

“Holding Fast on the Tiller:

Neo-liberalism, Community Based Advocacy and the Gander Women’s Centre”

by

Elaine Marie Condon, BA., BSW.

A Thesis submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research
in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of
Master of Social Work

School of Social Work
Carleton University
Ottawa, Ontario

November, 2006

© Copyright
2006, Elaine Marie Condon



Library and
Archives Canada

Bibliothèque et
Archives Canada

Published Heritage
Branch

Direction du
Patrimoine de l'édition

395 Wellington Street
Ottawa ON K1A 0N4
Canada

395, rue Wellington
Ottawa ON K1A 0N4
Canada

Your file *Votre référence*
ISBN: 978-0-494-23366-5
Our file *Notre référence*
ISBN: 978-0-494-23366-5

NOTICE:

The author has granted a non-exclusive license allowing Library and Archives Canada to reproduce, publish, archive, preserve, conserve, communicate to the public by telecommunication or on the Internet, loan, distribute and sell theses worldwide, for commercial or non-commercial purposes, in microform, paper, electronic and/or any other formats.

The author retains copyright ownership and moral rights in this thesis. Neither the thesis nor substantial extracts from it may be printed or otherwise reproduced without the author's permission.

AVIS:

L'auteur a accordé une licence non exclusive permettant à la Bibliothèque et Archives Canada de reproduire, publier, archiver, sauvegarder, conserver, transmettre au public par télécommunication ou par l'Internet, prêter, distribuer et vendre des thèses partout dans le monde, à des fins commerciales ou autres, sur support microforme, papier, électronique et/ou autres formats.

L'auteur conserve la propriété du droit d'auteur et des droits moraux qui protègent cette thèse. Ni la thèse ni des extraits substantiels de celle-ci ne doivent être imprimés ou autrement reproduits sans son autorisation.

In compliance with the Canadian Privacy Act some supporting forms may have been removed from this thesis.

Conformément à la loi canadienne sur la protection de la vie privée, quelques formulaires secondaires ont été enlevés de cette thèse.

While these forms may be included in the document page count, their removal does not represent any loss of content from the thesis.

Bien que ces formulaires aient inclus dans la pagination, il n'y aura aucun contenu manquant.


Canada

Abstract

Changes to how neo-liberal governments fund community-based organizations are said to diminish autonomy and result in the state harnessing the energy of the voluntary sector to meet a state/market agenda. This study considers the possibilities for community-based advocacy groups to achieve social justice within neo-liberalism. The case study method is used to examine the experiences of the Gander Women's Centre, a community-based feminist organization, in Gander, Newfoundland and Labrador. The issues faced by this group to retain autonomy and political relevancy are considered through a critical political economy framework. The findings suggest that the framework can help to inform and expand how organizations may respond to the changing relationship between the voluntary sector and the state.

Acknowledgment

There is joy in the achievement of this thesis and also in the reflection on the tremendous support that I received from so many people along the way. There is not enough space for me to list each one individually, so instead I offer a sincere thank you to everyone, who each in their own way encouraged me to take this on, and helped me to see it through.

My most important support came from my three children who, each in their own way, made it possible for me to leave them behind and embark on this journey. My love and gratitude go to, Brendan, Allison, and Patrick, all three of whom believed in my ability and their own resilience.

I cannot imagine that any Master's student ever received more support from a thesis supervisor than I did from Dr. Patricia Evans. Dr. Evans shared her immense knowledge to guide and critique my research, her endless patience with my questions, insecurities, rewrites, and edits, and her warmth and gentleness in responding to my continuing needs. I am so fortunate to have had the opportunity to work with this phenomenal academic and woman who has influenced forever my perception of myself and my way of seeing the world. Thank you also to my second reader, Therese Jennissen for sharing her knowledge and time, I only wish I had met her sooner.

Thank you also to the eight wonderful women who were my key informants, for sharing their knowledge, insights, frustrations, and dreams, and the Gender Women's Centre for the years of connection and the opportunities to meet the many women whose life stories always encourage me to keep looking for another way.

The Staff and Faculty at Carleton University have been fabulous to work with and learn from and I thank all of them for allowing me to feel at home.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Chapter I- INTRODUCTION

Introduction	1
Organization of the Thesis	5
Implications for Social Work	7

Chapter II - LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction	9
Organizational literature	9
Framework literature	24
Conclusion	32

Chapter III - METHODOLOGY

Introduction	33
Choosing a Methodology	33
Case Study Method	34
Data Collection	36
Strengths and Limitations	41
Reflexivity	42
Ethics	45
Conclusion	46

Chapter IV - THE ORGANIZATION

Introduction	47
Early Years 1983 - 1994	47
1995 - 2005 - Caught in a Current of Reform	53
Movement: Membership and Networks	66
Conclusion	68

Chapter V - KEY INFORMANT INTERVIEWS

Introduction	70
Who are my key informants?	71
What did they say?	72

Is the GWC setting its own course?	85
Conclusion	87
Chapter VI - DISCUSSION	
Introduction	88
The Case Study and the Organizational Literature	89
The Case Study and the Framework Literature	101
Conclusion	106
Chapter VII - CONCLUSION	109
EPILOGUE	116
REFERENCES	119
APPENDIX	125

Chapter I: INTRODUCTION

Introduction

Some of the owner men were kind because they hated what they had to do, and some of them were angry because they hated to be cruel, and some of them were cold because they had long ago found that one could not be an owner unless one was cold. And all of them were caught in something larger than themselves.

(Steinbeck, 1939, p.41)

In chapter five of John Steinbeck's, *The Grapes of Wrath* the farmers are discussing the foreclosures of their mortgages by 'the Bank'. Their frustration is partly with the fact that 'the Bank' does not exist in any real way that allows them an avenue to influence the course of events. The bank, although created by men has taken on a life of its own. The same quandary exists for community-based advocacy groups and the social justice community with the "foreclosure" of our welfare state. The state machinery, like the bank, seems to have been increasingly distanced from the ownership and influence of community. Canadian democracy and the configuration of the welfare state, created to reflect the values of citizens, seems to be driven by forces beyond our control. The processes for citizen involvement and input have been eroded, and the social justice movement struggles for legitimacy within itself and within policy discussions (McKeen, 2004; Conway, 2000; McKeen & Porter, 2004; Graefe, 2001; Gill & Theriault, 2003; Jenson & Saint-Martin, 2003; Martin, 2001; & Richmond & Shields, 2004).

The question posed in this thesis is: How can community-based advocacy groups

contribute to the rekindling of a social justice¹ agenda within our present neoliberal² paradigm?

Neo-liberalism is about more than a loss of national standards and diminishing social services; it is also about a change in the role of citizens and the relationship between citizens and government (Jenson & Saint-Martin, 2003). The reconfiguring of the relationship between ourselves and government processes has left only a facade of citizen participation and minimized the ability of people and communities to influence social policy and bring about social change.

This thesis considers the experiences of one community-based advocacy group in relation to what the literature suggests has been the experiences of the community sector as a whole across Canada. The Gander Women's Centre (GWC) is a community-based feminist organization in a small rural community in central Newfoundland and Labrador. It has been in place since 1985, continually struggling to survive and meet its goals to provide emotional and physical support to women in the region, and enhance gender equality. The GWC was born at a time that the women's agenda was strong both in government and in the community. It sprang to life within a vibrant national and provincial women's movement, led by the National Action Committee on the Status of Women, the Canadian Advisory Council on the Status of Women,

¹Social Justice, within the context of my analysis is understood as a belief in the right and capacity of all people to direct decision-making processes to achieve an equitable distribution (redistribution) of wealth, resources and power to meet the social, political, cultural, ecological and economic well being of all communities and society.(Reisch, 2002; Gindin, 2002a, 2002b)

²For purposes of this thesis the term neoliberal is defined as a political and economic ideology encompassing the following ideas about the state, the market and citizens: "it is based on rule of the market - liberating 'free' enterprise or private enterprise from any bonds imposed by government (the state) no matter how much social damage this causes." (Martinez, 2000, p. 2) It includes greater openness to free trade, reduction of workers rights and benefits and no price controls. It is based on the total freedom of movement of capital, goods and services; the state focus is on cutting public expenditures on social services including health, education, the safety net, and infrastructure. The state also supports the market by reducing government regulation of everything that could diminish profits and it sells state-owned enterprises, goods and services to private investors; "the concept of community is replaced with individual responsibility, [all people are pressured] to find solutions to there lack of health care, education and social security, [and are blamed] if they fail." (Martinez, 2000, p. 2)

and the Provincial Advisory Council - Newfoundland and Labrador.

My thesis examines the GWC and provides an in-depth analysis of this organization's struggles, strategies and choices in relation to its efforts to maintain autonomy and political relevancy within a neoliberal framework of social justice. The GWC has coped with the disappearance of federal core funding, the loss of federal support for the women's movement and the downloading of provincial government services. It has struggled with issues of membership and leadership and with trying to create and keep a place within public policy discussions.

Despite it all, this small group seems to have managed to balance service delivery and social justice work and been somewhat successful in keeping its voice within the policy debate. The group has been part of the process that brought victim services, family justice services and Cara Transition House to the central Newfoundland region. It has had success at the provincial level in increasing women's access to legal aid and the justice system. On the national level it has played an important role in affecting changes to the administration of, and victims rights within, parole. This group provides an important case study because it illustrates how one small group has experienced the current neo-liberal approach to social justice and the nature of its struggles to hold on to its advocacy agenda.

My hope in conducting this research was to accomplish two goals. First, through an examination of this case study and the academic literature to identify for the GWC, itself, and other groups, the strategies that have been effective in holding fast to autonomy, on a course toward social justice. My second goal was to gain the knowledge and language to articulate what was happening to social justice within our present political and economic system. Through this I hoped to rekindle a sense of optimism that groups with enough diligent effort can continue to

move forward with a social justice agenda, even within the confines of neo-liberalism.

I have chosen a critical political economy (CPE) framework as the theoretical approach through which I will examine the issues and focus my discussion. CPE considers the interrelationships among the various facets of society, and is grounded in the belief that the social, political and cultural aspects are organized to support the accumulation of wealth. One of the tenets of CPE is that the state organizes our collective values to create systems and processes that affirm the right of accumulation. This is particularly important to my study as the foundation of neo-liberal discourse is that the state has no other choice; cuts to services, diminished citizen rights and lower national standards are pre-ordained by globalization. CPE provides the tools for an important alternative analysis, important because in realizing that decisions are taken by choice, we can begin to believe there is a possibility for change. This theoretical approach is informed by the themes identified in the literature which examine community organizations in the context of neo-liberalism. These include the impact of new funding mechanisms on the ability of community-based organizations to continue a commitment to their objectives, including advocacy. The GWC is used as a case study to assess the extent to which it may reflect these, and other, aspects of the changing political and economic environment.

Once again, in the words of John Steinbeck: “The bank is something else than men. It happens that every man in a bank hates what the bank does, and yet the bank does it. The bank is something more than men, I tell you. It’s a monster. Men made it, but they can’t control it” (1939, p. 43).

Organization of the Thesis

This thesis includes six chapters, a conclusion and an epilogue. Chapter II is a review of related literature, discussed in two parts. The first part presents the organizational literature on which I drew to gain a broad understanding of the impact, for the volunteer sector, of neo-liberal economic and political governing practices. This literature provided the basis for identifying themes common within the experience of the community sector. These themes form the core of the examination of my case study. The second part reviews the literature related to the framework and considers how key concepts of the welfare state, neo-liberalism and social justice are defined through a critical political economy perspective. I conclude this chapter with analysis of the compatibility of neo-liberalism and social justice, within a CPE framework.

Chapter III describes the methodology used in this research. I describe the case study method and explore its appropriateness for this project. I consider the strengths and limitations of this method in general and for this particular case, and address my connection to the group through an examination of reflexivity. I also give details of my approach to the document review and selection of key informants. The chapter concludes with a consideration of ethical issues related to the research.

Chapter IV is an analysis of the organization's documents. Using the information drawn from the documents I begin by presenting the early history of the GWC. The core of this chapter is an examination of the years 1995 -2005, the years that are the focus of my study. I use the information from the documents to present a picture of the organization's struggles, issues and achievements, and discuss them in relation to the themes drawn from the literature. The main

purpose of this chapter is to present an analysis of the documents that enabled me to consider whether and how the GWC has managed to remain autonomous within neo-liberalism.

