

**The Intersection of Gender and
Race/Ethnicity/Official Language/Religion**

Prepared for the seminar on the “Intersections of Diversity”

DRAFT

March 2002

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“Citizenship, diversity and gender in Canada during the XXe century: a historiographical overview of maternalist’s contribution to the welfare state.”

This paper (38 pages) contains three parts : first a presentation of the canadian welfare state from a gender perspective (historiography); second, a brief chronology and historiographical notes on the Québec franchise; third, a full and complete bibliography (included in the first interim report). It was researched with Candis Steenbergen and Isabelle Perreault, graduate students and research assistants.

I would like to argue in this paper that the western feminist movements together with radical politics in the seventies had decisively brought broader participation of women into the public realm and into the political struggle for enlarged representation of previously excluded groups, thus bringing democracy closer to its proclaimed aim of representing people (the inclusion argument). It then made democracy more desirable and a household name or practice for larger numbers of people. Despite the sharp criticisms that we could (and should) still harbor against exclusion in democratic society, where equal rights are still formal and inequality prospers all around us, I will concentrate here on how the inclusion of women’s maternalist issues was made possible, thus enlarging our conception of citizenship today. The presentation of the most important studies in Canada will provide the broad context in which maternalist claims were brought forward.

Michael Waltzer’s civil society argument (1992) informs today’s inquiries about the role of citizenship in contemporary societies. Civil engagement had made gender an important factor in defining newly established welfare states in most western countries. Canada offers a unique vantage point of view to analyse such historical processes. I wish to reinforce the analysis made by some theorists that the feminist movement together with other radical politics (like ecology or equal rights advocacy groups etc..), had brought a radical transformation of the old views and politics about democracy, which were thriving until roughly the Second World War in most European countries. So I want to show how women’s voluntary associations, essentially maternalist ones, had been an important factor in establishing common claims for women, as well as in changing the political outlook of Canadian politics. I see four strategies used by women’s associations in their claim for inclusiveness (which is of course different than emancipation), whether they stress equality (sameness or equal political rights) or difference (complementarity

or social rights) . Let me say from the outset that I do not consider this history as an evolutionary progress toward a hypothetical nirvana where we will all be equals... but rather a hectic path that changed our common conceptions of equality, citizenship and democracy.

There are many questions that could be raised in the process, essentially concerning class, ethnicity and religion as well as concerning the nature of the regimes (constitutionnal, republican, decentralized federation etc..) to which feminist claims are adressed and by which they had been answered. I will only refer quickly to each of them, because of space constraints. I also chose to stress the impact mainstream maternalist claims were made, as the more radical ones are well known. It also allows us to discover a different narrative, where large groups of women play a public role and establish some kind of solidarity patterns that are essential to full citizenship. My assumption is they became full fledged actors in the modernization of Quebec and Canada with the full implementation of the Canadian welfare state, and with the secularization of Quebec society ending with the Quiet Revolution in the sixties. Whether those groups asked for a secularized state and society in total opposition to much of the church based associations ideology in Quebec, or for the recognition of women as equal to men vote in the rest of Canada, the challenge for them was to be considered as legitimate players in the public sphere as well as agents of emancipation for their members and more generally women.

I will base my analysis on studies made about canadian women's voluntary associations, which include la Fédération nationale Saint Jean-Baptiste (FNSJB) the WCTU, the YWCA, the Hadassa, the national council of jewish women etc...¹ Choosing those associations, which by and large represent the medium range of women's claims and civic engagement allows for a better understanding of the nature of the debate and its historical outcome. All those groups share what had been called middle class values of mothering along with their elite quest for equal political rights. Mostly influenced by the Protestant ideology of social gospel - individual freedom, equal political rights and social duties- including the quebecois catholic fédération (very influenced by its anglo canadian neighbors in Montréal), they carved a specific politically gendered identity in

¹ The associations under study in Canada will be the Fédération Nationale Saint-Jean-Baptiste (FNSJB, 1907-1960), and its 22 affiliates, such as the Comité provincial du suffrage féminin et l'Alliance canadienne pour le vote des femmes du Québec, created in 1921 and 1927-1940 (coming from the Montreal Suffrage Association, and from the Montreal Local Council of Women (MLCW), the National Council of Women in Canada (NCWC), the Young Women's Christian Association (YWCA, 1875 till now), the National Council of Jewish Women, (1909-1990) and the Canadian Hadassah, 1937-1991. My previous work established the importance of grass roots female associations in carving and enlarging a public sphere for women, in Québec and Canada. Based on the politics of recognition,

the nineteen twenties and thirties that deserves some attention as they blurred the lines of ethnicity or religion to focus on gender identity. The question was whether women gained something while at the same time contributing to naturalize or essentialize once more gender identity.

The chronology plays a crucial role in establishing the narrative and the changes that have occurred in Canadian citizenship history. There are four distinct periods (which reverses somehow Marshall's usual periodisation of citizenship history civil, political and social)²: the suffrage era and the first wave feminism of civil and (partial) political rights (for a minority) (1890-1920), the maternalist movement and the social rights (for the entitled) (1920-1950), the second wave and the individual rights of citizenship (1960s and 1970s), and the parity movement as the triumph of individual equality as a gendered one (1990s and 2000s). We will focus in this paper on the second period, which is crucial to the maternalist claim and its outcome.

The period between 1920 and 1950 has long been considered a politically dormant era for women in Canada, and it has been largely assumed that once women won the vote and obtained legal recognition as "persons," their political activity paused until the second wave "revival" in the 1960s. Recent historical inquiries, influenced by an expansion in the definition of the "political," and a renewed interest in the welfare state and in the activities of the early women's movement, have refuted such arguments.³ In the years between the wars, as Veronica Strong-Boag has noted, "Canadians tested the promise of equality between the sexes symbolized by

those associations stressed the difference of gender to participate in the political sphere. See *Paroles de femmes: une histoire des Cercles de fermières* (Montréal le jour, 1990) and *Profession: infirmière* (Montréal, PUM, 2000).

² Marshall's analysis is essentially based on the changing structure of social classes, which did not take much account of the gender aspect. His theory, then widely used, establishes 3 distinct periods where the civil rights are obtained roughly during the XVIIIe century (individual freedom), the political ones during the XIXe, and the social ones during the XXe century. See, for a discussion of Marshallian theory based on gender critic, Sylvia Walby, Is citizenship gendered? *Sociology, the journal of British Sociological Association*, vol28,2, May 1994: 379-396.

³ See Jill Vickers, "Feminist Approaches to Women in Politics," In: Linda Kealey and Joan Sangster, eds. *Beyond the Vote: Canadian Women and Politics*, (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1989) 16-35. Vickers argues that more research is required on women's activities in the suffrage movement and political organizations and parties (particularly into the interrelationship between the public and private realms) and that a clear understanding of feminists' conception of citizenship and of women's connection to the state is needed. She also calls for a more comprehensive definition of politics; one that takes women's various methods and locales of political thinking and action (largely situated outside of the suffrage movement and party politics), and the historical specificity of both, into account. To Vickers, once such a definition is developed, the notion that 'nothing much happened' after the suffrage would inevitably be abandoned. That definition, according to Vickers (17), necessarily requires that feminist analyses of women's political activity adopt *doubled vision* – "the capacity to view women's activities through more than one lens – or paradigm – at a time." See Appendix.

federal and provincial women suffrage victories,” hoping that “the Dominion was on the brink of a ‘new day’ that would bring good times and a fair deal.”⁴ Canada was well in the process of becoming a “modern” nation as it moved into the 1920s, and its preoccupation was with the increases in urbanization, ethnic and racial diversity, new sectors of employment and a mutated workforce, and a changed domestic economy that accompanied its transformation. In addition, Canada was also faced with women assuming new roles within the public realm:

As the years passed few women lived precisely the way their mothers had, but equally few found themselves able or willing to experiment fully with the sexual autonomy and material abundance embodied in the contemporary image of the ‘flapper.’ The Great Depression of the 1930s only confirmed what Canadians in the main already appreciated: changes in human behaviour were hard won and deeply resisted. In the inter-war years, growing up and growing old meant less for women than either opponents of equality had threatened or feminists had hoped for during the suffrage campaigns.⁵

While few women occupied formal positions within Parliament and the legislature during that time, they were actively participating in other, less visible, political realms. Between 1920 and well into the late 1950s, women maintained membership with women’s organizations (the YWCA, the Canadian Federation of University Women, and the Fédération Nationale Saint-Jean-Baptiste, for example), created national women’s coalitions, lobbied on issues deemed significant for women, and were involved in women’s auxiliaries, in trade and labour unions, and in burgeoning social movements.⁶ It has only recently become clear that Canadian women were indeed political creatures – and were actively engaged in political participation – after the First World War.

Wendy Sarvasy has noted that the postsuffrage activities of women in the United States were also viewed as politically insignificant until recent times, and revisited the era to correct false assumptions and bring women’s activities during the inter-war years to light. Building on work begun by “historically-minded political scientists” in the 1980s⁷, Sarvasy stated that women

⁴ Veronica Strong-Boag, “Janey Canuck”: Women in Canada 1919-1939, (Ottawa: the Canadian Historical Association, 1994) 1.

⁵ Strong-Boag (1994) 1. See also Kate Boyer, “Place and the politics of virtue: Clerical work, corporate anxiety, and changing meanings of public womanhood in early twentieth-century Montreal.” *Gender, Place & Culture*, Vol. 5, No. 3 (Nov. 1988) 261-275. See Appendix.

⁶ Heather MacIvor, Women and Politics in Canada, (Peterborough: Broadview Press, 1996) 79. Historians and political scientists have only recently viewed these activities – and a wealth of others – as “political.”

