In 1964, the Toronto Chapter of B'nai Brith honoured Charlotte by naming her "Woman of the Year" for her outstanding work in support of Israel.

First example cited of anti-Semitism

In their 1982 book, "None Is Too Many," authors Irving Abella and Harold Troper note that a member of the Canadian Jewish Congress declared Ms. Whitton an anti-Semite. The member made this declaration because as a leader at the 1938 Canadian Refugee Conference, Ms. Whitton both spoke against and voted against a recommendation that Canada receive thousands of needy European refugees (mostly Jewish).

This same person, who supported the recommendation, later accused her of setting out across Canada on a vindictive campaign of “guerrilla warfare” against the Canadian Jewish Congress to keep Jewish refugees out of Canada.

The Defense

Charlotte Whitton’s vote against this recommendation was based on the state of the Canadian economy. In 1938, Canada and the world were still in an economic depression. One million Canadians were out of work with many thousands in poverty and desperately hungry. As the Federal Government’s leading welfare consultant during the 30’s, Whitton was all too familiar with the dire straits of Canada’s economy and its people. Canadian municipalities and governments at all levels were having problems dealing with the existing unemployment and poverty. To accept thousands of the needy from Germany and other European countries would have added as many to Canada’s unemployed and welfare rolls and to the hungry and impoverished. At that time, no responsible Canadian official or social welfare leader could consider such an undertaking.

Whitton recommended that Palestine and other countries that were in better economic shape and better able to handle a large influx of refugees, accept Jewish refugees. Europe was at peace and Hitler’s final solution/holocaust had not started or even been espoused publicly. No international “red light” warning had been sounded of the imminent extreme danger to the Jewish citizens of Germany, let alone Europe.

In “None Too Many,” Abella and Troper propagate the anti-Semitic accusations made against Ms. Whitton. However, they do not provide any corroborating evidence to support them. Elsewhere in the book, they do provide quotations from Prime Minister Mackenzie King and Charles Blair, Head, Canadian Immigration Department, to support this same accusation made against them. Author David Mullington, to write his learned 2010 biography of Charlotte Whitton, exhaustively researched Ms. Whitton’s life. He could find no evidence to substantiate the harsh accusations made against her.

Conclusion

Charlotte Whitton voted rationally against an influx of needy immigrants based on sound economic reasons. There has been much hearsay but no evidence or facts have been cited to support either the anti-Semite accusations or that she set out across Canada on a vindictive campaign of “guerilla warfare” against the Canadian Jewish Congress to keep Jewish Refugees out of Canada.

Second Example Cited of anti-Semitism

Whitton was an anti-Semite because, as Mayor, she voted against accepting Bertram Loeb's \$450,000 donation for a new wing on the Civic Hospital. Although all city councilors voted to accept the donation, her vote in 1964 killed acceptance – a stipulation had mandated unanimous acceptance.

The Defense

Whitton constantly railed against the lack of political will to run cost effective and efficient government. She entered into municipal politics to clean up a political and economic mess. She ran as a staunch social and fiscal conservative. She wanted costs cut, meaningless positions and programs eliminated, and taxes kept as low as possible, all while building Ottawa into a city of which taxpayers and residents could be proud. As mayor, she believed the city should live within its means and protect taxpayers from unnecessary tax hikes. She did not waiver from this platform even in the area of social housing – her passion. She would only add more housing, “as long as it could be done cost efficiently and effectively.”

A new wing on the hospital, while desired, required raising ongoing revenues to pay for administration and staff. Ottawa did not have sufficient revenues at the time and Ms. Whitton could not support a tax increase.

Conclusion

Charlotte Whitton rejected Bertram Loeb's generous offer because, at the time, she did not think Ottawa could afford the ongoing costs associated with a new hospital wing.

Accusation Two: Charlotte Whitton was anti-French because, as Mayor, she did not support the implementation of official bilingualism in Ottawa.

The Defense

Whitton saw herself as a defender of the public purse and taxpayer money. To implement official bilingualism in Ottawa would require a large tax increase – one that she could not justify or support. There was no provincial or federal official bilingualism policy. As such, Whitton thought it premature to develop one in Ottawa. Only 33% of the population spoke French. She did however ensure that 33% of the city employees were French speaking. It is a fact that under her watch, Ottawa City Council printed, for the first time, French language signage and pamphlets for a Pedestrian Crossover Safety Campaign. Bilingual services could be provided when required.

Ms. Whitton made public her private view that she did not support official bilingualism. She did not approve of the disunity and social problems that had erupted over the French language battles between Quebec and the rest of Canada. However, as mayor, she was a pragmatist in her civic responsibilities. She did not shirk her duty in providing bilingual services to Ottawa's French speaking residents.

Conclusion

At the time, the province and federal governments did not yet have an official bilingualism policy. There was no written precedent for such a policy and there were solid fiscal reasons for not implementing one in Ottawa. Ms. Whitton prudently decided against it.

Accusation Three: Charlotte Whitton was anti-Ukrainian because in the 1920's she favoured British immigrants over all others.

The Defense

Charlotte Whitton's staunch fiscal conservatism influenced every aspect of her life and decision making. Her immigration outlook was fiscally prudent and practical. She made numerous speeches on Canadian immigration policy and the type of immigrants Canada should seek out and encourage. She did favour former Canadians who had migrated to the USA and those of British and European descent. She thought they would better assimilate into Canadian society and would need less help from the Government. She believed that immigrants should have to pay their own way to Canada and not be a burden on the government and Canadian taxpayers.

Canada's first wave of Ukrainian immigrants began in 1891 and ended in 1914. They settled primarily in Western Canada. Language and cultural differences led them to settle in segregated blocks. This did not enable them to assimilate well and caused friction with their Canadian neighbours. This wave also created social welfare issues. As a young student of social work and history, Charlotte would have studied these problems. Like many others in the 1920's, she concluded that many of the problems resulting from immigration would not have occurred if language and culture had been similar to those of Canada's majority.

Later in her career, Ms. Whitton worked closely with Ukrainian community organizations and praised Ukrainian immigrants for their hard work and valuable contribution in building Canada.

Conclusion

Early in her career, Charlotte Whitton's immigration platform was based on the view that Canada's immigration policy must be based on the careful selection of immigrants who would not be a burden on the Canadian economy and taxpayer. During the depression years, Ms. Whitton, like the Canadian government, did not support adding needy immigrants to an already economically ravaged society.

Conclusion and Recommendation

Allegations of anti-Semitism and racism must be supported by evidence that falls within their widely accepted definitions. There has been no evidence presented that Charlotte Whitton possessed a deep abiding prejudice, hatred, and hostility toward Jews, French Canadians and Ukrainians. Ms. Whitton was first and foremost a staunch social and fiscal conservative. This philosophy heavily and consistently influenced all of her political decisions.

The accusations are meritless. They should be summarily dismissed and Ms. Whitton's reputation and legacy restored.

Dr. Charlotte Whitton was and remains a truly great Canadian. We call on the Mayor, Council, and indeed all residents of Ottawa to restore her good name by naming the new Ottawa archives building after her. No less a deed will clear her reputation and restore her legacy.

-30-

This report is a product of POGG CANADA's Charlotte Whitton Research Committee chaired by Edgar Simpson and reflects the consensus of the membership of POGG CANADA.

Comments are invited to be sent to info@POGGtalk.org.
[To find out more about us, please visit our website: www.POGGtalk.org](http://www.POGGtalk.org)

Edgar Simpson can be contacted at 613-730-5398 (off) or by email at gecsimpson@rogers.com

-10-