

NEWSLETTER

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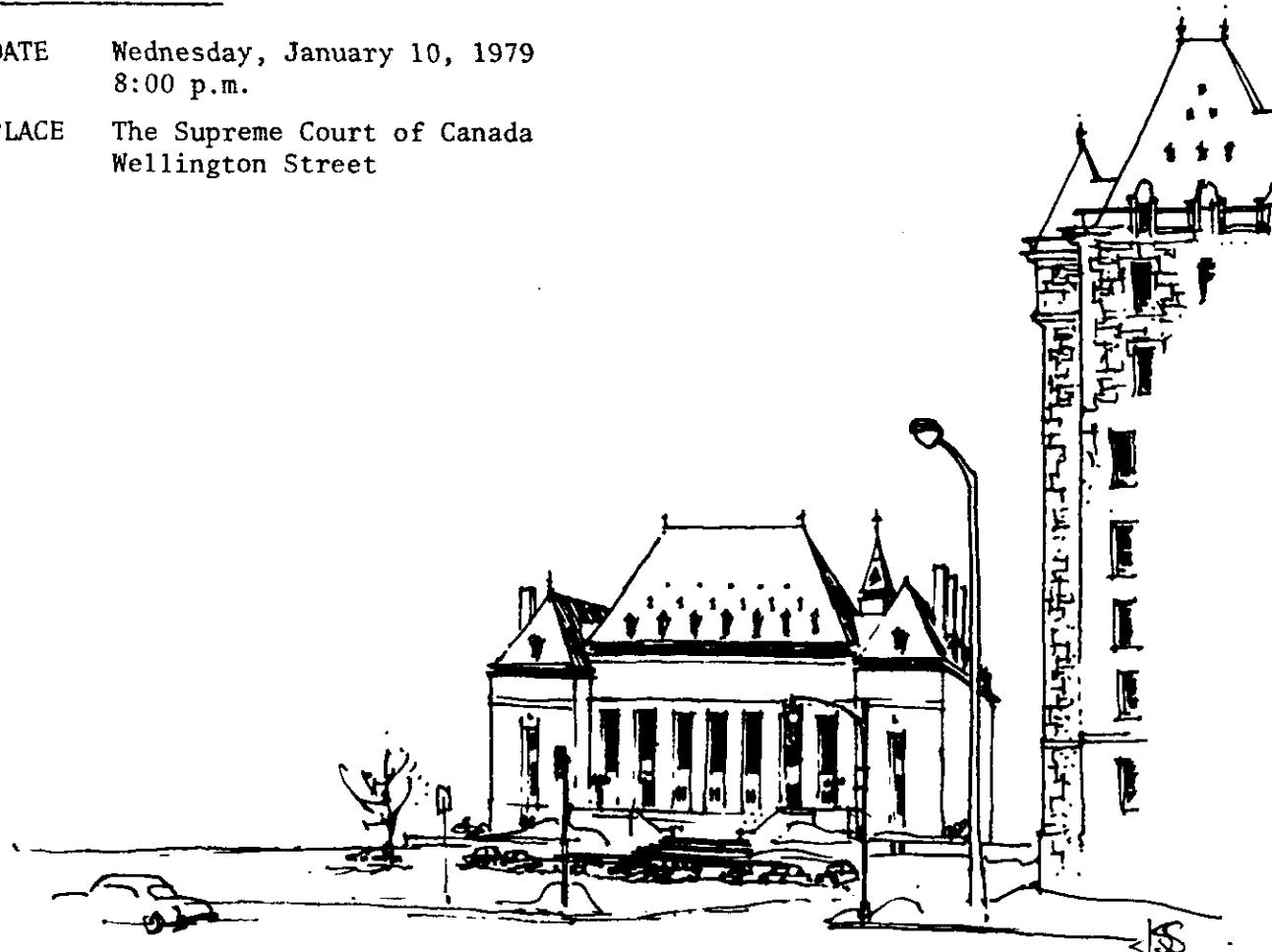
W.E. KEENAN, President

JOAN MACKIE, Editor

JANUARY MEETING

DATE Wednesday, January 10, 1979
8:00 p.m.

PLACE The Supreme Court of Canada
Wellington Street



THE SUPREME COURT OF CANADA

The dignified home of the Supreme Court of Canada was built in 1938-39 to the designs of Montreal architect Ernest Cormier, O.C. The repetitive piers of its stone façade suggest the columns traditionally associated with court houses, but their hard-edged austerity is very much a product of the late 1930s, when neo-classicism became absorbed into modernism. The building was originally intended to have a flat roof. The Department of Public Works--at the urging of Prime Minister MacKenzie King--insisted, however, that Cormier add the steep châteauesque copper roofs, which were by then a characteristic of our government architecture. At first no use was found for the space beneath the roofs, but the library was placed there during construction.