Chapter V is an analysis of the key informant interviews. The purpose of this chapter is to present the mission, role, successes and challenges of the GWC as reflected in the opinions and analysis of the eight key informants. I also consider the information from the interviews in relation to the themes and issues drawn from the documents. This chapter serves to complete, and bring to life, the recorded history of the GWC.

Chapter VI is the discussion chapter. In this chapter I consider what has been learned about the GWC from the document review and key informant interviews, in relation to the themes drawn from the literature. This chapter is also presented in two sections. In the first section I discuss the organizational literature, and in the second on the framework literature. I conclude with some analysis of how the literature and the framework can be drawn together to create an analysis that gives some sense of possibility to the social justice community.

Chapter VII is my conclusion. During the days immediately prior to writing this chapter I had several chance experiences which collectively suggested and helped me craft an answer to my research question. In this chapter I consider those chance experiences within the knowledge and ideas considered throughout this process. I conclude with some practical suggestions and challenges to the social justice community to take a risk.

I complete my thesis with a short epilogue. As I was finalizing the discussion chapter I was still struggling with whether CPE was, the 'right' framework. In the midst of all that I had come to learn and understand, and trying to remain positive about the future, two very serious events occurred within a few days of each other that have further compromised the ability of

women's groups to work within neo-liberalism. While I do not deal in detail with the events themselves or with what they might mean, I felt it was necessary to include them. It likely begins the writing of the next chapter in the story of the GWC, the women's movement, and social justice in Canada as a whole.

Implications for Social Work

What might this thesis contribute to social work practice and research? The social work Code of Ethics identifies as its second core value as the pursuit of social justice. The statement begins "Social workers believe in the obligation of people, individually and collectively, to provide resources, services and opportunities for the overall benefit of humanity..." (Code of Ethics, 2005). The principles related to this value include the rights of people to resources to meet their needs. It is hard to imagine how social workers can live up to this value and principle within our present system. It is very difficult to practice social work within an era of social exclusion, victim blaming, and deteriorating services and supports.

The issues that are addressed in this study as affecting social justice groups are issues for the social work profession. Not only are their own programs and services being reconfigured, but the partners within communities on whom many would draw for support are experiencing the same overwork and uncertainty. It is becoming increasingly difficult to believe that the way we work is based on a respect for the inherent dignity and worth of persons, as decisions about the programs we work within are increasingly based on economics and result in minimizing social exclusion, rather than confirming and enhancing the rights of citizens.

Dominelli (1999, p.20) suggests that faced with the reality of neo-liberalism social

workers respond in one of three ways: accommodation, escapism, and resistance. I hope that this research provides a basis for discussion to assist social workers in avoiding escapism and accommodation and affirming the need to creatively and collectively develop ways to resist the forces that challenge the core values of the profession. So that unlike the farmers, we do not have to pack up our beliefs and move to accept an alternative, and less just, way of organizing our economy and society. And unlike the agents of the bank we do not end up enforcing processes that we can not support; that we hate or make us cold.

Chapter II: LITERATURE REVIEW

The future belongs to the people who prepare for it.
Malcolm X

Introduction

This chapter presents a review of the literature that identifies the specific changes in political and economic ideology within the move to the right and neo-liberalism, and the effects of those changes on the ability of community-based advocacy groups to work toward social justice. The first section, the organizational literature, was used to help me gain a broad understanding of the issues and their impact for the volunteer sector, in general, and for society as a whole. Based on this literature, I identified key themes and issues which I later explore through my case study. The second section reviews the literature related to my framework, which is understood as critical political economy. This literature provided the critical interpretation that helped me to reflect on the work of the GWC in relation to the broader context of social justice. It also provided the perspective through which I framed my analysis in relation to the central question of whether or how social justice is achievable within neo-liberal ideology.

Organizational literature

Shifting political ideology:

Generally, in social policy literature, the welfare state is examined through, and discussed within the tensions created by relationships between, and the balance of rights and responsibilities of the state, the market and the people. Broadly, the welfare state is examined within the context of the provision of services to support needs related to health, education,

income support and maintenance, and an array of other social services (see Olsen, 2002; Pierson, 1998; Esping-Anderson, 2002 and 1990).

Olsen writes that:

In the twenty-five years following the Second World War, it was largely the traditional social democratic outlook that defined the prevailing orthodoxy on advanced capitalism and the welfare state... from the late 1960s onward [the welfare state] came under increasing challenge from both the right and the left (p 38).

As a result of these challenges, the predominant models of government in Canada, federally and provincially, have shifted from a liberal/social democratic model to a decidedly liberal model. “Because [the intent is] to revive in extreme form the economic policies of nineteenth-century liberalism, which argued against government interference in the market, it has come to be known as neoliberalism”(Phillips, 2003, p. 3).

In keeping with this ideological shift, our federal government has transferred much of its responsibility to the provinces and the market; the provinces, in turn, have shifted responsibility for delivery of social programs onto the people, through the community sector. An example of this is evidenced in the change from the CAP (Canada Assistance Plan) to the CHST (Canada Health and Social Transfer), and then to the CST (Canada Social Transfer), and how this change filtered down to the community. Provinces were given new authority in relation to social spending and new responsibility to meet provincial needs. The market has been given access to sectors of the state that had previously been considered legitimate functions of the state, and some that were protected by national standards and guidelines. The market now has the right to

sell to the government or people, services heretofore provided by the state. There are striking examples of this in all sectors of the state, including the contracting out of food services in health care institutions, the establishment of private health care clinics and the devolution of airports. And finally, the community has been charged with the responsibility of providing many services that the state and market no longer believe to be legitimate for the state or financially expedient for the market. Health care and education are delivered by government appointed volunteer boards which are given responsibility but little power. That the state actively pursues alternative mechanisms (ie community based, voluntary groups and for-profit enterprises) to deliver services is part of the neoliberal offensive (Shields & Evans, cited in Graefe, 2001, p 41; Scott, K., 2003; McKeen, 2004; McKeen and Porter 2004).

The change in how the state envisions its role vis-a-vis the enhancement of social justice and the redistribution of wealth and influence has been extensively examined and documented within the academic literature. I have selected several key themes, drawn from this literature, that influence the goals and the role of community-based advocacy groups, like the GWC, as they respond to and work within the changing role of the federal state.

Social Exclusion:

Jenson & Saint-Martin (2003) note the presence of an overall shift in the state's philosophy of citizenship, from a social rights regime to a social investment regime. According to these authors, social rights regimes give people a measure of rights by virtue of citizenship. A portion of state spending is to meet citizens' immediate needs. In this regard, the state spends in relation to life risks encountered by citizens: sickness, unemployment, old age and also to meet

the needs of non-participants in the work force. In this regime, the business of the state is to ensure a functioning economy to provide jobs, redistribute income and construct social policies that advance an equality agenda, including human, worker and women's rights. While complete equality has never been envisioned, the state had an important role in buffering its citizens from the worst effects of market forces. In contrast, the social investment state is focussed on the future, rights are connected with the ability to be productive in the labour market, government invests in human resources to build a secure future connected to the labour market. Current expenditures, such as investing in children, are viewed as necessary for future pay offs. Social policy is to work against the exclusion of those who cannot gain access to the labour market, rather than in favour of equality or with much concern for those whose labour market participation is not an issue. Government spending is targeted to specific populations at risk of exclusion, in part because there is a fear that people in the margins may be a threat to social cohesion. That means that a minimum level of basic needs are met, to ensure that economic, political and social systems are supported, or at least unencumbered, as they function in the interest of optimum accumulation of wealth by a few. Programs and services are not intended to enhance equality. This conceptualization of citizenship rights, which is embraced by neo-liberal philosophy, creates significant issues for social justice in Canada.

This ideological shift is perhaps clearest in regard to the provision of income assistance to the unemployed workers. We have seen government programs move from a basis of right to benefits (entitlement) to responsibilities and obligations on the part of the recipient. Increasingly, social assistance benefits are provided within programs of 'workfare' and 'learnfare', in which participants/recipients are obliged to participate in work or training in order to receive benefits.

The premise of this approach is that individuals, not economic or social structures, are responsible for their own position and that something is missing or wrong within the individual that needs to be enhanced or fixed so that person can become independent of government support. Although the programs are couched in terms of investment in the future, and long terms benefits for the individual and society, ... they became highly politicized programs to blame the poor (Lightman, 2003). Success in blaming the poor, or the otherwise marginalized, for their circumstances succeeds in achieving societal acceptance of least government intervention.

Dominelli (1999) suggests that, within the new global economy, discussions of social exclusion are generally limited in definition to the inability to secure an adequate income. She suggests that the definition should “include a dimension which is about the exercise of citizenship rights and the capacity to participate in decision-making processes that affect an individual’s life”(p. 17).

In the context of dwindling resources, as promoted by neo-liberal rhetoric, an effect has been the reduction of people’s expectations of state assistance with their problems and the increased likelihood that private troubles will remain as private and out of the public domain (Dominelli, 1999, p.18). As people are convinced that the state cannot afford to meet their needs, they stop asking and expecting, drawing less on social structures and social inclusion is diminished even further.

The rights of citizens, then, are compromised on several levels. First, because the state only considers a minimal level of basic need, second, because social inclusion only considers economic need and not social participation, and third because citizens’ expectations of the state are reduced. The shift in ideology then becomes self perpetuating. Marginalized individual and

groups are told they deserve less, they demand and expect less, and the essence of the diminishing rights of citizenship is not challenged because overall social participation in community and politics is reduced.

As Dominelli suggests “imposing market discipline on the welfare state, has radically altered both [the] social organization and its value base (1999, p.18). The state’s definition of basic rights is limited, the ability of citizens to participate in decision making is limited, and critique is further limited by acceptance.

The volunteer sector has also experienced a similar metamorphosis. As governments withdraw from providing direct services to the public, the voluntary sector has begun to offer these services either because their funding is now tied to service delivery or because they are cognizant of basic human need. This further diminishes the likelihood that present arrangements will be challenged.

Downloading:

McKeen & Porter (2004), Graefe (2001), & Richmond and Shields (2004) have all written extensively about the concept and impact of downloading. Governments withdrawing from direct service delivery have tapped into the voluntary sector to deliver minimal social supports and services. This shift has implication for social justice, both because governments no longer accept the delivery of quality, accessible and affordable services as a legitimate state role and because the agendas of social justice groups and other voluntary groups, are having to accommodate service provision. McKeen & Porter (2004) note that:

As governments around the world have come to accept a neo-liberal paradigm,

there has been a shift from the state to both market and the family in terms of [responsibility for social reproduction] and how social needs are met. These changes have implications for ...how these programs are delivered...and for the broader goals of equity, fairness, and the quality of life that individuals might enjoy (p.109).

This shift in roles also has implications for the autonomy of the voluntary sector. Graefe (2001, p. 38), when writing about the experiences of groups in Quebec, describes the relationship between the state and the community as one in which “the state steers without becoming mired in costly rowing”. He suggests that the state wants to maintain social cohesion, as it alters its role within the delivery of social and welfare services to support continued accumulation, and to do this governments tap into new ways of delivering services without the costs of public sector employees. The community sector, or third sector, Graefe says, represents a prime reservoir.

Richmond and Shields (2004) suggest that downloading the delivery of government services onto community groups, is achieved in part by “the displacement of core or base funding for contract funding” (p. 56) for service delivery. Community groups have to resort to signing service contracts/agreements with provincial government to sustain their existence. And communities across the country have independently organized themselves to provide food banks, clothing exchanges and other supports to help meet basic needs.

There is extensive literature about how the voluntary sector in general, and community-based advocacy and social justice specifically, have been affected by the present neo-liberal approach to the role of government and the welfare state and specifically concerning the changes brought about by the shift in government funding for the voluntary sector.

Funding:

Changes in funding mechanisms create significant impacts on the community sector. These include community agencies having to modify their agenda to encompass service delivery, along with, or instead of, advocacy. In addition, because contracts are typically with provincial or municipal governments, this financial relationship can impinge upon their ability to be critical of governments' actions regarding other aspects of social justice including legislation, programs and services.