⁷ Linda Gordon, ed., Women, the State, and Welfare, Wisconsin: University of Wisconsin Press, 1990). The text compiles the “best” essays written in the US about women and the welfare state in the 1980s, and suggests a number of ways in which more sophisticated analyses of welfare can and should be conducted in the future. See Appendix.

did not withdraw from political participation after the ratification of the suffrage amendment, but continued to struggle for the complementary goals of full citizenship for all women and the development of a feminist welfare state. According to Sarvasy, these objectives were grounded in a number of assumptions: that a feminist welfare state with gender equality as its mandate “would provide the context for the new women citizens” and women’s full citizenship would further the development of the welfare state; and that both goals would necessitate a vision of “gender equality” that incorporated equal treatment as well as difference.⁸ In so doing, activists of the era pushed for public policy changes that would augment women’s formal equality, including (but not limited to) jury duty, naturalization and family laws, and the promotion of a federal health care program that acknowledged the needs of women and children.⁹ Like their neighbours to the North, activists soon realized that their votes didn’t hold the power they had imagined, and – to the public, at least – the women’s movement appeared splintered and static. However, as Sarvasy attested, feminists of the era merely switched gears; some practicing the presuffrage “politics of difference,” some promoting a post-suffrage feminist egalitarianism, and others, “a core of feminist reformers,” melded the two.¹⁰ Sarvasy illustrated that, regardless of political persuasion, women in the US were engaged with and active within movements for the advancement of women’s political and social rights in this period.

The revision – and, often, the remaking – of history to include previously unknown women, their activism, and the issues that mobilized them during the inter-war period parallels the concerns of feminist scholars over the state of women’s rights, the meanings of citizenship and democracy, and the status of the women’s movement in the current historical moment. As Canada’s welfare state unravels in an era of neo-conservatism and restructuring, more and more feminist historians have been revisiting the relatively recent past to uncover women’s role in its development.¹¹ The current interest in women of the early twentieth-century also coincides neatly with recent trends in feminist scholarship, as Vickers outlined:

⁸ Wendy Sarvasy, “Beyond the Difference versus Equality Policy Debate: Postsuffrage Feminism, Citizenship, and the Quest for a Feminist Welfare State,” *Signs*. Vol. 17, No. 2, (Winter 1992) 329.

⁹ Sarvasy (1992) 329.

¹⁰ Sarvasy (1992) 329-330.

¹¹ Janet Guildford, “Tackling the Twentieth Century: Ten new books in Canadian women's history,” *Journal of Women's History*. Vol. 10, No. 1, (Spring 1998), 183. According to Guildford, “The most discernible trend in the new work in Canadian women's history is the shift in attention from the nineteenth to the twentieth century...This is a significant development...In the 1970s and 1980s, historians of Canadian women focused most of their research on the period from 1880 to 1920, investigating women's roles in politics, social reform, and paid and unpaid work.”

First, the women's movement has begun to mobilize around questions that require insight from feminist theories of politics...second, more than a decade of energetic work by feminist historians has begun to make our collective past more available to us so that we can better understand the dilemmas and choices of the suffrage and post-suffrage generations. Finally, the rise of the New Right with an analysis that makes issues of gender, the family, and the state central requires that we do more than react defensively. This rejuvenation of the old, cold-war political right, feeding on what we believed were 'our issues' demonstrates the urgency of our task.¹²

To Vickers, those analyses must understand that the myriad of women's activities – in social movements, in organizations, in women's associations, and the like, have *always* been political in nature. As the following synopsis will illustrate, the last decade of feminist writing on the period between 1920 and 1950 incorporates Vickers' definition of "politics" with regard to women's organizing to a certain extent. As well, women's stake in the welfare state – and how their activities have affected it – is a common theme among them. However, the ways in which feminist historians and political scientists have approached the era, the issues, and the women, vary dramatically.

Thelma McCormack has noted that gender inequalities throughout history have always been justified by the historical specificity of their existence. "In the seventeenth century," she explained, "women lacked moral maturity; in the eighteenth their rational capacities were deficient, while in the nineteenth the focus was on biology and the disabilities women endured as a result of reproductive functions." Therefore, by the end of the nineteenth century – when women in both Canada and the United States struggled for the right to vote, "they confronted a mix of normative, cognitive and biological reasons arrayed against them in science, philosophy, religion and law, in folk knowledge, literature and popular journalism."¹³ In essence, women were constructed as different physical, moral, and intellectual beings than men, and were consequently deemed less deserving of the rights of citizenship. The notion of "public man, private woman" remained firmly entrenched until North America began the process of modernization at the turn of the nineteenth century, when "the state, laissez-faire notwithstanding, was reaching more often and more directly into the lives of middle and working class women, [and] the age of bourgeois democracy and the nation-state the distinctively modern

¹² Vickers, 16.

¹³ McCormack, Thelma. Politics and the Hidden Injuries of Gender: Feminism and the Making of the Welfare State. (The CRIAW Papers, No. 28. Ottawa: CRIAW, 1991) 7.

political alienation of women began.”¹⁴ Given the participatory expectations of the new state and the patriarchal opposition to women’s engagement with it, it is not surprising that the women’s suffrage movement emerged, “question[ing] the meaning of a democracy that denied them any voice or role.”¹⁵ Citing conscription, concerns over health and welfare, children, and prison reform, maternal feminists demanded the right to partake in participatory democracy without property restrictions.

The establishment of the federal franchise for women in 1920 marked a virtual end to maternal feminism as a powerhouse:

Its rhetoric lasted longer...but the pre-war maternal feminism that inspired women of diverse backgrounds and led the Women’s Movement toward women’s suffrage could not survive the new secular ethos of professionalism that was displacing the altruistic volunteer or the changes taking place in marriage and the family in the new urban environments or the expanding credit-based consumer economy...A new agenda was emerging shaped by women who were better educated, more cosmopolitan, and less religious, women who had smaller families, greater mobility, and weaker ties with kin. The metaphor of family as state and state as family gradually disappeared as women became more familiar with the new social sciences – economics, sociology, etc...that led to a better understanding of large-scale social structures, the principles of prevention and the macroeconomics of social planning.¹⁶

McCormack cited Charlotte Whitton as the archetype of the new woman thinker and activist, representing the move away from religious and familial motivations to professional (“value-free”) and policy-based social work. She, according to McCormack, and others like her, envisioned social services as a charitable sector of the community, one not controlled by the state.¹⁷ Suffrage marked a pivotal moment in political history and the women’s movement, as it was a visible protest against the public/private divide, a major change in women’s political socialization, and a preface to emerging ideas about social change. As well, “it marked out an

¹⁴ McCormack, 9. See Janine Brodie, Politics on the Margins: Restructuring and the Canadian Women’s Movement, (Halifax: Fernwood Publishing, 1995). Brodie notes that international political change also affected the goals and priorities of the women’s movement, and identified “three distinct periods of major social transformation in Canada,” that generated a unique state form. “The laissez-faire state, which reigned from approximately the 1840s until the Great Depression of the 1930s, coincided with the development of industrial capitalism. The welfare state, dating from the 1940s until the 1970s, is associated with corporate capitalism and the branch plant economy. The current fashioning of the neoliberal state parallels the ascendancy of transnational capitalism (33-34).”

¹⁵ McCormack, 9.

¹⁶ McCormack, 12.

¹⁷ McCormack, 13.

area neither private nor public, that nurtured social movements and cultural interests as distinct from familial and reproductive needs, on the one hand, and economic interests on the other.” Women’s work was cut out for them; to place “this semi-public sphere with its cultural activities and “good works” into the public domain” and to heavily influence what was eventually going to become the welfare state.¹⁸

Despite the transformations that occurred during the postsuffrage era, very few historical analyses – in both Canada and the United States – have provided a comprehensive look at the development and establishment of the welfare state, and fewer in-depth analyses of “one or another of its parts” (including the influence of women) have been conducted by social science “specialists.”¹⁹ According to Michael Katz, those that have emerged tend to present the “polity-centred” approach developed by Theda Skocpol – one that highlights the influence of government, political culture, and policy “feedback” on social welfare provisions.²⁰ Proponents of Skocpol’s methodology have tended to focus upon the more technical aspects of the welfare state, and have generally given little space to the diversity of its recipients. In recent years, however, feminist historians and political scientists alike have been writing a revised version of women’s relationship to the welfare state that challenges traditional notions of gender, women’s organizing, democracy, and the overall contribution of women in political and social transformation.

Katz has argued that historians of women and welfare in the United States have commonly over-emphasized the role of the “female dominion” in the passage of laws, the creation of federal agencies, in the “rise and fall of federally supported health services for women and children in the 1920s”, and the redesign of policies. In all analyses, authors illustrated how gender inequalities were engraved into the welfare state at the moment of its inception in the 1930s, how an inferior status was imposed on women, and how most reformers were trapped within traditional notions of sex roles, preferring policies that allowed for men to earn a “family wage” and women to remain mothers at home. Most analyses in this regard, Katz argued, concluded that the welfare system embodied these assumptions, and that the negative

¹⁸ McCormack, 14.

¹⁹ Katz, Michael. “Segmented Visions,” *Journal of Urban History*, Vol. 24, No. 2. (Jan 1998) 244.

²⁰ Katz, 244. See Theda Skocpol, *Protecting Soldiers and Mothers: The Political Origins of Social Policy in the United States* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1992) and Weir, Orloff, & Skocpol, *The Politics of Social Policy in the United States* (NJ: Princeton University Press, 1988). Although women’s relationship to social policy is a featured and recurring theme, Skocpol does not use a woman-centred approach.

consequences haunt the present system in America. In general terms, Katz disliked the “formula” in which many of these analyses were presented. In particular, he stated that the documentation of the Children’s Bureau, Sheppard-Towner, and the design of the Aid to Dependent Children in 1935 has been overdone to the point of redundancy.

