

Diana Wright

1909 - 1982

Diana Kingsmill was the only daughter of Admiral Sir Charles and Lady Kingsmill, a prominent Ottawa family. Her education included boarding school in England, where she learned to ride to hounds. She improved her French in a Paris convent and studied German in Munich and Vienna. She was on the Canadian ski team at the 1936 Olympics, the first time women competed in these races, and took part despite having a broken hand in a cast. Diana was presented as a *débutante* during a royal visit to Ottawa, and she attended a ball at Buckingham Palace. She was photographed by *The Tatler* in London wearing a monocle.



Diana's first marriage was to Victor Gordon-Lennox, an English newspaper editor and kinsman of the Duke of Richmond. But the life of high society soon palled on her and, after divorcing Gordon-Lennox, she met and married Jim Wright, a journalist and political radical from Saskatchewan. They moved out west where her old life of comfort ended, and they lived in a farmhouse without electricity and running water.

There they worked closely as a team. Diana helped Jim with a sequel to *Slava Bohu*, his Governor-General's award-winning history of Canada's Doukhobors. They worked tirelessly for many causes involving the cooperative movement and farm, human rights, environmental and international issues, world government, overseas assistance and the United Nations. Her son George remembers: "There was always a fairly highly charged atmosphere in the house with people staying for discussion into the dawn hours... Her openness to new ideas and new people made her home a busy meeting place for people [of all ages]".

During the 1950s and 1960s the Wrights became involved with groups worried about the hazards of radiation, and cam-

paigned against the placement of nuclear arms in Canada.

Diana represented the Saskatchewan Farmers' Union at the annual Farmer-Labour-Teacher Institute. She was also the Saskatchewan representative on the Voice of Women's national board. In the early 1960s she offered her family's 11-acre summer home, Grindstone Island, on Big Rideau Lake, to the Canadian Friends Service Committee, who converted it into a Peace Education Centre.

In her final years she immersed herself in the environmental movement, editing the Saskatchewan Journal, *Probe*, and representing Saskatchewan on the CBC's agricultural advisory committee.