In 2003 when Gill and Theriault conducted their research in Saskatchewan, the provincial government held 600 service agreements with about 500 community organizations. These organizations had between 2500 to 3000 employees, many working in substandard conditions within community-based services, such as women shelters, day care settings, and mental health agencies. The Saskatchewan government was then in the midst of designing a Voluntary Sector Initiative which included a framework for partnership between the government and the community. Gill and Theriault's concern is that so far the initiative is 'top down' and does not appear to place the voluntary sector within the public policy process. There is also no recognition of the role of advocacy, no indication of shared values, or of government recognizing that these services are delivered by professionals, as well as volunteers.

Katherine Scott (2003) in *Funding Matters* documents the impact that project and service-based funding is having on the functioning of the volunteer sector. Scott's extensive report echoes the concerns that have been increasingly expressed from within the community sector across the country. Two of the themes that Scott has identified and that are of particular significance to social justice, and my thesis, are, 'mission drift' and 'advocacy chill'.

Mission drift occurs when organizations modify their activities to fit into funding guidelines, and advocacy chill can emerge as organizations are restricted or hesitant to criticize the sources of their funding.

McKeen and Porter (2004) suggest that these are strategies within neo-liberalism, intended to undermine the power and legitimacy of organizations representing marginalized social groups and progressive social movements, to critique government policy and offer alternative analysis. Such strategies, they say, have included the elimination of state funding for advocacy groups within civil society, including women's groups, and the elimination of funding to advisory committees.

Dominelli (1999) adds another dimension to the funding issue. She suggests that governments have offered funding for contract work to the voluntary sector "to avoid having to engage in a frontal attack on the legitimacy of universal services which might have inspired a popular backlash against the destruction of the postwar consensus on welfare"(p.15). As long as there appears to be some political will to continue to offer a minimal level of services through whatever means, the likelihood of a backlash is minimized. Although these contracts will be negotiated ones, the state through its purchasing power holds the upper hand in determining the final outcome of these deliberations"(p.17).

It is difficult to address the issues related to funding, mission drift and advocacy chill separately, such is their interrelatedness. However, it is important to try to build a specific picture of how changes in funding affect advocacy through some analysis of the issues independently.

Mission Drift and Advocacy Chill:

Again, the effects on the autonomy of the voluntary sector have been well documented. While Richmond and Shields (2004) note that “government off-loading has meant increasing demands for [the voluntary] sector, and resulted in job issues, including lack of job security, lower pay and benefits...”(p. 57), more significant to an examination of advocacy is their suggestion that moving from core to program-based funding curtails the autonomous capacity of groups to offer alternative analyses. They suggest that, “the fingers of the state now extend into the operations of non-profit organizations ...working against a vibrantly independent civil society”(p. 64). Concern for this loss of autonomy is expressed across the political spectrum, from both the left and the right. The Social Planning Council of Ottawa - Carleton, (2001, cited in Richmond and Shields, 2004, p. 55) note that ..“the role being established for the non-profit sector as producers governed by contractual arrangement with the state curtails their autonomous capacity to offer alternative perspectives,” and, the Canada West Foundation, (1999, cited in Richmond and Shields, 2004) who state: “The contract relationship can result in NGO’s losing their political edge and ability to work for political change. This is hardly an environment that is likely to nurture a vibrant civil society and pluralist democracy” (p.55). Contractual arrangements for service delivery, serve to mute the voice of a vibrant and alternative analysis. Consequently the likelihood of debate and discussion about alternatives to prevailing ideology is diminished.

For social justice groups there is also the dilemma of accepting funding to provide services that heretofore have been provided by the state and which should, according to social justice ideals, still be provided by the state. Scott (2003), Gill & Theriault (2003) and McKeen &

Porter (2004) all address the tensions within groups connected to this issue of providing what should be state services.

The dismantling of the social welfare state and the neoliberal approach to diminishing social justice activity has created not only concerns for the future of social justice, but serious internal dilemmas and tensions for social justice and community advocacy groups. The debate over how to stay true to the mission, stay financially viable, and stay at the policy table has been a contentious issue among members of social justice groups for at least the past decade. In part, this debate considers how best to effectively move the agenda forward, whether to mainstream or disengage. Dominelli suggests that another possible “consequence of this contracting process is that the voluntary sector, often a site for innovation and alternative provisions to those offered by the state, will be sucked into colluding with it...”(p 18).

Mainstreaming and disengagement:

The terms ‘mainstreaming’ and ‘disengagement’ were coined to describe a choice faced by the feminist movement in the 1980s, of whether to focus efforts on working within or removed from existing systems. This dichotomy was first defined by Linda Briskin and published in *Studies in Political Economy* in 1989. “Briskin argued that feminist practice struggles with the dilemma between “mainstreaming” (reaching out to and transforming the everyday lives of women, at risk of institutional co-optation) and “disengagement” (critiquing the system from a standpoint outside it at the risk of marginalization)” (Carroll & Coburn, 2004, p. 86).

Mainstreaming operates from a desire to engage with mainstream institutions such as the state, whereas disengagement suggests that it is not possible to achieve equality from within.

Amanda Scott (2003) discusses these concepts in her analysis of the ability of feminists to work toward equality within the federal bureaucracy. She draws on the work of Charles, (2000) and Morgan (1981) to pose questions about whether state power can be used to achieve women's liberation. Scott notes that,

according to Charles, feminist goals are transformed in the process of engagement with the state, especially when feminist movements are only one interest among many, feminist demands are not likely to emerge unscathed from the policy-making process. Morgan contends that, the processes used by the state... reframes political issues as social problems minimizing structural challenges and serves to protect the status quo (p.10).

Although the terms were developed within the context of the women's movement this dichotomy is central to decisions that presently face the social justice movement, particularly related to accepting service contracts and to participating in increasingly controlled government policy discussions.

An example of mainstreaming is seen in the approach used by the progressive forces in Quebec to form partnerships with the state in order to deliver social programs and continue to meet advocacy agendas. In this example, groups tried to be proactive in building partnerships with the state, with the result that the state usurped the groups agenda and tension was created between groups who wanted to continue in these partnerships and those who did not, or as Graefe puts it, between those trying to decide "whether to fish or cut bait" (2001, p. 50). In Newfoundland and Labrador women's groups also advocated for service contracts with the provincial government. As the amount of funding continues to increase, so does the skepticism

about autonomy.

While many of the present funding structures and programs were actually negotiated with provincial, rather than the federal, governments, there is an obvious parallel to the approaches and similarity of concerns across jurisdictions, (see McKeen, 2004; Graefe, 2001; Gill & Theriault, 2003; Carroll & Coburn, 2004). The experiences in Newfoundland and Labrador are similar to those in Quebec, Saskatchewan, and to those noted in Katherine Scott's *Funding Matters*, (2003).

Amanda Scott (2003) suggests that, within state structures, gender equity policies have been redefined in terms of efficiency and effectiveness. This changes the focus of the issues from structural problems to matters of bureaucratic clumsiness, and suggests that tweaking of existing systems will be enough. This has been the experience of the women's community in NL, where processes put in place, at the request of women's groups, to facilitate participation in social policy discussions are increasingly controlled by government and very narrowly defined to meet the government's agenda.

As governments continue to work from a neo-liberal perspective, it is crucial that women's groups, and social justice groups in general, consider whether their agendas are absolutely compromised by trying to work within state structures. And if, as suggested by Dominelli, groups have been sucked into colluding with government, who will give voice to an alternative analysis?

As this thesis reveals, an issue for the GWC is balancing the tension between wanting to open opportunities for women within politics and the bureaucracy and somehow feeling that women on the outside have a monopoly on true feminism.

Women and public policy:

In light of the discussion about mainstreaming it is interesting to look back to the early years of the second-wave, women's movement and reflect on the goals and activities apparent during that time.

In "*Politics as if Women Mattered*", the authors Vickers, Rankin, and Appelle, discuss the political climate during the time that NAC was defining a role for itself to advance women's equality. Vickers et al (1993, p. 209) note that "after the second world war...the Canadian political system became more centralized and more bureaucratized, the policy processes of the state became more professionalized and were purported to draw more extensively on the knowledge of experts." Few women were experts and consequently public policy was not constructed as if women mattered. The authors suggest that at that time:

the keys to women having a serious impact on public policy were seen as (1) persuading the policy elite that their sexist research base must be changed and (2) developing feminist experts who could bridge between the public policy process and the women's movement (p. 210).

Part of the strategy was to open doors to women in politics, while at the same time creating parallel political structures outside the formal state system. During the 1970s and 1980s the federal government actively supported the work of NAC and of many grassroots women's groups across the country. NAC grew into a significant political force, with some 600+ member groups. Very definitely women were becoming experts in public policy. Federal government support was created to assist women to work toward achieving some of the recommendations contained within the pioneering Royal Commission on the Status of Women, released in 1970. It

can be suggested that the federal government's intention was to mainstream women's knowledge into federal processes to enhance the status of women. In the 1980s, the voice of NAC grew beyond the more obvious gender issues as NAC leadership insisted on participating in debates about Free Trade and Meech Lake. These efforts can be viewed more as a strategy of disengagement, as the federal government of the time clearly was not happy with NAC for daring to suggest that it had a role within these economic and political debates. Beginning in the early 1990s, the federal government began reshaping and withdrawing support for gender equality work.

While Vickers, Rankin and Appelle look at the role of the women's movement in creating a voice in public policy within the 20 year history of NAC, Ann Curry Stevens (2006) considers what has happened to public policy within neo-liberalism. She suggests that "the new policy environment has been highly prescribed by the influence of capital which has, in turn, compromised traditional policy advocacy... within this, the power of good ideas has long since been eclipsed by the power of corporate interests" (p.119). For the women's community this implies that although it has successfully managed to gain expertise related to public policy issues and been able to create and present analysis supporting feminist arguments, this 'expert knowledge', is less effective in government decision making, as decisions are largely based on the interests of capital.

With all this in mind it is necessary to ponder whether it is at all possible to work within present government funding structures and policy processes toward social justice.

Framework Literature

Critical Political Economy:

Political economy, as a set of ideas and a field of study, was initially developed by Adam Smith and David Ricardo through their publications in 1776 of *The Wealth of Nations* and *The Principles of Political Economy*. Essentially, they provided an analysis of capitalism founded on the theory of the commodification of labour. They described an economic system in which workers' labour was bought to produce goods and services that, unlike the feudal system, were not intended for the consumption of the producer. This provided the foundations of an analysis of capitalism based on the theory of commodification of labour in which the value of a worker's labour is determined by the costs of production. (Gough, 1979, p. 5) According to Heilbroner (1992) "in Smith's time the role of the state was still largely identified with the aristocratic view and interests and was uncertain as to its appropriate role vis a-vis the emerging market" (p. 56). *The Wealth of Nations*, then, in theorizing a role for the state 'was a manual for government in his time' and associated with laissez-faire capitalism. A century later, in 1867, Marx reformulated these concepts and produced a theory known as historical materialism. Marx's work *Capital*, subtitled *A Critique of Political Economy* lay the groundwork for the development of critical political economy theory (Gough, 1979, p. 5).

From a critical political economy perspective, the forces and power of society are used to organize and control social, political and cultural aspects of life that complement the accumulation of wealth. This creates struggles and tensions between those whose labour is used to produce wealth and those who control the processes of production and distribution. Further, critical political economy considers the role the state plays in distributing power within society,

and the processes used to create common values from which the legitimacy of power arrangements are derived (Phillips, 2003; Armstrong & Armstrong, 2003; Gough, 1979; Clement, 1997; Mahon, 1977).

According to Clement (1997), critical political economy is considered materialist because “it begins with the assumption that the relations between people are fundamentally shaped by the way a society reproduces itself” (p.3). CPE views the relationships between people and classes as shaped by the processes of production and distribution, which are viewed as inherently social and political. The position of individuals within the circles of power, wealth, and influence is determined by their place within these processes. Feminist critical political economy highlights the role of gender as an important influence in the distribution of wealth and power and considers the ways that public and private economies (households) all necessarily contain contradictions, tensions, struggles and resistance. According to Clement (1997) “a critical political economy examination of human agency emphasizes the importance of people’s actions in shaping the course of history”(p. 4). The capitalist system and the current processes of production and reproduction are not immutable but, instead, merely a moment in time, that can be influenced and changed by people. Clement suggests the importance of a critical perspective: “The new political economy seeks most of all to prevent the political and social aspects of life from being marginalized by a strictly economic logic. Its goal is to reveal the political agenda of economic practices and to assert the importance of the social.” (Clement, 1997, p 5).