Melodie Mayson, in an article entitled “Ontario Works and Single Mothers: Redefining ‘Deservedness and the Social Contract,’” conformed exactly to the American formula described by Katz. Mayson noted that since the establishment of the Ontario's Mothers' Allowance (OMA) in 1920, mothers – particularly single, often poor moms - received some recognition from the state for their “mothering” work. Examining the Ontario Works Act, the workfare-based welfare regime (with mandatory employment requirements for single parents) instituted in 1998 that eliminated and replaced the OMA, Mayson argued that “by re-defining single mothers' ‘deservedness’ for financial assistance”, the province increased the regulation of single parents, assumed more control over the poor, contradicted its “family values” stance, and implied that “the growing reliance of single mothers on social assistance is...a cultural and moral problem.” According to Mayson, the principle of “less eligibility” and the division between “deserving” and “non-deserving” poor, were built-in features of the original OMA program, and have been consistent since its establishment. Those features, she argued, were based on hegemonic assumptions of gender and the sexual division of labour (promoting the concept of the “family wage,” and entrenched in the program by “maternalist” and “protectionist” ideology. However,

There is an important conceptual contradiction in the earlier feminist position. While previous feminist writers criticized the gender-specific provision of assistance to single mothers, the reality is that it is primarily women who are abandoned or left to cope with the responsibility of raising children. The "private" solutions often advanced in the social policy arena to alleviate the economic imbalance in the position of single mothers such as measures to enhance the realization of child support and male accountability - are significant for some mother-led families. They remain largely symbolic initiatives for many others, however, and do little to lift most children and their mothers out of poverty.²¹

Mayson argued that the tension that has historically surrounded the roles of parent and provider has been conveniently avoided by Ontario Works, and that the mandatory employment required by the program not only ignores the gendered division of labour, but “renders it invisible.”

²¹ Mayson, Melodie. “Ontario Works and Single Mothers: Redefining ‘Deservedness and the Social Contract’.” *Journal of Canadian Studies*. Vol. 34, No. 2, Summer 1999, 89-109.

Despite Katz's concerns, writers of political and social history – in both Canada and the United States – have succeeded in providing space to voices and stories previously underrepresented (or simply not represented) in national political histories of the postsuffrage era or accounts of women's organizing. The role of women within religious organizations has been one of those oft-unheard stories. Sharon Anne Cook's Through Sunshine and Shadow: The Woman's Christian Temperance Union, Evangelicalism, and Reform in Ontario, 1874-1930, presented an extensive understanding of the evangelical origins of the Woman's Christian Temperance Union's (WCTU) and the role it played in the construction of a middle-class female culture in Ontario. While the evangelical underpinnings of the late 1880s informed and validated women's roles, by the 1920s, "the evangelicalism that had empowered and energized Protestant women was being eroded by a conservative fundamentalism that sought to limit women's role to the domestic sphere. Many Ontario WCTU members accepted this confining redefinition of women's proper sphere. The WCTU and its aging members continued to promote the sanctity of the family, but, especially after the provincial prohibition legislation enacted during the war was revoked in 1927, the organization all but disappeared from small-town and rural Ontario."²² As well, Cook draws comparisons with the American WCTU sisterhood, and noted that the organization leaders often shared information and strategy, and that "the Ontario WCTU became more decentralized, more evangelical, and less politicized than the American WCTU."²³ While revealing class-based discrimination within its ranks, Cook focused predominantly on the WCTU's "institutional structures, relationships with other women's organizations, and reformist agenda."²⁴

An edited text, Changing Roles of Women within the Christian Church in Canada, has also contributed to the recounting of the lives of women previously missing in historical analyses of the postsuffrage era. In their introduction, the editors made note of the heavy influence that American churches often had on Canadian women, but the articles within the book primarily addressed the lives of the Canadian women themselves, "with their own distinctive challenges in their own cultural, political, and geographical settings."²⁵ While the collection addresses

²² Rosemary Gagan, "Through Sunshine and Shadow: Review," *The American Historical Review*; Vol. 102, No. 1 (Feb 1997) 227.

²³ Gagan, 228.

²⁴ Gagan, 228.

²⁵ Susan Hill Lindley, "Changing Roles of Women within the Christian Church in Canada, a Review" *History*, Vol. 65, No. 4, (Dec 1996) 780.

Catholic and Mennonite sisterhoods, women's missionary work both in Canada and abroad, and the trials and tribulations of etching out leadership space within four different denominations, the articles in the final section are most pertinent to this summary. They "detail early charitable work by women for women and children and show how some women, such as Nellie McClung, found religious conviction and practical experience propelling them out of conventional feminine benevolence into social confrontation."²⁶ Also included throughout the text were illustrations and examples of "the way cultural assumptions dictated certain appropriate (subordinate) activities as divinely and naturally suitable to women, the way that women used the areas of responsibility assigned to them-and the power of their purses-to increase their control and expand their roles while publicly continuing to defer to male authority, and the way women's leadership and nontraditional work became acceptable when there was a shortage of male workers, as in wartime."²⁷

While a number of Canadian political and social historians have concentrated on the collection and compilation of primary documents, agency records, and chronological history proper on the postsuffrage era, others have theorized through women on the front-line: those who actually implemented welfare policy—paid agents and early social workers. Case histories could be useful in this regard, but few have been written on the Canadian situation. Linda Gordon's Pitied But Not Entitled, (albeit American) has been called a "major intervention into current discussions of the welfare state and the origins of the transfer payments, variously called "welfare," "pensions," or "insurance," that mark our sense of common responsibility to those we define as entitled."²⁸ Representing not only a history of ADC in America but also a review of current historical writing on women and welfare as well as an interpretation of the interrelation of welfare and single motherhood, Gordon examined the disintegration of the notion of economic security that once grounded social security legislation in the 1930s.

In many ways, Gordon presents a fairly standardized history of welfare and the ways in which social policies were shaped toward and around mothers. However, Gordon went deeper, and illustrated how contradictory the results of this "Progressive crusade" were for poor women. For instance, she explained how women reformers often "engaged in rescue fantasies,"

²⁶ Lindley, 781.

²⁷ Lindley, 781.

²⁸ Ruth Crocker, Department of History, Auburn University, H-NET BOOK REVIEW Published by H-State@msu.edu (June, 1995)

misconstrued the poor single mother as a widow, and ignored the fact that most poor women were also engaged in paid work.²⁹ In this discourse of maternalism, the rights of poor women were grounded in their family status, not in their identity as individuals. Gordon also addressed the dire need to read “woman,” class, race, ethnicity, and age into histories of social policy making, and to rethink the ways in which differences between and among women were constructed. She noted, “Women's power does not always promote all women.”³⁰ Perhaps most interesting about her study was the acknowledgment of the theoretical problem of agency and domination, particularly on the part of the welfare recipient, as poor women were not in any way organized. Fortunately, Gordon addressed the silences, and calls on her readers to take notice of them, as reminders of “the existence of the powerless, the unmobilized, the alienated”³¹ In addition, Gordon included a review of black women’s activism during this era – something missing (yet seemingly necessary) in the majority of inquiries into the postsuffrage period. For African-Americans, regardless of class, the concern was not about need, but *access*, as access to welfare directly translated into civil rights. In doing so, Gordon exposes the “white notion of welfare” so often missing in feminist analyses.³²

Nancy Christie’s text, Engendering The State: Family, Work, and Welfare in Canada, is illuminating. While Canada endured the effects of two world wars, industrialization, and economic and political crises, welfare entitlements based on family reproduction were replaced by state policies that promoted paid labour in the workplace. To a nation gripped with new and great anxieties, the mother no longer appeared capable of functioning as its vitally adhesive force. The necessity of stabilizing the paternal position of the father as breadwinner in order to sustain the family and support economic progress became the progressively dominant view. Although this thinking effectively helped a portion of the population achieve economic autonomy, its damaging effects were wide reaching. Women, unskilled labourers, and the chronically indigent had been left resourceless.

Despite the impact that race obviously had on women’s organizing in the early part of the twentieth century, very few inquiries have placed it alongside gender as a central component of

²⁹ Linda Gordon, Pitied But Not Entitled: Single Mothers and the History of Welfare. (NY: The Free Press, 1994) 44.

³⁰ Gordon (1994) 290.

³¹ Gordon (1994) 211.

³² Gordon (1994) 119.

welfare histories.³³ Fortunately, Canada's broad immigration history has received significant scholarly attention over the last decade, and feminist and left analyses of the social and cultural implications of race on the "making" of national identities and nation-states have increased. Franca Iacovetta, a historian specializing in postwar Canadian history, challenged the dominant liberal conceptualization of "Canada as a land of genuine opportunity" in her article, "Recipes for Democracy? Gender, Family, and Making Female Citizens in Cold War Canada." Such myths, including the "portraits of Canada as a place where everyone can be both "different" and "equal," must be exposed as ignorant of the "exclusionary and discriminatory" history of Canadian immigration and refugee policy, particularly with regard to "undesireables."³⁴

Iacovetta analyzed Cold War histories through the lens of "domestic containment," and explored "how the dominant gender ideologies of liberal democracies in the early Cold War...informed reception work and social service activities among immigrant and refugee women," and the ways in which immigration and citizenship policies sexualized and shaped norms of reproduction and motherhood.³⁵ She illustrated that while Canada was upholding the tenets of their new modernity, nation-builders feared attacks from potential "threats – from within and without – to democratic "decency."³⁶ The perceived Cold War threats - the atomic bomb, communism, and homosexuality – were exacerbated by the desire to maintain postwar domesticity, and thus, "deviant" women were also targeted. Interestingly, the ethnic diversity (and presence of "successful" ethnic and "non-white" Canadians) of the nation was also "proof" to many nationalists that Canada was indeed a "modern" nation.³⁷

Foreign domestic workers have also been the subject of feminist analyses on race, identity, policy, and the construction of modern political identities. Abigail Bakan and Daiva

³³ For a little perspective, see Hamilton, Sylvia. "The Women at the Well: African Baptist Women Organize." In: Linda Carty, ed. And Still We Rise: Feminist Political Mobilizing in Contemporary Canada. Toronto: The Women's Press, 1993, 189-206. She writes: "At the same time that the famous five women from Alberta were fighting for the legal right to be recognized as persons, African Canadian women citizens were facing widespread discrimination and exclusion in all aspects of their lives, not only because of their gender. For them, race also sharply etched the parameters of their place in Canadian society." (189) 1920s – organizing against the Klu Klux Klan.