Architect Cormier (born 1885) has had a distinguished career. He was trained in

both engineering and architecture in Montreal and Paris. His many public buildings include the principal block of the University of Montreal, a large addition to the main Court House in Montreal, and participation in the design of the United Nations headquarters in New York.

In the Supreme Court building, Cormier's artistry may be seen in the handsome entrance hall and the splendid courtroom, as well as in such details as the bronze doors and the attractive lighting fixtures.

In front of the building stand statues of Truth and Justice that were begun by sculptor Walter S. Allward in 1912 as part of a never-completed tomb, but somehow became lost and were unearthed (from a Department of Public Works parking lot) only in 1969. The seated likeness of Prime Minister Louis St. Laurent on the lawn to the south is the work of Vancouver sculptor Elek Imredi.

H.D. Kalman

AN INTERVIEW WITH MAYOR DEWAR

Less than a week after Marion Dewar was installed as Mayor of the City of Ottawa, Heritage Ottawa requested, and was granted, an interview with Her Worship. As a Controller she had long been a friend of those working for the preservation of the heritage of our city. She had, for instance, backed the creation of the Local Architectural Conservation Advisory Committee, supported the retention of the Polish Embassy (W.E. Noffke, Architect, 1907), and cautioned against a multitude of "problems" that the proposed development of Rideau Centre could cause.

But we wanted to hear her thoughts on heritage matters now that she holds the city's top office. Newsletter Editor Joan Mackie and President W.E. Keenan spent a lively half hour with the Mayor. The following is a summary of the meeting.

On Rideau Centre

Mayor Dewar feels it is essential that Rideau Street be kept open to automobile traffic, for the continued survival of both the market, and the merchants at the lower end of Rideau Street. She would like to see "side malls" develop in, for instance, George Street and Freiman Street, thus extending the environment of both the market area and Rideau. "This would make the heritage elements part of the contemporary environment," Mayor Dewar said. "I like the natural attraction of the heritage aspect, but I wouldn't like to see it become separate and isolated."

Mayor Dewar would not be adverse to the development of a hotel and shopping centre "providing marketing studies show that the other Rideau Street and market area merchants will survive." But she insists these marketing studies be undertaken by Regional Council, and not solely by Viking Developments, as in the case to date. The Mayor is quick to point out that "of course Viking's studies are going to indicate that their own development would revitalize the area. It's in their best interests to say so."

On Centretown

"Because people are recognizing the value of their old homes, we're essentially clearing away slums and potential slums without a slum-clearance scheme." Mayor Dewar proudly pointed out that in Centretown, home renovations are proceeding at a fine pace even without OMB approval of the Centretown Plan.

On the role of Heritage Ottawa

Mayor Dewar sees Heritage Ottawa as an effective organization for promoting the preservation of the city's heritage in three main ways: through participation and education, and by assuming an advocacy role.

On the matter of participation, she strongly suggests that "Those elements that make up the real backbone of why we like our city (i.e. its heritage features) are going to be lost in times of financial constraints unless we mobilize, and Heritage Ottawa is the likely group to lead the way." The Mayor thinks that Heritage Ottawa ought always to be aware of neighbourhood activities taking place, and see that it is represented as an active participant in such activities. While she points out the obvious festivities that frequently occur in Lowertown (suggesting too that Heritage Ottawa participate), she also says that there are approximately 165 active community associations with which Heritage Ottawa could affiliate.

This point leads directly to the second role that she sees Heritage Ottawa assuming: that of an educator. The Mayor suggests that these same community associations are logical groups to educate about the value of the city's heritage. "On the whole, these are well-educated, middle-class groups, but they aren't necessarily aware of the heritage of their neighbourhoods. Generally, suburbanites don't think about heritage. If they did, they wouldn't be living in the suburbs. It's necessary to raise the level of consciousness of the people to the value of the heritage in their community."

Mayor Dewar suggests that Heritage Ottawa may not be at its most effective, in terms of educating the public, as a separate group. "You ought to plug into existing groups, establish linkages, and become a part of the mainstream, not a separate entity. You must be involved at a 'grass roots level.'"

Mayor Dewar likewise recommends that Heritage Ottawa play an active advocacy role on behalf of heritage matters. She feels that the organization is respected sufficiently for even developers to listen to what Heritage Ottawa says!

On Heritage Day

Consistent with the Mayor's advice to spread the message about heritage preservation at the grass roots level, she says, "I would like to see Heritage Ottawa organize Heritage Day more as a community day. Perhaps field trips for school children could be arranged. I don't feel the children realize the wealth of history that exists in their town. Possibly Heritage Ottawa and the city could jointly organize something special on the mall or in community centres to focus attention on our heritage."

On cooperation

"It's hard not to get angry sometimes about heritage negativism. I look to Heritage Ottawa as a partner in educating the people of our city about the importance of our heritage."

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January 1979

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