The mission and the mandate of the GWC include the desire to participate in and lead processes to influence the distribution of wealth and power to diminish gender oppression. The central focus of my thesis is to consider whether social justice groups, in general, and specifically

the GWC, can stay on course with social and political agendas, within the economic ideology of neo-liberalism. Therefore, a critical political economy framework is very appropriate to my critical analysis of the Gender Women Centre's ability to steer its own course during difficult years. The work of the GWC, and its ability to chart and steer its course, has to be considered within the present arrangement of power and influence and the processes offered, developed, and used by the state to engage, influence, or co-opt, the work of the GWC.

While the critical political economy tradition, which I will draw upon for my analysis, suggests a particular bent in defining the purpose and function of the welfare state, there are other views. The ideological perspective from which one views the welfare state will influence whether the work of the GWC can be considered autonomous and toward social justice, or merely sustaining of the existing power relationships, therefore it is important to briefly comment on some of these various perspectives.

Welfare State:

Ideological perspectives on the role and purpose of the welfare state are diverse. Some favour a social democratic philosophical view of the welfare state as positively influencing the shortcomings of capitalism. Although the inalienable right of capitalism to exist is not questioned, there is interest in the state playing a role to modify the harshest aspects of capitalism that result for those with the least power and resources (Pierson, 1998).

For the people on the far right of the political spectrum the welfare state is viewed as representing unnecessary and harmful government interference in the economy and as a waste of money. The welfare state, it is argued, interferes with the ability of the national market to

participate in and exploit to the fullest the spoils made available by economic globalization. This school of thought favours a return to a charity model of caring for those who can not care for themselves (Pierson, 1998).

From a critical political economy perspective the welfare state plays a particular role in authorizing and enforcing the primacy of the needs of capital accumulation and the market. It serves to safeguard capital's interests by reigning in the power of people to affect change and, at the same time, assuages the anger of those who would use their energies to create movements to challenge the supremacy of capitalism as a way of organizing our economy. According to Mahon (1977):

the development of the welfare state was in response to organized working class opposition to capitalist exploitation within the rise of monopoly capital. ...in advanced capitalist society the state's active participation in the economy, via the welfare state, forms an important aspect of its role as organizer of the consent of the dominated classes to capitalist relations of production (p.168-9).

Further, Mahon (1977, p. 170) suggests that the structure of the state is nothing but the mediated expression of basic socio-economic inequalities as they are manifested politically in various forms and levels which class struggles assume at any particular point in time. The state is an organizer of hegemony, and works to resolve struggles of inter and intra class interests. These are likely "to be resolved, in such a manner that the 'general political interest' of the power bloc is maintained."

This point is developed by James O'Connor; and noted by Armstrong & Armstrong (2003):

*The welfare state is a term used to describe both a set of institutions and a set of social relations. O'Connor, in **The Fiscal Crisis of the State** maintains that welfare states have two essential roles: accumulation and legitimization. States help create the conditions for private profit making and helps to ensure social harmony by providing a justice system and services for citizens, and by promoting a shared value system (p. 3).*

In other words, the welfare state is there to not only mediate disputes in ways that favour the power arrangements of capitalism, but also to ensure that collectively citizens support the right of those with the power to retain it.

In terms of the significance of this perspective to the work of the GWC, in the final estimation I ask whether the GWC, or any other similar group, can really affect a redistribution of power and resources by working within the processes made available by our present political and economic system? If the role of the welfare state is to sustain present power relationship is it likely to provide mechanisms to seriously challenge this authority? Can social justice be achieved without this challenge?

Neo-liberalism:

According to Evans and Wekerle (1997) “Until recently the Canadian welfare state appeared to rest on the assumption that governments in Canada had a positive role to play in alleviating some of the worst effects of the inequalities of the free market and operating as a buffer for some of its most vulnerable citizens” (p.5). But the Canadian welfare state of the 1960s and 1970s was developed to meet the needs of capital accumulation within basically provincial

and national economic systems. In recent decades the welfare state was adjusted to fit the needs of capital to maximize profits within a global market place and include a reduction in public services, a devolution of powers to the provinces, reprivatization of what had been accepted as legitimate government services, and a downloading of programs and services designed to meet human needs onto communities and families.

Additionally the federal government, through a campaign which persuaded people of the imperative of eliminating the deficit, also appeared to shift the shared values of society, so that it was generally accepted that cutbacks and restructuring were necessary for national economic security. Evans and Wekerle (1997) write that:

The spectre of the deficit, the powerlessness of nation states to counter the forces of the global economy, and the need to alter fundamentally the expectations that Canadians had of their governments comprise the current foundations of the dominant discourse that must be challenged if the welfare state in Canada is not to be dismantled (p.14).

Neo-liberal governments have been successful in creating a common belief that the global economic forces are inevitable and unable to be influenced or controlled by citizens. Canadians seem to accept that we have to work harder and longer, expect less from our state, and learn to depend on our families and communities to provide the buffer once seen as legitimate within the welfare state. As noted previously: this perspective has come to be known as neo-liberalism (Phillips, 2003).

Social Justice:

Social justice, within a critical political economy perspective, strives toward a world in

which resources, processes and structures are designed by and controlled for the mutual benefit of all citizens. It has to be an active passion for a world in which people have the right and are supported to shape their own lives and reach their potential. It is the antithesis of the world designed in favour of accumulation of capital (Reisch, 2002; Gindin, 2002; Gindin & Panitch, 2000).

According to Berlin,(1996; cited in Reisch, 2002):

Marx asserted that the roots of injustice lie in the political-economic structure that was based on subjugation, discrimination, exploitation, and privilege. Marx said that justice would prevail therefore when individuals received what they needed on the basis of their humanity and not merely what they deserved based on their social class of origin or productivity (p. 345).

Gindin and Panitch (2000) suggest that “Marxism as a material force needs what Bloch called its “warm stream”of desire, passion, and dreaming as much as it needs its “cold current”of analysis” (p. 4). A feminist perspective would add that social justice must also be a process of involvement, empowerment and self realization.

During the 1960s, 1970s and 1980s many people who were involved in social movements believed that they were working with the system to achieve social justice. In Newfoundland and Labrador people involved in the trade union movement, the women’s movement, the rural development movement, among others, claimed power and rights. Together with national and sometimes international movements, they achieved higher wages and better social programs and a sense of voice and power. They were beginning to create an acceptance of social justice as a legitimate organizing foundation of political and economic processes.

Despite this lack of real systemic change this era is often regarded as the 'golden age' of capitalism, when the welfare state was at its most developed. However, poverty and inequality persisted, largely unabated. While many women gained the right to sell their potential to others and gained the power to consume, they did not gain the right to actively shape their community (Gindin, 2002, p. 4).

Those successes, however limited, created a sense of collective power and through collective actions and with the support of the state, the forces of the market were modified slightly to reflect the interests of worker, gender and citizen rights. Neo-liberalism is a response to those successes both because the costs of social programs interfered with the market's ability to maximize profits and because the golden age of welfare had defined a relatively strong role for the state in regulating the economy. Capitalism as a social system within the global economy was restricted by the rise in equality, the security for workers and power within social movements. Working class victories ... were undermining discipline, threatening profits, class power and class rule... higher wages, better social programs, greater security, the foundations of social justice, were redefined as barriers that blocked capitalism's own needs (Gindin, 2002, p. 4)

To rekindle and or create social justice we need to first believe that we can. Gindin and Panitch suggest that social justice is manifested by the ability to dream what you want to be possible, to dream to change the world and believe that you can. The dream of social justice, within critical political economy, is toward the goal of realizing social, political and economic systems based on equality, dignity, and a sharing of power that has the potential to accommodate individual and collective dreams.

The GWC was born in an era in which social democratic thinking had a legitimate voice,

when the intent of the organization was to move society towards a more just and equitable distribution of power, wealth and influence.

Conclusion

One of the tenets of CPE is that the state organizes our collective values to create systems and processes that affirm the right of capitalist accumulation. The demise of the welfare state and the arrival of neo-liberalism included a massive propaganda campaign to convince us that we were lost if we did not reign in our social spending. After a period of trying to herald an alternative view and realizing that it could not compete with the power and resources of the media, either owned by private business or the state, both with the same message, organizations like the GWC began to search for and develop new ways to influence society and to try to tame the beast as much as possible. The work of the GWC then moved within the realm of the political systems that were open to participation. Success was measured by legitimacy within those processes rather than by any sense of a real shift in power and influence.

The organizational literature reviews the consequences for social justice groups in the shift from a social democratic ideology in the 1960s to a neo-liberal model in the 1990s. The impact is deep and far reaching. Social justice groups have tried to react to these changes and cutbacks by trying to reclaim what has been lost. The framework literature challenges us to question whether trying to regain what we have lost is the best approach or whether we would be better served to try and create something new; in the shape of an economic and political system that has the potential to realize social justice in its broadest dimensions.

Chapter III: METHODOLOGY

Introduction

This chapter describes the methodological approach used in this study and explains the rationale for its selection. It includes a detailed explanation of why I selected the case study method and how I applied it to conduct the research. It contains a description of my data sources and the criteria applied to the selection of key informants. I also discuss the strengths and limitations of this particular methodology and discussion of the issue of reflexivity. I end with a discussion of ethical issues commonly associated with qualitative research and an explanation of how I considered those within my research.

Choosing a methodology

The previous review of the related literature suggests that the shift to neo-liberal ideology had very definite, and dire, consequences for the voluntary sector. The specific issues are dealt with in detail in both the literature review and the discussion chapters of this report. In very brief summary, the literature suggested that community-based advocacy groups, in pursuit of a social justice, tend to drift away from their missions as a result of coping with new government funding mechanisms and that the possibilities for citizens to influence government processes are eroding. The literature is focused on examining the problems and provides little in the way of inspiration in terms of creating a sense of possibility or suggesting strategies to be used by the voluntary sector and the social justice movement, to regain control of their work.

Based on what I felt was a prevailing aura of futility, I wanted to explore whether a sense

of possibility and hope could be maintained or rekindled, for social justice groups in the current climate. I wanted to uncover, discover or create a sense of hope, a sense of hope that was likely hidden beneath the layers of processes and issues. I decided to use a single case study because it provided methods to conduct a deep analysis.

Case study method

According to Yin (2003) case studies are preferred, in general, in the following circumstances 1) when the questions “how” or “why” are being asked, 2) when the investigator has little control over events, and 3) when the focus is on a contemporary phenomenon within a real life context.

Hamel, Dufour, & Fortin, (cited in Rubin and Babbie, 1997) suggest that “case study methods focus on gathering enough information about a particular [case] to permit the researcher to effectively understand how it operates and functions.”(p. 212). A case study of a group, Rubin and Babbie (1997) note ‘may be defined as the systematic gathering of enough information about a particular organization to allow the investigator insight into the life of that organization... and allowing the researcher to place particular emphasis on a specific area or situation occurring within the organization”(p.219). Rubin & Babbie (1997) suggest case studies provide, “extremely rich, detailed, and in-depth information” (p 212). Stake (1995) finds this approach is well suited to an in-depth study of the particularity and complexity of a single case, coming to understand its activity within larger, important circumstances. As I wanted to understand how a specific group had operated within the larger context of neo-liberalism, and how its experience fit within the context of what the literature suggested was the impact on social justice groups in general, the

case study method was the most appropriate approach.

I chose the single case study because it allowed me to delve deeply into the processes, dilemmas, issues and successes of one particular organization. There is already a breadth of research that considers the experience of the social justice movement within neo-liberalism. What is missing is a deep analysis in search of alternatives. Neo-liberalism is definitely a contemporary phenomena to which this case study will provide a very real life context. I am examining how groups in general and the GWC in particular, has struggled within the neo-liberal context and whether it is possible to successfully push the lines of control to a place of more autonomy.

Stake (cited in Rubin & Babbie, 1997) suggests that there are different purposes for studying cases. An intrinsic case study is undertaken when the researcher wants to understand a specific case, for itself rather than in relation to a theory. In an instrumental case study, the case is secondary to understanding some external theoretical question or problem. The case is chosen because the researcher believes that her understanding of some other research interest will be advanced (p. 216). With this knowledge in mind, I went in search of a case and ended up in my own backyard.