³⁴ Franca Iacovetta, "Recipes for Democracy? Gender, Family, and Making Female Citizens in Cold War Canada," *Canadian Woman Studies*, Vol. 20, No. 2 (Summer 2000) 12.

³⁵ Iacovetta, 12.

³⁶ Iacovetta, 13.

Stasiulis have written numerous articles on the topic and often frame their discussions with theoretical examinations of multiple marginality; by intersecting race, gender, and class with notions of the nation-state. One article, "Foreign Domestic Worker Policy in Canada and the Social Boundaries of Modern Citizenship," examined "the practices and relations of exclusion and inclusion at work within both the state and civil society in constructing the social boundaries of citizenship."³⁸ The authors argued that the construction of the "foreign domestic worker" in Canada has been merely an in-house reproduction of the inequalities situated in the world "between hegemonic and non-hegemonic states." As a result, conceptions of "domestic labor," "the family" and the public/private divide have not only been gendered and racialized, but have also perpetuated the Such ideologies aid in the reproduction, "in microcosm, within the private Canadian home, of the hegemonic relationship of Canada to the home country"³⁹:

The ambiguity of the social space constructed out of relations between live-in domestic workers and their employers creates complex and contradictory interests and expectations, including contested, and cross-cultural, assumptions about appropriate roles and behavior related to "family life." The unequal status of employer and employee, simultaneously a relationship between "citizen" and "non-citizen," renders such a contest inherently reflective of the uneven relationship between the states of origin of the two parties.⁴⁰

Ethnicity and race, the authors contend, only exacerbated the already unequal position of the domestic worker in relation to her employer. Bakan and Stasiulis located the origins of the disparate citizenship rights of domestic workers in the theories of eugenics promoted before the Second World War, and showed that Canada's self-identification was aligned with the British Empire. That vision was marked by notions of Anglo-Saxon superiority and incorporated racialized and gendered understandings of women; ideas that influenced policy on everything from immigration to reproductive rights and contributed to the devalued citizenship of women of colour.

³⁷ See also Franca Iacovetta, Paula Draper, and Robert Ventresca, eds, A Nation of Immigrants: Women, Workers, and Communities in Canadian History, 1840s-1960s, (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1998).

³⁸ Abigail B. Bakan, and Daiva K. Stasiulis, "Foreign domestic worker policy in Canada and the social boundaries of modern citizenship," *Science and Society*, Vol. 58, No. 1, (Spring 1994) 10. Bakan and Stasiulis examine the construction of non-citizenship through the "Foreign Domestic Movement," which was established in 1981. However, their work provides insight into how race figures into discussions of women's citizenship in Canada more broadly.

³⁹ Bakan & Stasiulis, 29.

⁴⁰ Bakan & Stasiulis, 23.

The article also provided an often-unheard critique of traditional models of citizenship, one that denounced the tendency of theorists to either adopt or modify slightly the evolutionary perspective of T. H. Marshall. Such models, they argued, are “ill-equipped to deal with the growing reality of non-citizens such as foreign domestic workers,” because obtaining economic rights has generally been of graver significance to these women than Marshall’s civil and political rights.⁴¹ In addition, Bakan and Stasiulis indicated that the notion and meaning of citizenship has been marked by global inequality:

Advanced western liberal democracies, where the economies are more industrially developed and welfare states are established, appear to offer a potential "pool" of citizenship rights which is significantly greater than those on offer to the vast majority who live in third-world nations... Moreover, the unequal distribution of citizenship rights within the advanced liberal democracies, principally along the lines of class, race and gender inequalities, becomes blurred and recedes in importance when considered in counterposition to societies where far larger proportions of citizens suffer from chronic poverty and privation.⁴²

While the process of im/migration from a developing nation into a “globally hegemonic state” has generally resulted in the loss of previously-enjoyed rights for the “gains” promised by the host country, the real tradeoff can be measured in terms of political, social, and cultural losses for economic opportunities, not rights. Bakan and Stasiulis refuted Marshall’s causal link between modernization and the emergence of citizenship, and suggested that civil, political, and social rights should be understood in terms of the “globalized conception model” to ensure the inclusion of “discriminatory factors characteristic of citizenship rights within the hegemonic state itself” - racism and sexism included - in future models.⁴³

Linda Kealey and Joan Sangster have suggested that many examinations of women’s activism, organizing, and politics during the postsuffrage period in Canada have “stressed the failure of women’s politics to transform Canadian society, except in limited ways.”⁴⁴ Instead, they argued, “any discussion of women’s politics must deal squarely with the transformative potential engendered by these politics.”⁴⁵ Their collection, Beyond The Vote: Canadian Women and Politics, was based on the belief that “historians of the suffrage era have up to now

⁴¹ Bakan and Stasiulis, 26-27.

⁴² Bakan and Stasiulis, 28.

⁴³ See also Linda Kerber, “The meanings of citizenship.” *Dissent*, Vol. 44, No. 4 (Fall 1997) 33-37. Appendix.

⁴⁴ Linda Kealey and Joan Sangster, eds, Beyond the Vote: Canadian Women and Politics, (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1989) 12.

⁴⁵ Kealey and Sangster, 12.

underestimated the activities of labour and socialist women in working for sex equality before the First World War,” and that examinations of women’s activities during that era *must* explore the role of socialist women.⁴⁶ The editors viewed the essays in their text as “revisionist” in terms of “politics” and political history, and suggested that an expanded definition of the notion of “politics” - one that illustrated the vast range of women’s political activism (at all levels, including local and community politics) was in order.⁴⁷ That political activism, the editors added, also included “women’s groups espousing changes that affect both private and public sphere experiences of women as well as women’s relationships to state structures and state policies.” In that respect, examinations of women’s “politics” must acknowledge “the family as an arena of sexual politics, subject to class, cultural, and ethnic variations.” They stated that the public/private divide must be viewed as a fluid boundary, and suggested that “the degree of differentiation between them has often been assumed to be greater than historical experience demonstrates.”⁴⁸

Beyond the Vote argued that socialist women of the postsuffrage era were not politically docile following the establishment of the franchise, but instead transferred the knowledge, skill, and political commitment gleaned from the struggle for the vote into other arenas. Despite the disintegration of the “moderate or liberal feminist tradition” after the war, Kealey and Sangster asserted, “left feminism increased its strength and visibility” in Canada.⁴⁹ They also illustrated that while the women involved in the New Left and peace movements were “early twentieth-century pacifists” with “a shared social-gospel philosophy,” they maintained that these women were also marginalized within the ranks; particularly during the wars.⁵⁰ Before the emergence of the second wave women’s movement in the 1960s, women continued to be defined in terms of their domestic roles in both the Liberal party and in the CCF, and “the dominant social norms prescribing female domesticity influenced the definition of ‘appropriate’ political issues for women.”⁵¹ It would also be interesting to note that the text made mention of the significant

⁴⁶ Kealey and Sangster, 5.

⁴⁷ Kealey and Sangster, 11. See also Joan Sangster’s Dreams of Equality: Women on the Canadian Left, 1920-1950. (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1989). Sangster’s text is also premised on this assumption.

⁴⁸ Kealey and Sangster, 12.

⁴⁹ Kealey and Sangster, 6.

⁵⁰ Kealey and Sangster, 11. Even though the left was plagued by the “biological determinist trap” and continued to view women through the lens of the family, “its internationalist sympathies, class analysis, and the questioning of sex roles by some women within the movement differentiated its views of women from those of right-wing groups.” See pg. 8.

⁵¹ Kealey and Sangster, 7.

changes that occurred among single women's roles between the two World Wars, as women began to seek both education and employment in larger numbers than ever before, and that the "post-suffrage hopes for expanded options for young women were only realized in a limited fashion."⁵² In essence, Kealey and Sangster's text not only suggested that historical assumptions of the postsuffrage era need to be challenged, but asserted that the contributions of ethnic, socialist and communist women during that period also need to be included. The editors wrote: "not only do we need to be conscious of class and cultural factors in women's politics, we also need to be critically aware of the limitations of the public/private dichotomy that fractures our understanding of women's politics and its transformative potential. If we begin with the experience of women, particularly at the local and community level, we discover a rich network of women's politics nuanced by class, culture and ideology."⁵³

There is evidence of the continuing appeal of an earlier celebratory approach to women's diverse experiences and their contributions to Canadian history, as well as a keen interest in newer approaches. In the last few years, Canadian feminist scholars have been debating the merits of a variety of theoretical approaches, including the relative value and importance of both women's history and gender history. While theoretical innovation and the linguistic turn have influenced the concepts and methods of Canadian women's history, a number of texts take a "no nonsense" approach to historical inquiry; examining the impact of "community" organizing and working-class women's history.⁵⁴ Joan Sangster's Earning Respect: The Lives of Working Women in Small Town Ontario, provides a useful example of this turn in perspective, tracing the remarkable changes of the working lives (as affected by the depression and the Second World

⁵² See also Veronica Strong-Boag, new day recalled: lives of girls and women in English Canada, 1919-1939. (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1987). Strong-Boag draws attention to the exploding numbers of young middle class women entering the labour market. Most found their options limited to sales, clerical and service work. Strong-Boag also downplays the 1920s image of the sexually liberated flapper, maintaining an emphasis on the contradictory sexual expectations young women faced.

⁵³ Kealey and Sangster, 12.