The GWC had a reputation, among some within the women's community, for pushing the limits of the acceptable and allowable in terms of funding guidelines, for continuing to find a place within government decision-making structures and for energetically engaging the provincial women's community in efforts to push the agenda toward equality. I knew that the group had engaged in sometimes difficult, discussions, deliberations and actions, in efforts to hold to the tiller and stay on a course of its own design. At the same time I had a degree of apprehension about whether the work of the GWC toward social justice was compromised by working within

available processes and power structures, despite determination and creativity. Because the GWC intentionally struggled against the currents of neo-liberalism and developed a reputation for successfully pushing the sides of the box, I decided that the GWC would provide an excellent case study through which to consider whether it is possible to pursue social justice within neoliberalism.

I examine whether and how the GWC managed to define its mission and activities and balance service delivery and advocacy objectives, in the midst of the downloading, advocacy chill and mission drift tendencies, that the literature says are significant indicators of the neo-liberal approach to the welfare state. My study considers how the advocacy role of this organization, has evolved over time and across different ideological views of the welfare state. It examines how this group has managed internal issues regarding funding and reporting, and how the GWC tried to continue to do systemic advocacy work within the limitations imposed by government. And finally it considers this case in relation to a critical political economy definition of social justice.

Data Collection

The major data sources for this case study included an extensive review of the organization's documents and interviews with eight key informant interviews.

Document review:

In April 2006 I asked the Board of Directors of the GWC for permission to review their organizational documents for the purposes of my thesis research. Not only did they answer with a hearty 'yes', they provided me with office space, a computer and keys, so that I had free access to

the premises and all the documents. As I have been closely connected to this group for many years, the trust was not so surprising, and neither was the disorganized state of the documents. I spent considerable time digging through boxes and reviewing computer discs in an effort to find as much material as possible and then I spent an equally long time sorting and organizing. In the end, the documents were still incomplete, especially for the first five years. In an effort to fill in some of the blanks, I called one of the founding members who was able to provide much of the missing detail, particularly as it related to how and why the group was created in the first place. In the early 1990s the group began publishing a newsletter and began to keep a better filing system. The documentation from 1997 on is more thorough.

Although this study is focused on the period 1995 - 2005, as this is the time period throughout which the major changes relating to funding and advocacy have occurred, I felt it was necessary to review all of the organization's documents so that I could understand the development, processes, issues and ways of working within differing political ideologies.

A complete document list is attached in Appendix 1. My review included grant and project applications to federal government programs, and service agreements and contracts with the provincial government, as well as project files, activity and financial reports, workplans, and quarterly and annual reports. From these I drew out, examined and compared statistics on service delivery over time. I reviewed minutes of various meetings, newsletters, discussion papers, policy documents, correspondence, conference reports, coordinators reports, evaluations and news articles, and an array of other documents. I also reviewed the files relating to the 1995 -96 Status of Women Canada (SWC) consultation process that resulted in the end of core funding to women's Centre and the files related to Forum '97, the process that resulted in the women's

centers gaining provincial core funding.

The GWC has been busily engaged in social action work and apart from the required reports and a few newsletter articles has recorded little of its history. It works very much within an oral culture where recordings of processes and debate are usually limited to a few flip chart pages used during a discussion. This group has had a vital and vibrant history that can only be captured through the reflection and analysis of the women who were key to shaping that history.

Key Informant Interviews:

Who are my informants?

I conducted eight key informant interviews with respondents identified through the following criteria. The first criterion was to select women whose involvement with the GWC adequately spanned the time period under study, 1995 - 2005. I wanted to be sure that I had several people who were able to comment on the same time period and events. This was achieved and there is significant duplication. Five of the interviewees were connected with the GWC in some capacity throughout this entire time period, two were involved during the central years (1997 - 2004) and, one during the last five years.

The second criterion was to achieve a representation of different types of involvements, such as leader, board member, executive member, consumer, and funder, as well as women who associated with the GWC for more personal and/or philosophical/ ideological reasons. The interviewees represent a range of involvements: six have been members, four of whom have held various executive positions, including Chair of the Board, five of the members have served on various sub-committees and been involved with systemic advocacy work, and five have been

involved with service delivery work, one was a founding member of the Gender Status of Women Council and the GWC, one began her involvement as a consumer. Three of my key informants were not members of the GWC, but were closely connected to the group in other capacities. One respondent was a senior bureaucrat associated with the Women's Policy Office, Government of Newfoundland and Labrador; one was a representative of Status of Women Canada, and formerly with the Department of Secretary of State, and one is a representative of the Provincial Advisory Council on the Status of Women.

My third criterion was to include women who, in addition to their connection with the GWC, had other community advocacy involvements. I included this because I felt that a variety of experiences from different community groups would result in a broader and deeper analysis of the work of the GWC. Three women have been active with other local women's groups and two with provincial women's groups; five have been active members of coalition partners, other social justice, or community advocacy groups. A fourth criterion was location, applied purely for economic reasons, three live in the community of Gander, all eight live in the island part of the province of Newfoundland and Labrador.

Finally, I wanted to include women who would be able to offer a variety of perspectives related to the research question. As I have been connected to the GWC in a number of capacities during this period I had opportunities to work closely with each of these respondents. Through these experiences we shared our personal and political ideologies. With certainty I can say that this group represents as broad a range of personal and political ideologies as have influenced the work of the GWC, from radical feminism, to socialist feminism to liberal feminism.

Although age was not a consideration in the selection of my respondents it is notable that

only two of the interviewees are under 40 years of age: three are between 40 and 50 and the three others are over fifty. Of course in 1995, at the start of this study period this group would have been a decade younger and the age span would have been 27 - 48. With regard to age my informants represents the demographics of the present membership.

The interview process

In mid- April I contacted each of my respondents by telephone, explained the purpose and nature of my research and requested an interview, everyone agreed to participate. I then sent a formal letter of introduction (Appendix 2) and followed up with another phone call to arrange an interview. All the interviews took place between April 27th, 2006 and May 12th, 2006. The respondents chose the location of the interview, several were conducted in their work place, several others in their homes. Four interviews were conducted in St. John's and four in Gander.

I began each interview by addressing the issues of informed consent and provided each informant with an informed consent form (Appendix 3) which I asked her to sign. The informed consent requested permission to audio tape the interview, only one person declined.

I prepared and used an interview guide (Appendix 4), and asked the same questions in basically the same order. However, I allowed respondents to digress when it seemed important to the flow of their reflections. I used different probes in each interview to help the respondent follow through on their analysis of a particular point, or to gain more detail. I referred to the questions in order and on occasion some respondents felt they had adequately dealt with a question in previous answers.

Each interview lasted between approximately 45 minutes and 1 hour. With regard to the

interview that was not audio taped, I made notes during the interview process and immediately after the interview wrote a detailed account of the comments. All other interviews were transcribed by me.

Strengths and Limitations

The strength of a case study is that it provides extremely rich, detailed, and in-depth information and can be a very effective tool for examining processes that unfold overtime (Rubin & Babbie, 1997). The case study approach frequently incorporates qualitative methods, which are frequently criticized for their lack of objectivity and for producing results that are not generalizable, either within the population or to any other populations. Both Yin (2003) and Stake (1995) suggest that objectivity can be attained in case studies if rigorous and systematic procedures are followed, biased views are not allowed to influence the direction of the findings or conclusions, and all evidence is reported fairly. Objectivity rests on the ability of an investigator to articulate her procedures in such a way that others can repeat the research if they choose. It requires the researcher to clearly articulate what areas have been investigated and through what means. I have addressed these issues by providing samples of my interview guide in the appendix and by providing a detailed list of the documents that I reviewed and considered. I also addressed the issue of objectivity within the following discussion on reflexivity.

In terms of scientific research, generalizability refers to the certainty with which findings from one study can be used to understand other similar phenomena. A case study by its very comprehensiveness in depth, is less generalizable. However, Stake (1995) maintains that petite generalizations can be drawn from the specific case when themes reoccur, and case studies can be

used to modify grand generalizations as counter-examples are developed to the accepted generalization. The study seeks to modify grand generalizations by using the experiences of this particular case to expand current knowledge about the key issues explored in the thesis.

Also in terms of any generalization, it is important to note that the case study is of a small women's group in a small town. It is likely that they managed to 'go under the radar' by virtue of the fact that in the grand scheme of things, at least on the national level, they may have been considered fairly insignificant. Politics and community work, within a population of 500,000, in the province of Newfoundland and Labrador is conducted very differently than in provinces with much larger populations. There is a greater degree of familiarity both within the culture and within politics. Getting access to power brokers may be easier to accomplish when it is likely you know their cousin or are related to their sister-in-law. A recently transplanted 'come from away'³ observed to me that "Newfoundlanders live their history". I believe this is true and very much affects how we do things. Generally, we know what's going on and consider it our business. Maybe the processes identified within this study cannot be applied to large urban centers but they can very much be applied to how things can be done in other rural communities. As well, the notions behind the ideas are broadly generalizable.

Reflexivity

One of the concerns that has been identified in the literature related to qualitative research is reflexivity. Simply stated, reflexivity is the extent to which the researcher, through life

³'Come from away', a term used by Newfoundlanders in reference to people who come from 'the mainland' (Canada) to live and work in this province.

experiences, is reflected in the shaping and analysis of the study. Douglas Macbeth (2001) writes that “in the rush of interest in qualitative research in the past 15 years, few topics have developed as broad a consensus as the relevance of analytic reflexivity, it has become a signal topic in contemporary discussions of qualitative research”(p. 35). Macbeth describes reflexivity as a deconstructive exercise for locating the intersections of author, other, text and world.

Reflexivity is an issue of considerable importance within my methodology because of the connections between myself, as author, and the site of this research. I have been a member of the GWC since 1985 and have served in various volunteer and waged capacities. Perhaps one of the most significant connections is that I have been the lead researcher and project manager on many of the GWC social policy advocacy initiatives. In short I am also one of ‘the blind men and the elephant’⁴. This relationship affected this project in several ways that I am aware of and perhaps other that I am not.

Many of the present members of the GWC are my friends, or know me by reputation. Therefore, it was likely easier for me to receive access to the organization’s records and documents. But more importantly, in terms of keeping my research scrupulous the eight women who are my informants have been my friends and colleagues for many years. I have a great deal of respect for each of these women, despite our ideological differences which we have heartily discussed on many occasions. I want to continue to be friends with all of them once this research is finished. I have tried very conscientiously to portray as accurately as possible what they said and, when I have summarized, what they meant. Although they are not identified in the document, they will be able to identify themselves, and I want each of them to feel that their

⁴Refers to the excerpt at the beginning of Chapter 4, from the fable of Six Blind Men and the Elephant by John Godfrey Saxe

comments have been portrayed in the context in which they were intended.

Some of the challenges related to my intimate knowledge of the women and the group appeared during the interviews when they, and I, wanted to change the process from an interview to a discussion. Several of my respondents noted that it was their only chance to ever to monopolize a conversation with me, so overall, I think we were successful in sticking to the interview format. Then we turned off the tape and had a chat.

Some of the positive aspects about this relationship include that I understand what they are talking about because I know the work of the organization. I know the background to the issues, the processes and the challenges. The interviews were likely quick to focus directly on the issues because there was no need to gather the 'behind the issue' concrete details. Therefore I think I was able to capture more in-depth analysis right from the beginning. In most cases, instead of describing what happened, the women were able to focus more on what it meant for them.

Of course there are also possible negative aspects of having such an intimate relationship with the research subject. The most challenging was to ensure that I really heard what the informants said. I was keenly aware of this possibility and minimized the influence by avoiding the urge to converse and using active listening techniques. I transcribed the interview tapes myself, was again careful to listen to what was said and asked follow up questions where necessary. I feel confident that I heard them, in part because I was truly surprised by many of their comments.

Kirby and McKenna (as cited in Amanda Scott, 2003), suggest that [when] the advocate/ researcher becomes an active seeker of information about something that concerns them, ...they can become a producer of new information, and will learn about themselves, [in the process].

This was very much a journey of self discovery. Through the reflections and analysis of the hopes and worries from a group and about issues for which I care very deeply I have come to more clearly understand and articulate my ideology with regard to how to move toward social justice.