⁵⁴ See, for example, Suzanne Morton, Ideal Surroundings: Domestic Life in a Working-Class Suburb in the 1920s, presents detailed community studies of working-class culture and explore the relationship between paid work and domestic life through a study of Richmond Heights, a working-class suburb of Halifax, Nova Scotia, in the 1920s. Ideal Surroundings blends the collective biography approach many social historians use with a finely tuned analysis of her subjects. Morton has used the life course as an organizing principle for her study, and this approach enables her to explore women's and men's workplaces and domestic lives, and the special circumstances of elderly men and women, and female-led households. See also Linda Kealey, Pursuing Equality: Historical perspectives on Women in Newfoundland and Labrador, (Social and Economic Papers, No. 20, Institute of Social and Economic Research, Memorial University, 1993).

War) of women in English Canada through 1920 to 1960.⁵⁵ With a strong emphasis on the significance of oral history, Sangster utilized archival research and interviews throughout her examination of work culture (and the marginalization of women within it), the intricacies of waged work (as opposed to unpaid domestic labour) and the creation of women's new identity as wage earners.⁵⁶ Challenging dichotomies that separate the public and private, home and job, patriarchy and capitalism, Sangster argued that all spheres work as "mutually reinforcing arenas in which women make their lives and their lives are made." Sexual difference and the sexual division of labour also informed her analysis, as, she argued, the ideologies underlying them were consistent with their own prewar experiences. As a result, and "to create a livable workplace, women produced their own distinctive work culture that could provide a basis for resistance but did not have to, as it was itself shaped and circumscribed by the structure of the work process, the power of employers to define discipline, and conservative ideals of femininity."⁵⁷ Perhaps most significant about Sangster's text was her consideration of working-class women as powerful, active "seekers of 'respectability,' a class-specific goal that meant hard work, moral uprightness, and acceptance of proper gender roles and familial obligations and that could provoke resistance even as it facilitated accommodation and consent."⁵⁸ As Sangster argued, "a distinct notion of the dignity owed to women and of the respectability of women's aspirations and lives was promoted and defended by the workers," despite the economic inequality and gendered hierarchy of power that pervaded the workplace.⁵⁹

⁵⁵ See also Mary Kinnear, In Subordination: Professional Women, 1870-1970. Access to professional training and occupations were important goals for many Canadian first wave feminists. Mary Kinnear seeks to understand the influence of the late-nineteenth-century women's movement on the experiences of women in five professional occupations in Manitoba: university teachers, medical doctors, lawyers, public school teachers, and nurses. Kinnear employs a variety of such traditional sources as institutional records, the press, and the census. Kinnear argues that professional women in Manitoba between 1870 and 1970 did not find autonomy, but instead experienced a subordinate status in relation to their male professional colleagues; as well, they placed their careers in subordination to the demands of family life. Although Kinnear's subjects were residents of the province of Manitoba, she is less interested in the special historical features of that province than in claiming representativeness for her subjects.

⁵⁶ Joan Sangster, Earning Respect: The Lives of Working Women in Small Town Ontario, 1920-1960, (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1995).

⁵⁷ Nancy Gabin, "Earning Respect: The Lives of Working Women in Small-Town Ontario, 1920-1960, Review," *The American Historical Review*, Vol. 102, No. 1 (Feb 1997) 229.Review.

⁵⁸ Gabin, 229.

⁵⁹ Sangster, 159. For more on women and work in Canada, see Joy Parr, The Gender of Breadwinners: Women, Man and Change in Two Industrial Towns (1880-1950), (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1990). Parr integrated both class and gender in her analysis of the establishment of industrial society in two small Ontario towns (one, Paris, she considered a 'woman's town'; the other, Hanover, a 'man's town.' Influenced by poststructuralism, she emphasized the shifting meanings of gender, class and work and how they were influenced by prevailing dichotomies of the era. See also Mercedes Steedman, Angels of the Workplace: Women and the Construction of Gender Relations in the Canadian Clothing Industry, 1890-1940, (Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1997).

Historians have also been interested in the ways in which women worked at war, and analyses feature prominently in histories of women during the postsuffrage era. For instance, Carolyn Gossage's Greatcoats and Glamour Boots attempted to recover some of the "missing footage" surrounding women's participation in the war effort. Gossage acknowledged that the First World War provided a plethora of previously-inaccessible opportunities for women to serve their country, their actual participation was restricted and limited to nursing roles or volunteer positions at home and abroad. Once the manpower shortage ensued, women's roles expanded and many moved to factories as munitions workers. However, Gossage noted, "their role was well within the confines of tradition. During the "war to end all wars" and for some time to come, the notion of the female as a nurturing presence held sway."⁶⁰ Gossage also included mention of the women who volunteered with the Canadian Red Cross, the YWCA, the IODE (Imperial Order of the Daughters of the Empire), and the St. John Ambulance, and asserted that their roles deserved mention among other war histories.⁶¹ In the American context, Lorry Fenner historicized the arguments on the integration of women into the American military, and suggested that current debates should "move away from the particulars of conditions of service and the inclusion of specific groups to the fundamental issues of citizenship and military obligation in a democratic society," and explore the ways in which gender and gender roles have functioned in policy and institutions.⁶²

Steedman also highlights class, gender, and ethnicity as the primary determinants of women's experience, and (like Sangster) stresses the interconnectedness of family and workplace. When women, who were "angels" in the home, engaged in paid factory work, "they were perceived as 'angels', the 'other', separated from the earthly hierarchy and expected to follow the bidding of the men who worked around them ... "(2). Women workers were introduced by Steedman as "highly skilled workers," yet her discussion downplayed women's agency, and predominantly focused upon their marginal position in the workplace (2). Concerned with why unions were not attractive to women workers in the interwar period, she argued that prevailing patriarchal structures limited their appeal. However, according to Steedman, after 1930, new types of union organizing appealed more and more to women, and locals began to appear and form alliances with other feminist organizations, which "gave them the space to speak as women rather than as genderless members of the working class . . . to speak politically of their rights to equal pay for equal work"(255).

⁶⁰ Carolyn Gossage, Greatcoats and Glamour Boots: Canadian Women at War 1939-1945, (Toronto & Oxford: Dundurn Press, 1991) 18.

⁶¹ Gossage, 19.

⁶² Lorry Fenner, "Either you Need These Women or You do Not: Informing the Debate on Military Service and Citizenship." *Gender Issues*. Volume 16, Number 3, (Summer 1998), 5. Fenner also addresses the notion of citizenship, and stated that "it is so easy to exclude, or to use and forget, marginalized groups because we have not addressed the fundamental issue of their participation. An examination of the period since 1940 aids our understanding of the issues, provides evidence for the current debate on the integration of women and others into the military, and can help us know where to head for the future. In the past when the nation needed military women they were integrated with minimal benefits and maximum restrictions; continuing service needs impelled constant changes in those limitations, showing the malleability of gender concepts and the elasticity of standards, as well as demonstrating that spaces were available for negotiating patriarchal structures. Lack of comparisons of racial debates

Alison Prentice, in the preface to a series of texts that were published in the early 1990s on women in the early twentieth century, stated that there were a number of themes that have been consistently missing in historical analyses of women following the franchise. A prominent one, according to Prentice, has been an examination of the “life cycle” or “life course.” Another has been the tension between public and private lives (one that she believed has increased over time). As well, “the theme of women’s needs and concerns juxtaposed against a variety of demands: the demands of governments, churches, or organizations; the demands of changing economic conditions, of wartime or peace; or the demands of individuals – a whole host of whom, both male and female, expressed views, exerted pressures, made requests, or issued ultimata concerning what women should be or do,” has been inadequately addressed.⁶³

One volume in particular is useful to this discussion: Beth Light, and Ruth Roach Pierson’s No Easy Road. Covering the period beginning two years after the federal franchise, the volume illustrated that while postsuffrage Canada did not provide an environment conducive to feminism or feminist organizing, women’s activism flourished:

...throughout the whole period there were women who remained politically active: some worked to keep the ideal of peace alive in the inter-war years; some pressured for mother’s allowances; some, within the United Church of Canada, campaigned successfully for the ordination of women; others struggled, less successfully, for the provision of birth control information for women and the improvement of wages and working conditions for women in paid labour. Women belonging to ethnic and racial minorities found cause to struggle against cultural prejudice and racist discrimination...⁶⁴

Most suffragists, according to Light and Pierson, had not struggled for the vote as “an end in itself” but as “a key to bettering women’s position in society generally.” Following the federal enfranchisement, they argued, many women continued the presuffrage aim and agitated for the provincial vote (until 1940). Others “turned or returned to organizing and agitating for more local and specific improvements in the lives of girls and women,” and became active members of social and labour movements and voluntary organizations.⁶⁵

to gender debates and gender and racial debates to sexual orientation debates shows how limited our application of available evidence has been.”

⁶³ Alison Prentice, introduction by the series editor. In: Beth Light, and Ruth Roach Pierson, eds. No Easy Road: Women in Canada 1920s to 1960s., (Toronto: New Hogtown Press, 1990) 11-12.

⁶⁴ Light and Pierson, 350.

⁶⁵ Light and Pierson, 343.