Ethics

As noted above, a important data source for my study included interviews with key informants. The majority of these people are, or have been, members of the women's community in Central Newfoundland and Labrador, including volunteers, staff and directors. Others are representatives of government funding agencies and other community organizations. None can be considered members of vulnerable populations.

The common ethical issues in social science research include informed consent, confidentiality and anonymity. I have actively addressed all issues. I prepared a detailed explanation of the scope and purpose of my thesis and related research which I distributed to all participants for their information. Confidentiality and anonymity are not serious issues for many of my informants as they have freely discussed their ideas in various public forums. But for some, particularly women who are working, or hope to work within the bureaucracy, there may be some concerns. These issues were discussed with each key informant. A consent form detailing the parameters of confidentiality and anonymity was prepared, discussed and signed with each participant.

In terms of qualitative case study research there are other ethical issues to consider. For instance Stake (1995) emphasizes the ethical obligation to minimize misrepresentation and misunderstanding. He suggests the use of triangulation to help to meet this obligation. In this case

triangulation was achieved by confirming themes and facts through cross referencing and comparison between and among written materials and information obtained from key informants. I also recognize that the uniqueness of perspective was as important as commonality of themes in achieving as complete a picture as possible related to the purpose of this project.

It was important for me, as the researcher, to consciously recognize the likelihood of subjectivity and strive for objectivity. This was aided by my sincere desire to produce research that was accurate, worthwhile and meaningful.

Conclusion

The case study method has allowed me to conduct a deep analysis into the history, issues and dilemmas for the GWC within its struggle to work toward equality and social justice. The next two chapters details the information and understanding that I have gained through the application of these methods. Chapter IV presents the results of the document review, and Chapter V presents the information and analysis drawn from the key informant interviews.

Chapter IV: THE ORGANIZATION

The Bridge

This bridge will take you only half way there
To those mysterious lands you long to see:
Through gypsy camps and swirling Arab fairs
And moonlit woods where unicorns run free.
So come and walk awhile with me and share
The twisting trails and wondrous worlds I've known.
But this bridge will only take you halfway there -
The last few steps you'll have to take alone.

Shel Silverstein

Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to draw upon the records of the GWC to examine its origins and development. The chapter is intended to give you a feel for the passion and struggles that brought the group together, sustained it, periodically threatened its existence and continually challenged the members and the group to find new ways to hold fast to the tiller. This chapter also considers whether and how the group was able to hold fast to their mission amidst the changes to the welfare state.

Early Years 1983 - 1994

The roots of the Gander Women's Center lie in the consciously developing Canadian women's movement, a movement that was gaining the attention of all levels of government.

In the 1960s women's groups in Francophone and Anglophone Canada joined forces to demand a royal commission on the status of women. The federal Liberal Government, sensitive to national unity issues, was eager to support movements it believed cut across linguistic cleavages and, therefore, fostered its relationship

with the women's movement by agreeing to strike a royal commission to investigate women's equality needs (Rankin & Vickers, 2001, p. 6).

The Royal Commission on the Status of Women in Canada, appointed in 1967, submitted its report to the federal government on September 28, 1970. The report contained 167 recommendations (CACSW, 1993, p.5). In response to those recommendations, the federal government took the following steps. In December 1971, the first federal Minister Responsible for the Status of Women was appointed, and the Department of Status of Women was created to support the work of the Minister on an ongoing basis, through developing and analysing federal policies and programs to ensure their positive impact on women (CACSW, 1993, p. 7). In 1973 the Canadian Advisory Council on the Status of Women (CACSW) was created to bring before government and the public matters of interest and concern to women and to advise the Minister (CACSW, 1993, p. 5). Also in 1973, the Women's Program of the Department of Human Resources and Labour, was established to provide financial and technical support to women's organizations for activities that promote the equality of women in Canada (CACSW, 1993, p. 7). Finally, in 1980, the Government of Newfoundland⁵ appointed the first Provincial Advisory Council on the Status of Women (PACSW).

In 1983, almost a decade after its founding, the federal Women's Program (now within the Department of Secretary of State), joined with the PACSW to provide support and encouragement to a group of women in the small town of Gander, Newfoundland, to begin the process of creating a new women's group for their community (Gander Beacon, 1983). Marie

⁵ The name of the province was officially changed from Newfoundland to Newfoundland and Labrador, on December 6th, 2001.

Matheson remembers planting the seed a year earlier. Marie, a recent university graduate, moved to the town of Gander to begin a career in education. Marie said she wanted to get involved in the community but not in a traditional women's group. She was thinking of a different sort of women's group: "something for women who were interested in the status of women issues." Marie started attending a women's 'stitch and bitch' club and began talking to other women there about the possibility of starting something completely new. Two of the members of this club helped lead the effort to create the women's council (personal communication. June 13, 2006). Over the next several months, these women laid the groundwork for the group by organizing kitchen meetings and small group discussions to connect with other women in the community.

The Gander Status of Women Council (the Council) was formed and incorporated by 1984 and opened the doors of Gander Women's Center (GWC) in February, 1985 (Gander Beacon, 1985; correspondence from Marie Matheson, Jan 22, 1999, file #503). The Council's incorporation papers include such global objectives as 'supporting, establishing, protecting and guaranteeing equal rights for women, and promoting changes in legislation, attitudes, customs and practices, to benefit women', as well as very specific goals around 'establishing a women's center to provide emotional and physical support, and encouraging the development and improvement of services to meet the needs of all women.' The objectives also include that the group will contribute to the growth and improvement of the status of all women through education and facilitating communication between individual and groups (incorporation papers, file # 106, see appendix 5).

From the beginning, the group saw itself as part of the larger provincial and national movements. Immediately they began building networks and creating ways to generate discussion

and to share information on several levels. To encourage local community awareness and involvement, the GWC offered education and information sessions, and films and they organized discussion groups and brought in resource people from more established groups such as Day Care Advocates and Planned Parenthood. The group built networks, provincially, through participating, with other women's groups in conferences and political lobbies. Nationally, members made connections with the Canadian Congress on Learning Opportunities for Women (CCLOW), CACSW and attended the annual National Action Committee on the Status of Women (NAC) conferences and lobbies. The members of the Gander group were not shy about assuming leadership roles. Within the first few years the group offered to organize and host a Provincial Women's Conference and one of the Gander members became Newfoundland's representative on NAC. In addition to all of this they kept the Center open and available to women through a combination of paid and volunteer help. Of the original group Matheson said, "We were young, interested, full of energy and very committed to the issues, though not all of us equally committed to all of them" (Jan 22, 1999, file #503). This energetic group faced two important challenges in these early years: 1) responding to needs of women in Gander for direct service related to violence against women; and 2) funding.

As outlined earlier, although one of the objectives of the GWC was to provide support to women, the members of the group did not intend to be in the business of delivering direct services. However, once the GWC opened its doors, the members very quickly became aware of the reality and extent of violence in women's lives, the absence of specific services, and of the general lack of awareness of violence against women which was evident in existing health care and law enforcement structures. When women who were beaten and bruised arrived at the GWC,

it began to provide direct services, including emergency housing, transportation and clothing. At the same time, the GWC began to lobby for services to be established and financially supported by government. Only a year after the GWC opened, the lobby for these services for victims of wife abuse seemed to be a real possibility.

In 1985 the federal government announced Project Haven, a funding initiative offered through Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation (CMHC), intended to increase the number of emergency shelters for victims of family violence (CMHC, Project Haven Guide, 1985, p. 1). The project was designed to provide infrastructure funding to community-based groups to build shelters, on the condition that the group could get a provincial commitment for administrative funding. The GWC decided to take on the responsibility of doing whatever work was necessary to establish a transition house in central Newfoundland and Labrador. This decision was clearly based on client need, member interest and available funding.

For the next few years the agenda of the GWC became enmeshed with that of the transition house. Through education, advocacy and lobbying, most activities continued but they focussed primarily on issues related to the violence in women's lives. This focus on the needs of victims of violence demanded a critical analysis of justice, health and social assistance policies. This was the beginning of, what would turn into the GWC's on going work of social policy advocacy.

A second major challenge to the GWC, in the early years, related to funding. In the 1990 Federal budget, Gerald Weiner, Minister of Finance, announced the elimination of core funding to women's groups across the country. The women's groups in Newfoundland and Labrador reacted quickly with a radical, clear, determined, and organized voice. 'Weiner' roasts and

demonstrations happened across the province and a group of feminists occupied the offices of Secretary of State in St. John's. They demanded a return of funding. This response and fight back quickly spread across the country and was successful--- to an extent. Funding was restored, but with restrictions, including a cap on funding to the federal Women's Program and an annual reduction to core funding of 5% in each of the next five years.

This loss of funds represented more than simply less money for the GWC. It signalled the withdrawal of the federal government support for building an equality agenda and made it more difficult to achieve a vibrant women's movement. Until the early 1990s, in addition to providing core funding, the federal government, through the Women's Program, funded women's groups in Newfoundland and Labrador to hold annual conferences and lobbies. The conferences were hosted by different Councils each year but they followed a similar process. This process included extensive communication among groups to identify themes, issues and formats. The work leading up to the lobbies required that each center become aware of prevailing provincial issues and come prepared to present background information, arguments and recommendations to the Provincial Cabinet and to the official Opposition. These activities helped to sustain and expand the women's movement. Along with the core groups from the women's centers, every year more women's groups participated. Through these events, women gained and used knowledge and skills to discuss, debate, analyse and critique, and they developed a sense of collective voice and power.

The GWC began in 1984 with considerable energy, determination and with optimism for what could be achieved. However, by 1994, Canada was in the throes of deficit preoccupation. From the perspective of the GWC, certainly since the Weiner budget in 1990, social programs had been experiencing what Ken Battle (2001, p. 1) called social policy by stealth. Slowly but

surely, the welfare state was being reshaped and services and a commitment to providing services were being chipped away. Unemployment was high, and Canadians were increasingly concerned about our national debt. In the Fall of 1994, the Federal Liberal government issued a discussion paper, *Agenda: Jobs and Growth*, which outlined the government's plan to reform Canada's social security programs. Leading up to, and surrounding the release of this document, groups on the Canadian right were calling for a severe retrenchment of social policy and a return to a residual welfare state (Rice & Prince, 2000, p. 94 - 95). The victories of neo-liberal provincial governments and a Reform federal opposition, helped to solidify the discourse that appears to have succeeded in altering Canadians' expectations of their government's role in social welfare. (Evans, 2002, p. 80) Rumours that the government intended to dismantle the social safety net, including getting rid of Canada Assistance Plan (CAP) and restructuring the Unemployment Insurance System (UI), were confirmed once the document, subtitled, "Improving Social Security in Canada" was released (Carter & Clark, 1994, p. 7 - 9).

1995 - 2005 - Caught in a Current of Reform

I have chosen the decade 1995 - 2005 as the focus of my research for several reasons. This period clearly marks a decided move toward neo-liberalism. Social security reform and the blatant retrenchment of the welfare state resulted in significant changes in the relationship between governments and women groups. The autonomy of the GWC was affected by the loss of federal government support for the women's movement in general and by attempts at the provincial level to harness the energy of women's groups to deliver government services. The changing relationship between the state and the voluntary sector resulted in a decade of intense

challenge for the GWC, and social justice groups in general, to find ways to hold fast to their goals.

Reshaping support for gender equality within the Canadian welfare state:

While the green paper on social security reform, released in the Fall of 1994, did not specifically address funding for women's programs, the document reflected the ideological climate of the times. Rumours of cuts to women's programs were spreading across the country. In January 1995, Jacqueline Pelletier, President of the Ontario Advisory Council on the Status of Women, sent an urgent memo to call for action by Women's Councils across the country. In this memo she informed women that:

The federal government is reviewing the whole women's 'package' which includes the CACSW, Women's Program and Status of Women Canada. It appears that one idea that the feds are considering is to roll the whole women's 'package' into one entity within Status of Women Canada. I must emphasize that this is not fact, but rumour. What is very clear, however, is that the Council and Women's Program is at risk (memo, Jan 13, 1995).

In Newfoundland and Labrador the PACSW-NL organized a series of teleconferences for women's groups to come together and plan strategies to influence the federal government to continue its funding and support for a strong women's program. Their plans included connecting with and soliciting support from other community organizations, municipal and provincial governments and from specific MPs, including Newfoundland's member of the federal cabinet. In addition, there would be the issuing of press releases and the launching of a letter writing

campaign to key Federal Ministers (Minutes, Jan 26th, 1995). What is interesting is that their strategies were directed at convincing people of the economic value of the work of the centers. The campaign was based on the facts that the Centers brought federal dollars into the province and saved the province money by providing direct services. The teleconference minutes from this period argue, for example, that “women’s centers are cost effective, we should figure out what we save the [provincial] system in emergency services when we take a woman out of crisis” (Minutes, Jan 26th, 1995), and that “we should begin by documenting the money we save social services and health” (Minutes, Feb 9th, 1995).

The strategies are not focussed on the social justice value of a strong women’s movement, but on the economic value of direct service. This is significant for a couple of reasons. First, it signals acquiescence to the neo-liberal ideology of reducing everything to its market value, and, second, it also changes the significance of the work, from its origins in creating processes to advance the women’s movement and to achieve full equality, to providing structures to sustain service delivery.

The Federal Budget came down on February 28th, 1995, and marked the end of the CACSW. Women’s group reconvened again on March 2nd, by teleconference. The president of the PACSW read a press release from SWC concerning core funding for women’s centers, that stated “funding would be held at last year’s level”, she declared that our lobby worked. In fact the details, as provided during that discussion included another 5% cut to the Women’s Program budget overall, but “the status quo will be maintained for the current years funding for women’s centers and that during this time the Minister will hold consultations to evaluate the program” (Minutes, March 2nd, 1995, file #538). Again, the discussion turned to economic survival, and

this time the group was making plans to focus on securing provincial government funding for service delivery. The discussion during this meeting was devoid of comment or analysis of the impact of these changes, and the pending evaluation, on the women's movement overall, but rather focussed almost entirely on the economic survival of the women's centers. While some may have considered this a victory, or at least a reprieve, there was certainly no security in federal government support for the women's movement across the country.

The minutes of the March 2nd conference call contain the first documented discussion about approaching the provincial government for funding for service delivery. "We should go after funding from the province,... we should get the province to recognize the service delivery part of our work,... we should charge the provincial government for some of the work we do." (Minutes, March 2nd, 1995) Another conference call occurred on March 21st, during which it was noted by several participants that "there doesn't seem to be much energy to fight back". Some groups wanted to get on with the quest for provincial funding while others, including the GWC, wanted to focus their energies on issues embedded in the whole social security reform. GWC specifically referred to the absence of federal interest in social justice. One member commented that, "maybe we should connect with other groups, like NAPO, because it's not just women's programs they're not interested in, it's social justice" (minutes, March 21st, 1995). That seems to be the end of any consideration of launching a campaign to fight back against the federal governments withdrawal of support for the women's movement. The documents suggest that a fight back campaign was never seriously considered. This is significant in light of the fact that Newfoundland and Labrador led the national fight back against the Weiner budget just five years earlier.

In 1996, the federal government put the promised consultation process in place and the GWC was among the groups invited to participate in the Atlantic regional consultation in Halifax. The groups invited included a very broad range of women's interests, including sports, education, and business. There were also some groups, such as women's centers, and anti-violence groups, that would be considered part of the women's movement. The new women's program, announced later that year, reflected this miscellany. It was all within SWC as rumoured and included an academic research funding branch and a project funding program accessible to all groups interested in women's issues, not just feminist organizations. The new program had no funds for annual conferences or political lobbies, and core funding to women's centers was slated to end in 1997. This program, with its inclusion of non-feminist groups and absence of funds to support networking, effectively ended any federal government commitment to the women's movement.

Downloading:

From federal to provincial funding:

While 1997 was the last year of federal core funding, women's groups in NL were successful in obtaining a project grant to fund a workshop to consider alternative funding strategies. This event, called *Forum '97* was organized under the leadership of the PACSW. Forum '97 included a series of teleconferences through which PACSW led the women's centers in a process to identify the service delivery components of their on-going work. In the Fall of 1997, the groups came together to design their pitch to the provincial government about the fact that women's centers, by the services they offered, were saving several departments considerable

money. The centers asked for compensation for this work and in December the Minister Responsible for the Status of Women announced that the province would provide an annual grant of \$30,000 to each the seven women's centers. The GWC participated fully in these efforts to secure provincial funding for service delivery and played somewhat of a leadership role in Forum '97.

Contracting for service: from the province to the community:

The provincial government used contracts, called service agreements, to formalize the funding arrangement with the women's centers. These agreements consisted of a formal legal contract which was prepared by the provincial government and a service plan prepared by the women's council which was included as Schedule A.

In the beginning, the contract section basically included that the government would fund the center to 'provide core service, as specified in Schedule A' and that the Councils would provide reports, maintain proper books and records, submit a financial statement and have liability insurance" (Service Agreement, 1998 - 1999). The services in Schedule A were those that the Centers identified they were already providing and included: direct service, public education and outreach, information and referral and community leadership. The four categories were consistent across women's centers but the weight given to each area was at the discretion of the individual center and the centers retained considerable autonomy to include other activities within their service plans. For example, the GWC consistently included advocacy within its core services.

In 2003, the government made a significant change to the wording of the service

agreements. The main contract now included a clause specifically defining funded core services. Although the categories did not change, this move is significant for two reasons. First, because government had taken the flexibility to determine services away from the women's centers, and, second, "there is no reference to the advocacy and lobbying work of the centers" (Smith, 2005, p. 3). Although there has been no noticeable impact to date, the fact remains that the government now has the power to enforce these restrictions.

Service delivery contracts are a very clear example of downloading as defined by Richmond & Shields, (2004) and Katherine Scott, (2003). The neo-liberal state reduces its responsibility to deliver services by contracting with voluntary, or for profit, organizations to provide services that should have been provided by the state. While the province had not been providing the services offered through the women's centers, the service agreements institutionalized the centers and further removed the government from responsibility for service delivery. From the GWC's perspective, their role was to advocate for the government to take on this responsibility and not to provide the service themselves.

However, there has been little change in the type of direct services offered through the GWC over the years. Although the formal record keeping did not start until 1998, log books, minutes and funding applications from 1985 onward contain files that suggest that the services provided through the GWC did not change significantly during the 1995 -2005 decade or in relation to the work of the previous decade. Nonetheless, the service agreements entrenched, symbolically at least, the GWC's service delivery role.

The GWC was creative in presenting activities it wanted to engage in as meeting the requirements of the service agreement. For example, ongoing annual events associated with Take

Back the Night, December 6th commemorative ceremonies, and International Women's Day celebrations were reported as fulfilling requirements for education and outreach. Community leadership was defined as presentations to various government consultation processes including pre-budget and community consultations, and as assisting the Department of Justice with the establishment of Family Justice Services and participating in planning for a unified family court. Again, there is no discernible change in the scope of these activities pre and post provincial funding. At times government initiated consultations processes were more numerous, such as in 2001-2002 when the community was consulted on social assistance, mental health, housing, health care and the provincial budget.

Although the GWC was governed by the service agreement, as were the other centers, there is really no notable impact on the day-to-day work of the center. The records indicate that the GWC did not expand its service delivery role as a result of welfare state retrenchment. But, on the other hand, the advocacy role seems to have undergone a significant transformation whereby the work, although still connected to client needs, was more directly influenced by available funding.

Funding: Staying Afloat

The issues within funding have always included getting enough funds to keep the GWC open and available to women, and finding money to enable the group to focus on advocacy. The provincial core funding, although a little higher than the federal grant, was still inadequate to meet the needs of the GWC and the Council. As in the past, for most of this decade, the GWC devoted considerable effort to securing money from many and diverse sources.

Although SWC had a pot of money for advocacy work, related to institutional change, there were several issues associated with gaining funds from this program. First, the process of project application was complicated and time consuming, and since SWC did not provide funding for project development, it was an additional drain on limited staff and volunteer time. Second, the funds were not dependable, both because there was a limited pot of money, accessible to an increasingly large number of groups and because SWC kept changing the funding criteria. Getting money from this pot one year did not guarantee money for the next. That being said, as the GWC was already developing an interest in social policy and institutional analysis, this funding criteria generally fit with the goals of the group.

In addition to getting money from this source, during this ten year period the GWC also accessed funds for various projects from a variety of sources including both federal and provincial agencies and departments. Some of the projects were motivated by altruism, others were more financially driven. For example, the Victims' Services program within the Department of Justice provided funding for the GWC to do outreach work related to violence against women in isolated outposts. This was work that the GWC wanted to do in conjunction with Cara House. On the other hand Human Resources and Development Canada asked the GWC to do a study of women's employment and training needs in the Central Newfoundland region. While this was not directly related to the mandate of the group it was considered not to be ideologically compromising and it would help pay the rent.

As with other groups across the country, in this post social security reform period, the GWC experienced a difficult and multi layered struggle to keep the group going, and on course. Katherine Scott (2003) has identified several detrimental effects for the voluntary sector as a

result of Canada's new funding regime. Of particular relevance to the GWC is the concept of volatility which refers to the vulnerability of groups related to increasing insecurity of funding. This insecurity requires more energy to find sources of funding which takes time away from attending to organizational development. A second effect is mission drift that can occur when organizations shift their course to either attract new funding or to accommodate restrictions in changed funding guidelines. A very real concern for the GWC has always been to find ways to negotiate with funders to secure funding without compromising their mission. There is never an easy answer and the group remains vulnerable to funding changes.

Advocacy: pushing the limits to hold to the tiller:

Avoiding Mission Drift:

When the GWC formed in 1984 it was to join a dynamic women's movement in the province. Already women's groups had created processes to enable them to work collectively to influence government policy and programs. As noted previously, with funding from the Secretary of State, groups gathered annually to discuss women's needs and consider how programs and processes could be added or adjusted to meet this reality. The results of these collective exchanges, reflections, and actions reaped significant benefits for women in the province. For example, the women's community was successful in convincing government to bring in a victim services program to assist victims of violence in coping with the court process; to mandate a support enforcement agency to assist women to collect child support; in educating agents of the state about violence against women and getting many processes adjusted to support women in coping with or leaving abusive situations.

The restructuring of the welfare state and the withdrawal of federal support to the women's movement affected the role that the GWC played in terms of providing provincial leadership within several social policy areas. In 1995, the GWC took its first steps in this regard. During the teleconferences to discuss the 1995 budget, the GWC began a discussion on the need for a collective provincial voice to increase the rights for victims in the parole process. (Minutes, March 22, 1995). The GWC's knowledge of issues within parole grew from experiences with direct service delivery with victims of violence caught up in the parole process. After initial inquiry, the GWC believed there were serious gender issues within both the law and the administration of parole and decided to look for funding to examine the system. In 1995, the GWC applied for funds to lead a provincial effort to bring pressure on the federal government to make changes to national parole policy. An application was submitted to and approved by Secretary of State, Women's Program and the work to reform parole policy began. Women's Centers throughout the province participated in this effort and by 1997 it had spread outside the province and was supported by groups in New Brunswick during a demonstration and leafleting at the National Parole Board office in Moncton. The GWC joined with other victims rights' groups across the country to put forth a common agenda. This effort was successful in changing the system to ensure that victims received more information from the institutions and also were given a voice at parole hearings. This was the beginning of what turned into a decade of GWC undertaking social policy research and advocacy, all related to the issues brought by their clients and integrating the needs expressed by centers across the province.

After 1997, there was another fundamental shift in how the federal government provided support for women's equality work. Instead of support for collective analysis and political

lobbying, funds were now available to consider whether the policies and programs presently in place needed to be adjusted to meet gender equity. This was project funding to do research to tweak rather than to challenge the system. The ability to chart a course autonomously is compromised as the lines of longitude and latitude were pretty much predetermined.

Yet the GWC continued to find ways to create processes and to provide leadership for women and groups to analyse, critique and make recommendations related to social policy. Throughout the decade the GWC also led a provincial effort to reform civil legal aid, a provincial response to proposed changes to the Divorce Act, and also initiated a provincial analysis of the role of class and gender within child protection.