Women involved in the labour movement were unconvinced that the electoral system could adequately affect or change women's lot, yet believed that the capitalist system contributed to the overall oppression of women in Canada. Those affiliated with the Communist Party of Canada (CPC), attempted to capture the imagination of the new working-class woman, and established a women's department in 1922.⁶⁶ When the CCF emerged in Canada as a viable party, the interest of women in both socialism and social reform expanded and the party attracted women from a broad range of backgrounds: "daughters and wives of Prairie farmers active in the cooperative movement; urban proletarian women active in the labour movement; and middle-class intellectual women active in the League for Social Reconstruction," and the like.⁶⁷ Just as women in the workforce were plagued by notions of female domesticity and male dominion, women in the CCF were also troubled by "the unwillingness of the male leadership to let women win the nomination in a "safe" riding and the relegation of women in the party to "behind the scenes" support work."⁶⁸ Light and Pierson acknowledged that the vote did not bring with it the promise of total emancipation for women in Canada. Instead, women were faced with new challenges – often within the political parties that they fully supported. However, "some women continued to believe that, if women were running the show, the show would run differently. Women also clearly sensed a continuing need to organize separately, and they did so in many different kinds of organizations from the Women's Labour Leagues of the Communist Party of Canada to the National Council of Women of Canada (NCWC)."⁶⁹ Thus, claims that have

⁶⁶ Light and Pierson, 347. "One of the two major goals of the Women's Department of the CPC was to organize wage-earning women. Unionizing female wage earners, however, was extremely difficult and costly when the overwhelming majority were in unskilled jobs, often domestic work. But in the 1930s...Communist affiliated unions made headway among the women textile and garment workers in Ontario and Quebec."

⁶⁷ Light and Pierson, 348. "A vocal minority of women in the CCF organized around and spoke out for specifically feminist issues. Many of their pronouncements anticipated the demands of the resurgent feminism of the late 60s and 70s. not sharing the deep suspicion of the Communist Party harboured by their male CCF counterparts, some CCF women willingly worked together with CP women in 1934-1935 in the Canadian League against War and Fascism, a Communist "front" organization." Light and Pierson (348) also noted that "Some of the radical CCF women organized themselves in February 1936 into the Women's Joint Committee of Toronto to carry on the struggle. But the 1930s was not a woman-friendly period for feminism. The last recorded meeting of the Toronto CCF women's joint committee was in June of 1936, less than a half a year after its founding."

⁶⁸ Light and Pierson, 348.

⁶⁹ Light and Pierson, 349. The NCWC "functioned as an umbrella organization representing a host of Local and Provincial Councils of Women and their affiliated societies as well as nationally organized societies in federation with the NCWC (such as the Canadian Nurses Association, the Dominion Council of the YWCA, and the Canadian Girl Guides). As a 'parliament of women', the NCWC lobbied on behalf of women's rights and women's interests straight through and beyond the Second World War. Largely middle class in membership and upper-class in leadership, the NCWC also illustrates the continuing divisions among women in class society, as exemplified, for instance, in the Council's support for the training of domestic servants but not for their unionization. Nor was the NCWC free of racial prejudice..."

asserted that women in Canada were indeed “emancipated” by the vote have served only to mute the now-obvious efforts of postsuffrage feminists to affect social change.⁷⁰

Thelma McCormack has also acknowledged that the “promise” of suffrage was unfulfilled following the federal enfranchisement, and added that the immediate postsuffrage years illustrate that “the promise of democracy itself” has also eluded Canadian women.⁷¹ In her text, Politics and the Hidden Injuries of Gender, she examined the political culture and experience of women in Canada since the federal vote was granted, and argued that, “on the one hand, women have been instrumental in the development of the modern welfare state although men have usually been given the credit. On the other hand, women have a legacy of injuries as a result of their marginalization, rejection and discrimination in the patriarchal state.”⁷² Emphasizing the ways in which gender and structural inequalities have affected the construction of the welfare state, she suggested that women themselves (particularly those with political mobility) negatively affected its development and institution. We do not suggest (2) that the welfare state as a whole or specific policies have been gender-blind or intended to redress structural inequalities. Utilizing the notion of “hidden injuries,” McCormack argued that:

The experience of being at the edges, of being on the outside looking in, of being invisible has given women penetrating insights about the social order and led to the formation of their own criteria for monitoring social change. At the same time it has been conducive to certain forms of social-psychological adaptation and political accommodation that can become dysfunctional. This dilemma, we suggest, is at the

⁷⁰ Light and Pierson, 343. The authors also mentioned the image of the “new woman” that emerged during this era as a factor affecting women’s organizing. “Whereas during the pre-war struggle for equality in education, jobs and suffrage she had been portrayed as “masculinized,” defiantly sporting sturdy shoes and “mannish” suits and clandestinely smoking cigarettes, the “new woman” was metamorphosed in the 20s into the “flapper.” Uncorsetted, and flouting her short skirts and boyishly bobbed hair, this “breezy, slangy, informal” creature raced about in cars, drank and smoked openly, wore make-up, and danced the Charleston till all hours. The terrain of emancipation was thus shifted from formal politics and the economy to sex, without any acknowledgement that the touted sexual revolution was largely enacted on male terms and in a pre-contraceptive culture. This trans-formation of the image of the “New Woman” also served to hide the continued existence of social barriers to the equality of women while at the same time deflected attention from the actual political struggles in which women were engaged. In fact, women became politically involved at the national, political, provincial, municipal, and international level, as well as in the politics of political parties, labour unions, churches, and communities. There was a “generation gap” between the feminists who came to maturity before the First World War and the young women seeking self-liberation in the post-war world. But some of that gap was a media fabrication, as many women, young as well as middle-aged, continued the struggle for women’s rights into the 1920s and 30s.” See also McLaren and McLaren, The Bedroom and the State, Appendix.

⁷¹ Thelma McCormack, Politics and the Hidden Injuries of Gender: Feminism and the Making of the Welfare State, The CRIAW Papers, No. 28. (Ottawa: CRIAW, 1991) 1.

⁷² McCormack, 1.

core of women's political experience and has been important in the way they have envisioned the welfare state.⁷³

McCormack also distinguished between "the welfare state" (an economic and male perspective that "refers to deficit financing *cum* Keynes and various systems of insurance which provide stability to a market economy that is prone to crises") and "the welfare society" (a female definition that "reflects women's experience as cradle-to-grave caregivers, and their unpaid or underpaid work outside the competitive, profit-driven market economy").⁷⁴ She argued that while the welfare state brought some relief to the impoverished, it has failed miserably in terms of empowering women more generally.

Conclusion

This brief presentation of the main arguments that trigger academic debate on gender role in enlarging citizenship, particularly maternalist claims, shows how difficult it is to establish a cohesive narrative. The Canadian context offers a wide variety of cases, including the Québec one, which is treated separately in the appendice, since I did not want to include too many results of my own studies into this report. Historically, I will contend that all four strategies used by diverse feminist movements in different time and space had been established on the construction of gendered political identities, which were produced and build upon sex differences. For those associations, gender difference mattered and was not seen as an anthropological stable variable (invariant) or natural biological factor but as a social construction that those associations helped in forging, historically meaningful in those years of economic depression and political operational, as it contributed to some of the most important fixtures of protective legislation to come in Canada.

So the debate over whether they were legitimate feminists seems odd and passé (whether equality claims (which later became sameness) were the only tool to provide full access to women in politics; whereas the old differentialist claim had been dismissed as promoting more of the same discrimination against women, using essentialist arguments as well as protective ones.) It seems to me that maternalist claims were at the time feminist stances.

For me, the political integration these many strands of feminist associations demanded had been a successful one. It broadened the citizenship and gave democratic participation a new meaningful aspect. Feminists' redefinitions of democracies has also been an important stake in this history: we discover now that the maternalist ties to the welfare state were not that negative,

⁷³ McCormack, 2.

⁷⁴ McCormack, 3.

now that we have to confront market driven economies, with no compassionate state to care for the poorest...

More to the general point, it seems to me that the equality claim, within both the liberal or the marxist traditions, was a major force of change throughout the last century : for women, it helped them enter the citizenship building process, from which they were and still are overall excluded. If this is well known, what this historical perspective shows (I hope) is that the means used by feminist associations to voice their claims and obtain some gains were and still are mostly based on gender specific issues . So we should stop using dichotomized categories (as Joan Scott already showed long time ago, it seems..), equality and difference, community and citizenship for a better understanding of democratic processes. Now it remains to be seen were the claim for equality for every individual advocated by contemporary feminist theorists will lead us?

Do women then gain individual rights and loose collective representation (and solidarity, or reciprocity)? This is what is at stake in these ongoing debates : women want to be considered as equal individuals, without having to refer to the state or any other superior morality (be it feminism) or quality (entitlement) to behave as they want, vote as they like, raise their children the way they want. Isn't that what happens in the parité debate, as it centers on the individual right to vote and to be elected, and builds on sex difference to have women participating equally...

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L'EXCLUSION POLITIQUE ET JURIDIQUE DES FEMMES

Perspectives québécoises sur les femmes et la citoyenneté

I- Historiographie: Le droit de vote et les associations

A. Le droit de vote

En 1983, Marie Lavigne et Yolande Pinard affirmaient qu'on a mis trop souvent l'accent sur la lutte pour le suffrage. Ce courant historiographique polarise exagérément l'attention sur le rôle de quelques individus:

On a un peu trop rapidement assimilé les victoires féministes aux seules pressions exercées par une petite poignée de militantes bourgeoises et par leurs associations. D'autre part, l'action politique des femmes ne semble être reconnue que dans la mesure où elle est reliée aux luttes menées pour l'obtention de droits égaux, du suffrage principalement. Comme l'a déjà dit souligné Gerda Lerner⁷⁵ pour les Etats-Unis, une définition aussi étroite de l'activité politique des femmes ne permet pas de cerner et de comprendre tous les aspects de leur engagement dans la vie communautaire, y compris comme membres de la famille. Elle ne rend pas compte non plus de la nature et de la forme spécifique de leurs luttes politiques ou de leur participation aux réseaux informels du pouvoir⁷⁶.

Francine Fournier dira pour sa part:

Les études historiques qui décrivent et situent les luttes spécifiques des femmes pour l'obtention du droit de vote conservent, malgré le risque d'isoler ces événements de l'ensemble des réalités sociales de l'époque, une importance fondamentale (...) Mais l'on est bien forcé de constater qu'en se limitant à ces seuls événements, l'analyse, par définition, porte sur un groupe restreint de femmes, celui d'une poignée de militantes issues de la classe bourgeoise et reflétant, même dans l'opposition, les valeurs et les préoccupations de celle-ci. Il n'est pas facile d'élargir la réflexion à partir du peu de données recueillies et répertoriées portant sur les «autres» femmes⁷⁷.

B. Les associations

Lavigne et Pinard diront encore que:

...la naissance du mouvement féministe à l'aube du 20e siècle s'enracine dans une tradition d'intervention collective qui a souvent revêtu une forme organisée. Or,

⁷⁵ Gerda Lerner, *The Majority Finds Its Past. Placing Women in History*, NY, Oxford University Press, 1981.

⁷⁶ Marie Lavigne et Yolande Pinard, "Travail et mouvement des femmes: une histoire visible" in Marie Lavigne et Yolande Pinard, dir., *Travailleuses et féministes: Les femmes dans la société québécoise*, Montréal, Boréal Express, 1983 (1977), p. 35.

⁷⁷ Francine Fournier, "Les femmes dans la vie politique au Québec" in Marie Lavigne et Yolande Pinard, op. cit., p. 338.

nous ne connaissons que des bribes de cette histoire. On n'a pas encore enregistré de protestations, du moins ouvertes, face au retrait du droit de vote ou à l'adoption du Code civil en 1866. La synthèse du Collectif Clio trace un bilan de cette période qui représente néanmoins un secteur sous-développé de la recherche⁷⁸.

II- L'exclusion des femmes

Diane Lamoureux mentionne que "c'est par l'élargissement du droit de vote à des catégories sociales qui en avaient a priori été exclues que se distingue la démocratie moderne⁷⁹." Mais les sociétés humaines n'ont pas su se doter de règles de fonctionnement politique qui soient véritablement inclusives. "La démocratie moderne née des révolutions anglaise, américaine et française s'est fort bien accommodée de l'esclavage et de l'exclusion des femmes et des non-possédants⁸⁰."

Quant à Chantal Maillé, elle dit: "Les conceptions culturelles des rôles sociaux de sexe ont servi dans l'Histoire à exclure l'ensemble des femmes de l'espace politique⁸¹". Les femmes émergent d'une culture politique d'exclusion. Elle ajoute:

Pour toute une école d'auteurs, c'est la question du suffrage qui a servi de leitmotiv à la création des premières organisations féministes au cours de ce siècle (...) L'inclusion des femmes dans la définition du concept de citoyenneté devient une revendication défendable et fournira à des femmes un pôle idéologique de mobilisation⁸².

III- Brève chronologie de l'extension du droit de vote aux femmes

(chronologie succincte des mesures législatives concernant les droits politiques et civils des femmes au Canada et surtout du Québec).

A. De 1791 à 1839:

Par l'Acte constitutionnel de 1791, l'Empire promet la création d'une Chambre d'assemblée élue pour satisfaire les revendications des immigrants britanniques et faire croire à une consultation chez les Canadiens⁸³.

⁷⁸ Marie Lavinge et Yolande Pinard, "Travail et mouvement...", p. 34.

⁷⁹ Diane Lamoureux, Citoyennes? Femmes, droit de vote et démocratie, Montréal, Ed. du remue-ménage, 1989, p. 9.

⁸⁰ Ibid., p. 10.

⁸¹ Chantal Maillé, Les Québécoises et la conquête du pouvoir politique, Montréal, Ed. Albert Saint-Martin, 1990, p. 7.

⁸² Ibid., p. 18.

⁸³ Denis Laforte et André Bernard, La législation électorale au Québec, 1790-1967, Montréal, Ed. Ste-marie, 1969, p. 20.

Les premières élections se déroulent en **1792**. On y participe par le biais d'un système électoral censitaire. Mais jusqu'en **1848**, date de l'obtention du gouvernement responsable, le droit de vote donne peu de pouvoir à la population.

Tous les sujets britanniques de 21 ans et plus, s'ils remplissent les conditions matérielles du système électoral censitaire, peuvent voter. L'acte ne comporte aucune mention particulière quant à l'exclusion des femmes. Il faut posséder une terre d'une certaine valeur ou être locataire et payer au moins 10 livres sterling de location par an.

Et les revendications des femmes à cette période?

Les femmes ne semblent pas s'être exprimées sur la question de leurs droits politiques. Quoique le livre de la féministe Mary Wollstonecraft, **Une réforme des droits des femmes**, publié en 1792, ait été lu par quelques individus, le contenu de ce livre reste inconnu de la grande majorité des citoyennes du Bas-Canada⁸⁴.

Pour le Collectif Clio, le XIXe siècle débute par l'exclusion des femmes de la politique plus par habitude que par des interdictions formelles. En fait, la femme est la reine du foyer et l'ange gardien des valeurs familiales ce qui rend quasi-impossible toute participation directe au processus politique⁸⁵.

Toutefois, Francine Fournier et John Garner nous révèlent que nombre de femmes ont exercé leur droit de vote dès le début du XIXe siècle⁸⁶. De toutes les colonies, c'est au Québec que les femmes ont le plus exercé ce droit⁸⁷. Phénomène tout à fait contraire à la situation qui prévalait en Grande-Bretagne où les femmes ne votent pas malgré l'absence d'une restriction légale formelle à ce sujet⁸⁸. Mais la vie est difficile dans les colonies. Les femmes comme les hommes se serrent les coudes dans tous les domaines. Pour Garner: "It is this full partnership in every aspect of frontier life that makes it surprising that women were not granted and did not demand political equality⁸⁹".

En **1834**, une nouvelle loi électorale retire le droit de vote aux femmes mariées par une mesure très efficace. On exige maintenant que tout électeur possède en bien propre les propriétés sur lesquelles s'établit le cens.

⁸⁴ Collectif Clio, L'histoire des femmes au Québec depuis quatre siècles, Montréal, Ed. Le Jour, 1992 (1982), p. 142.

⁸⁵ Ibid., p. 142 et 164.

⁸⁶ John Garner et Francine Fournier nous donnent les exemples de la mère de Louis-Joseph Papineau qui vote pour son fils en 1809. Il y a également l'élection de 1820 où 22 femmes mariées votèrent en utilisant les mêmes titres de propriété que leur maris. Francine Fournier, op. cit., p. 340 et John Garner, The Franchise and Politics in British North America, 1755-1867, Toronto, University of Toronto Press, 1969, p. 157.

⁸⁷ John Garner, op. cit., p. 157.

⁸⁸ Ibid., p. 156.

⁸⁹ Ibid., p. 159.

De toutes les colonies britanniques en Amérique du Nord, les femmes du Bas-Canada ont été les premières à être officiellement exclues du droit de suffrage par cette mesure. Par la suite, ce sera l'Île-du-Prince-Édouard en **1836**, le Nouveau-Brunswick en **1843**, la province du Canada en **1849** et la Nouvelle-Écosse en **1851**. "In one colony only, Upper Canada, was the franchise never legally closed to women"⁹⁰.

Il n'y a pour ainsi dire pas de protestation de la part des femmes. Une des raisons évoquées par le Collectif Clio est que la Coutume de Paris en vigueur au Bas-Canada, contrairement au Common Law qui régit la vie des Américaines et des femmes des Maritimes et du Haut-Canada, ne fait pas disparaître l'existence légale de l'épouse au moment du mariage.

B. De 1840 à 1866

Avec l'Acte d'Union de **1840**, la femme perd un droit civil important avec l'abolition du douaire de la Coutume de Paris qui protégeait la veuve de la dépossession de certains biens de son défunt mari même s'ils ont été vendus ou hypothéqués. Le motif indiqué par les membres de l'Assemblée est que cette mesure complexifie énormément la spéculation immobilière et qu'elle entrave la libre circulation du capital.

Après avoir accordé le gouvernement responsable à la province du Canada en **1848**, une loi électorale vient retirer tout droit de vote aux femmes en **1849**:

...on ne peut douter que dans l'esprit conservateur l'élément féminin était non seulement un inconnu, mais aussi un facteur éventuel de perturbation sociale par une trop grande émancipation⁹¹.

Le Collectif mentionne que l'historienne Catherine L. Cleverdon⁹² a formulé l'hypothèse qu'un tel retrait a peut-être été influencé par la rencontre de **1848** à Seneca Falls aux États-Unis où les féministes réclamèrent officiellement le droit de vote⁹³.

L'abolition du droit de douaire est davantage précisée en **1866** par l'annulation de la Coutume de Paris et par l'instauration d'un Code civil qui ne change rien aux droits des femmes: "Les épouses demeurent régies par le principe de l'incapacité juridique pendant leur mariage⁹⁴". Il n'y a aucune trace de critique à propos de la confirmation du statut subordonné de la femme.

C. De 1867 à 1940

⁹⁰ John Garner, op. cit., p. 155.

⁹¹ Denis Laforte et André Bernard, La législation électorale au Québec, 1790-1967, Montréal, Ed. Ste-marie, 1969, p. 70.

⁹² Catherine Lyle Cleverdon, Woman Suffrage Movement in Canada, Toronto, University of Toronto Press, 1950.

⁹³ Collectif Clio, op. cit., p. 164.

⁹⁴ Ibid., p. 167.

Le suffrage féminin fait l'objet d'un véritable débat parlementaire en **1885** lorsque John A. MacDonald veut modifier la loi électorale. Il veut uniformiser le cens électoral à travers le pays. "Comme le projet de loi ne comportait aucune mention concernant le sexe des personnes satisfaisant aux critères censitaires, les femmes célibataires majeures et les veuves auraient pu voter⁹⁵." Le projet est rejeté devant les protestations qui sont soulevées.

Dans le courant des années **1890**, on voit une prolifération des associations de femmes. Il est à noter que ce n'est pas la première expression d'un mouvement organisé de femmes au Québec. Il a y eu les manifestations des «ménagères» contre le prix trop élevé du pain sous le régime français, la participation des femmes aux événements de **1837-1838** et aux oeuvres de charité laïques ou intégrées dans les communautés religieuses⁹⁶. De plus, durant une bonne partie du XIXe siècle, les femmes de la bourgeoisie participent activement au mouvement de réforme urbaine par le travail qu'elles accomplissent dans de multiples associations de bienfaisance⁹⁷.

Il n'en demeure pas moins qu'à la fin du XIXe siècle, "les femmes du Québec commencent à remettre en question leur statut politique et juridique⁹⁸". D'abord et avant tout par le biais des anglophones, un mouvement en faveur de l'obtention du droit de suffrage pour les femmes prend forme.

Pour Diane Lamoureux, on observe deux courants principaux qui permettent aux femmes d'expérimenter le phénomène de l'organisation publique. Il y a les ligues de tempérance qui font prendre de l'ampleur au mouvement des suffragettes. Elle se réfère à Wendy Mitchinson⁹⁹ qui a bien démontré que les ligues de tempérance défendaient une conception très traditionnelle des rôles sociaux de sexe car c'est au nom de leur fonction maternelle que ces femmes veulent préserver leur famille du fléau de l'alcool. Elles voulaient participer à la sphère publique parce qu'elles ne pouvaient compter sur les politiciens et l'électorat masculin pour entreprendre le combat contre l'alcool. Un deuxième courant qui:

«(...)Influencera durablement le suffragisme canadien, c'est le mouvement de réforme sociale qui est le fait de travailleuses sociales, des dames patronnesses, d'enseignantes et d'enseignants. Les membres de ce mouvement se proposaient de contrer les divers fléaux qui accompagnaient l'industrialisation et l'urbanisation».¹⁰⁰

⁹⁵ Diane Lamoureux, op. cit., p. 18.

⁹⁶ Collectif Clio, op. cit., pp. 135-236.

⁹⁷ Ibid., p. 342.

⁹⁸ Ibid., p. 168.

⁹⁹ Wendy Mitchinson, "The WCTU: «For God, Home, and Native Land»: A Study in Nineteenth-Century Feminism" in L. Kealy, dir., A Not Unreasonable Claim, Toronto, Women's Press, 1979.

¹⁰⁰ Diane Lamoureux, op. cit., p. 29.

Le droit de suffrage devient le moyen pour parvenir à la moralisation sociale. Encore une fois, on ne remet pas en question la conception traditionnelle des rôles sociaux, «(...)Ce n'est pas en tant qu'êtres humains mais en tant que mères que les femmes doivent voter».¹⁰¹

Le mouvement féministe suffragiste est donc, à ses débuts, "un ensemble d'organisations véhiculant divers types de préoccupations: l'organisation du travail, la famille, l'hygiène, l'éducation¹⁰²". Ces préoccupations prennent toute leur signification dans le contexte de l'industrialisation et de l'urbanisation. La ville est considérée comme étant un milieu de vie qu'on doit transformer par l'intermédiaire des oeuvres sociales, de l'hygiène et des équipements collectifs¹⁰³.

Plus précisément, il semble d'usage courant de faire remonter les débuts du mouvement suffragiste au Canada à la formation du Toronto Women's Literary Club en **1876** par Emily Howard Stowe, première femme médecin du Canada. L'organisation devient la Toronto Women's Suffrage Society en **1883**. Elle a comme objectif de promouvoir l'égalité des femmes au travail, leurs droits et de réorganiser le travail philanthropique. Il y aura par la suite la fondation du National Council of Women (NCWC) en **1893** par Lady Aberdeen, femme du Gouverneur général et fondatrice des Victorian Order of Nurses. Elle souhaite unifier les associations de femmes et séculariser le mouvement des femmes¹⁰⁴.

En **1902**, les francophones quittent le Montreal Local Council of Women, la branche montréalaise du NCWC, pour l'Association Saint-Jean-Baptiste fortement catholique et nationaliste. Geste qui va de pair avec la montée du sentiment nationaliste et l'impact grandissant de l'Eglise sur la société. En **1907**, la Fédération nationale Saint-Jean-Baptiste voit le jour avec à sa tête Caroline Béique et Marie Gérin-Lajoie:

Les 22 sociétés affiliées, totalisant quelques milliers de membres, se répartissent selon trois types d'oeuvres: soit les oeuvres surtout composées des associations de dames patronnesses déjà existantes, les oeuvres d'éducation, telles l'Association des femmes journalistes ou les écoles ménagères provinciales et enfin, les oeuvres économiques qui rassemblent des associations professionnelles pour l'amélioration de la situation des travailleuses¹⁰⁵.

¹⁰¹ Ibid., p. 29.

¹⁰² Chantal Mailé, op. cit., p. 27.

¹⁰³ Diane Lamoureux, op. cit., p. 64.

¹⁰⁴ Collectif Clio, op. cit., p. 343.

¹⁰⁵ Marie Lavigne, et al., "La Fédération nationale Saint-Jean-baptiste et les revendications féministes au début du 20e siècle" in Marie Lavigne et Yolnade Pinard, op. cit., p. 201.

Aussitôt, elles inscrivent à leur programme la réforme du Code civil pour redonner à la femme un statut juridique. La Montreal Suffrage Association voit le jour en **1912** grâce au travail de Carrie Derrick.

De **1916 à 1922**, les femmes obtiennent le droit de vote dans toutes les provinces, sauf au Québec et à Terre-Neuve. Pour Diane Lamoureux:

Cette évolution n'est pas la résultante de grandes actions, ni même de polémiques mémorables. L'impression qui domine est celle de la fatalité historique plutôt que la pression d'un mouvement suffragiste¹⁰⁶.

En **1917**, on accorde le droit de vote aux femmes de l'armée où à celles ayant un proche parent qui y participe. Et en **1918**, le gouvernement de Borden accorde définitivement le droit de vote aux femmes de 21 ans et plus qui répondent aux critères électoraux¹⁰⁷. La Première Guerre mondiale y est pour beaucoup. Elle a modifié substantiellement les relations sociales entre les sexes, estompant les frontières entre sphère publique et sphère privée. En vertu de leur participation à l'effort de guerre, les femmes ont donc assumé leur devoir de citoyenneté¹⁰⁸.

Respectivement, en **1921** et en **1927**, on met sur pied le Comité provincial du suffrage féminin et l'Alliance canadienne pour le vote des femmes du Québec. Le Comité sera l'expression des premières démarches en vue d'unir les efforts des féministes anglophones et francophones. Il est formé des anciennes de la Montreal Suffrage Association et des membres de la Fédération nationale de la Saint-Jean-Baptiste. A partir de **1927**, les efforts des suffragettes sont plus systématiques.

L'année suivante, les femmes voient leur entrée interdite au Sénat par un arrêt de la Cour suprême. Le Conseil privé de Londres renverse la décision de la Cour suprême et reconnaît que les femmes sont des «personnes» et statue qu'elles peuvent siéger au Sénat. On entreprend de ce pas les travaux de la commission Dorion en **1929** pour réformer le Code civil. Les associations féminines qui y présentent des mémoires sont: la Fédération nationale Saint-Jean-baptiste, l'Association des femmes propriétaires, l'Alliance canadienne pour le vote des femmes, la Ligue des droits de la femme et le Conseil local des femmes de Montréal. Elles veulent principalement le droit exclusif de gérer leur propre salaire. Il en découlera des modifications mineures en **1931**¹⁰⁹.

¹⁰⁶ Diane Lamoureux, op. cit., p. 16.

¹⁰⁷ Chantal Maillé, op. cit., p. 22.

¹⁰⁸ Diane Lamoureux, op. cit., p. 22.

¹⁰⁹ La femme mariée peut administrer et "même aliéner" le produit de son travail personnel. On simplifie la séparation de biens et on reconnaît la capacité juridique des femmes séparées de corps. Diane Lamoureux, op. cit., p. 90.

Après une multitude des projets avortés (1927, 1928, 1930, 1931, 1932, 1934, 1935, 1936, 1938 et 1939), le droit de vote est finalement accordé aux femmes du Québec en **1940**. Le clergé proteste vivement. Par exemple, le cardinal Villeneuve s'oppose au droit de vote pour les femmes:

1. Parce qu'il va à l'encontre de l'unité et de la hiérarchie familiale.
2. Parce que son exercice expose la femme à toutes les passions et à toutes les aventures de l'électoratisme.
3. Parce, en fait, il nous apparaît que la très grande majorité des femmes de la province ne le désire pas.
4. Parce que les réformes sociales, économiques, hygiéniques, etc., que l'on avance pour préconiser le droit de suffrage chez les femmes, peuvent être aussi bien obtenues grâce à l'influence des organisations féminines, en marge de la politique¹¹⁰. (communiqué émis le 1^{er} mars 1940)

La loi est tout de même sanctionnée le **25 avril 1940**.

Chantal Maillé indique que, de **1921 à 1940**, les Québécoises, contrairement à la croyance populaire, ont participé fortement au vote fédéral. Elles sont loin d'être si apolitisées qu'on ne le dit. Cependant, le vote au fédéral ne sert pas leur cause car les:

...opposants faisaient une distinction nette entre le vote fédéral et le vote provincial, la participation des femmes québécoises au vote fédéral étant vue comme un moyen possible de contourner les effets pervers du vote féminin des autres provinces (non catholiques), alors que le vote sur le territoire provincial devait rester une chasse gardée masculine¹¹¹.

Il faut par ailleurs noter que les féministes québécoises ont été relativement peu présentes dans les campagnes suffragistes à l'échelle canadienne; seule la Montreal Suffrage Association s'en est mêlé.

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¹¹⁰ Collectif Clio, op. cit. p. 363-364.

¹¹¹ Chantal Maillé, op. cit., p. 39.

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