Aside from the focus on social policy research, the GWC also tried other strategies to keep women's voices within social policy debate. In 1999, the GWC created a chapter of the Raging Grannies⁶ and along with the Council of Canadians and the PACSW, it intervened on behalf of women across the province during a provincial health consultation held in Gander. The group also helped to create coalitions within their community to address local issues. These included forming a community coalition to bring pressure on the regional hospital board regarding kitchen services in the local seniors' home, and joining with parents to support their efforts to get girls' hockey included in the NL Winter Games. These interventions were successful, others were not. The GWC initiated an intervention with the municipal government regarding the effects of the newly announced poll tax for low-income residents, and joined in a coalition effort to take possession of an abandoned local school for a community resource center;

⁶ The Raging Grannies originated in British Columbia, when a group of women who had been peace activists in the 1970s wanted to create another medium for protest. The idea has spread across the country and there are now groups in most Canadian provinces. Gander has the only group in Newfoundland and Labrador.

neither of these efforts achieved the desired results.

In 1999, the GWC organized and hosted an Atlantic Canada Women's Justice Conference. "Making Waves," which brought together feminist activists from the Atlantic Region to identify common issues and create strategies to work collectively towards justice in the new millennium. This resulted in the creation and enhancement of informal networks which are still in existence. The GWC also connected with groups on the national level with respect to civil legal aid. In 2002 the group was asked to participate in a Canadian Bar Association effort to prepare a Charter challenge concerning the federal funding structure for civil legal aid. In 2001, when the Family Justice Services Program was announced for the central region of NL, the Minister of Justice credited the creation of the service to the work the GWC had done in relation to civil legal aid.

Undoubtedly the GWC was busy with public policy advocacy during this decade. For most of this time funding, whether from SWC or the WPO, was not enough to cover the salary for a full-time coordinator. So the policy research and coordination of the Center were usually rolled into one paid position. The advocacy work was often the primary focus, and the records show that during the periods of intensive advocacy work, the community work was considerably restricted. Whether the lack of attention to engagement with the local community was due to the increased focus on advocacy is not clear, nor is it certain whether this affected local interest in the group. What is clear is that during this period the GWC faced significant challenges in maintaining an active membership and board.

Movement: Membership and Networks

In terms of direct membership the GWC keeps only a running membership list, so everyone who has ever joined the organization is still included as a member. The GWC has never stood on ceremony and it is likely that many of the women who have been active with the group never officially became members. Currently, there are approximately 125 names on the membership list, most of whom joined during the 1980s and many of whom no longer live in the community. The records do not indicate any particular effort to expand membership, except to make membership applications available at public events and to recruit people to serve on the board of directors to make decisions and assume accountability.

From 1995 to 1998 there was a stable and active group, but since 1999 the group has been very small, essentially just enough members to keep the board from folding. The records indicate that in recent years the lack of membership has become an increasingly serious problem. Minutes of meetings, newsletters and other reports clearly establish a concern about falling membership. At several points there are comments that events had to be postponed due to lack of interest. In 1999, there were no Board meetings for a seven and a half month period due to lack of a quorum. In 1999 the AGM was postponed so many times that the board considered changing its by-laws to hold elections every two years, instead of annually.

In terms of social action and social justice, networks, both local and provincial, have been vitally important to the GWC. In 1990, the community rallied to fight the Weiner budget cuts, in 1995 to support the GWC efforts to influence parole policy and, in 2000, for the Women's World March. There are other significant examples of the GWC joining with others to address

community issues. In 1997, the GWC worked with the local labour council committee to organize a weekend workshop on coalition building. Also in 2001, the GWC supported the work of mothers in the community who challenged the Winter Games Committee to include girls' hockey. These networks typically included local literacy and adult education groups, anti-violence groups and unions. An additional struggle for the GWC is that many of these groups have lost funding or social action focus. For example provincial funding for the literacy coalition has been withdrawn as has federal support for the Canadian Association of Adult Education. The Women Interested in Successful Employment (WISE) program which was administered by a community advisory board has been removed from community direction and is now administered through a provincial office in St. John's. The local anti-violence group no longer exists and Cara Transition House, once a vibrant community partner has been subsumed under the new Heath Board structure. Provincially, the Association Against Family Violence (PAAFV) lost most of its core funding and, as previously noted, the women's community no longer holds annual conferences and lobbies. Nationally we have lost NAC, CACSW, and federal support for the women's movement.

Whether the loss of these networks can be seen as direct results of neo-liberal retrenchment of the welfare state is uncertain. Networks can exist without government funding. What is certain is that the state has withdrawn support for groups to do political analysis and advocacy, and consequently until new means are created, the power of the GWC and of people in general to organize a strong collective voice to do significant social justice analysis and actions will remain severely compromised.

The GWC remains in somewhat of a crisis situation with few members and a real absence

of networks. There are some efforts by the women's community to create a new momentum through teleconference discussion calls, and there have been some efforts to form new partnerships and coalitions, with union and senior women. In 2004, the GWC participated in an Fishery, Food and Allied Workers (FFAW) central regional education event and actions have been taken to encourage senior women to participate in the Raging Grannies and in International Women's Day events. These efforts have been sporadic and no real successes have materialized to date.

Conclusion

How has the GWC been able to set its own course and hold to the tiller?

The GWC has struggled to balance an overall desire to create a just and equal world with helping to ameliorate some of the harshest effects of the present political and economic system. The ever-present issues with core and project funding, the shifts in government ideology, the retrenchment of the welfare state, and the general malaise within society has created countless struggles and barriers and a constant need to regroup.

Although it appears that the work continued to be determined by board member interest, client need and available funding, it can be suggested that funding was the key factor in planning advocacy work, as client need and board interest would have been better served in following the social justice course more closely than was possible within the available funding structures. Since 1995 advocacy work has been articulated within very specific project guidelines and the vibrant and collective advocacy that occurred within provincial conferences and lobbies no longer happens.

Most of the efforts over this decade in question were focussed on social policy research; research that was considered legitimate, or sufficiently non-threatening, to be funded, and used, by neo-liberal governments. It was research and related social action within defined boundaries, that did not threaten present the power relationships and also did not significantly move the equality agenda forward. In some ways, the GWC has pushed the limits of the box by refusing to expand service provision and instead rewriting their existing work to fulfill contract requirements. If the group felt its advocacy voice was restricted because of provincial funding, then strategies like creating the Raging Grannies to provide a safer vehicle to challenge government, helped the GWC regain its voice in a safer milieu.

The commitment of the women who started the organization and of the women who continue to struggle to keep it going still rests in the desire to achieve social justice. The interviews I conducted with women who have been connected with this group add a layer of analysis that is not available from the documents that represent the recorded history. They will provide another picture of the GWC that will help in the discussion about how successfully the GWC held the tiller and steered their own course.

Chapter V - KEY INFORMANT INTERVIEWS

Six Men and a Elephant (excerpt)
And so these men of Indostan
Disputed loud and long,
Each in his own opinion,
Exceeding stiff and strong.
Though each of them was partly right,
And all were in the wrong.
John Godfrey Saxe

Introduction

Recognizing that each woman's story of the organization would be influenced by many factors, including her particular experience and her political or ideological lens, I intentionally sought out, among the available interviewees, a cross-section of experiences and world views. Their many different views of the GWC are partly right in that they reflect each woman's individual experience, and also partly wrong, as each touched the elephant in a different way and with her own expectations. To say this is not to suggest that my informants lacked vision; on the contrary, they each have incredible vision, but each vision is coloured by her own lens. They shared the ability to offer deep analysis and insights and to articulate their hopes and dreams and fears. They also shared a passion for the organization and a commitment to advancing equality and social justice, each within her own definition and parameters.

The documents, I can assume, recorded what was significant to the group at the time of recording; the interviews, on the other hand, give insight into what is significant to individual members, in retrospect. The documents record the decisions, the interviews shed light on the debate. On another day, a different part of the elephant may have stood out to any of them. So the

story that unfolds is the one that has been told to me and captures their reflections and opinions at the point of telling.

The purpose of this chapter is to reflect on the mission and role, successes and challenges, of the GWC, as expressed through the opinions and analysis of the respondents. Some of the specific themes obvious in the documents came through in most of the interviews, including the fact that some combination of client need, board member interest and available funding determined the work of the GWC, and that there were internal struggles related to balancing advocacy and service. As well, all the respondents were very knowledgeable about the social policy work and the GWC's reputation as a player in the field of social policy overall and within the justice arena in particular. There were differences of opinion about whether the chosen course was the right one for the group to take. Some saw the focus on policy projects as mainstreaming and a definite shift away from the original advocacy mission, others saw it as consistent with the original mission although adapted to the political climate of the time. Themes that emerged as particularly important within the interviews but less so within the documents include questions related to sustaining membership, and challenges to the continuing existence of a women's movement overall.

Who are my key informants?

The criteria that I developed and applied to identify an appropriate cross section of respondents, as detailed in the methodology chapter, included that they collectively would adequately represent: the time period under study; different types of involvement, both within the GWC and community advocacy in general; and a range of ideological perspectives that have been

influential in the creating and shaping of the GWC. Specific details of how each of these criteria have been accomplished are also contained in the methodology chapter.

What did they say?

The mission of the GWC. What is it and who decides?

One pressing dilemma for community-based advocacy groups within a neo-liberal welfare state, is the downloading of service delivery from the government to the voluntary sector, and the impact that funding tied to service delivery has on the group's ability to follow their original advocacy mission (Gill & Theriault, 2003, Graefe, 2001, Richmond & Shields, 2004, Scott, 2003). For the GWC, the advocacy/service challenge was complicated by the shift in its source of core funding, from the federal government to the province. As discussed in the previous chapter, the GWC had originally received core funding, for advocacy and education, from the federal government, first through the Department of the Secretary of State, then through Human Resources Development Canada, and later from Status of Women Canada. After 1997, the federal government stopped providing this core funding and women's groups in Newfoundland and Labrador approached the province for funding for service delivery. Given this context, I asked the respondents to discuss their understanding of the mission of the GWC and their impression of the factors that influence that mission.

In the beginning the mission, as very clearly stated by the founding member, was advocacy and education.

When I became involved, education and advocacy were to be our primary focus... as for service delivery, it was not part of our mission at all. The first inroads into

our group re service delivery came when we were the only ones who would undertake to help women get out of violent situations (04).

Two other respondents agreed that the mission of the GWC is advocacy and that any service delivery was simply a necessary evil that resulted from either the absolute lack of services to meet a specific need or the fact that services had been downgraded from the provincial government (01, 03). In contrast, four respondents saw the mission as a combination of advocacy and service delivery. However, three of them described service delivery as education, information and referral:

[I] always saw the GWC as doing both...A very strong hand in directed advocacy work, doing the research, the analysis and really pulling that together into concrete stuff, at the same time the GWC had a space and room for every woman who dropped in crisis...both seemed to go on, neither at the detriment of the other (06).

Only one respondent referred to service delivery in terms of concrete and direct services such as accompanying women to court or other appointments, helping with application forms and resumes and counselling.

Most respondents agreed that the GWC has managed to hold the delivery of direct services to a minimum, in favour of a focus on advocacy. The modus operandi was articulated by several respondents and creatively described by one as: “while they were hauling the bodies out of the water they were also up the river trying to stop the process that was throwing the bodies in”(07, 04, 05). Respondents feel that the knowledge gained through the direct service work helped to define the issues that shaped the advocacy agenda.

The present compromise between service and advocacy has not been arrived at without a struggle. Respondents noted that the debate created tensions on many levels for the individual, the group and with government. The GWC has engaged in various struggles with both levels of government: with the province in debating contract language, and service delivery and reporting requirements; and with the federal government in pushing funding guidelines to facilitate the groups' advocacy agenda. The most significant tensions however, were those internal to the individual and to the group. Individually and collectively, members struggled with “whether to fill the service gap or not”(01), “trying to fill gaps on one hand because people need services and trying not to fill the gaps on the other hand because government needs to know that those gaps are there and it is their responsibility to fill them.”(03) One member described the struggle among members as between

the practical members and the philosophical members. Members who came to the Board with ideological motives tended to want to focus on the advocacy work and hold government accountable for the continuing delivery of services, those who came wanting to do some practical good work tended to want to provide direct services to individuals (03).

Respondents reported that some members had left the group because their needs were not being met: “members who wanted to do the individual service work or more practical work tended not to find a place for that [at the GWC]”(01).

The respondents were very clear that only a few people led the group. In a very upfront, honest and forthright fashion, perhaps, but none the less those who wanted to do the systemic advocacy work were the leaders and that is why this work became the focus. Respondents said

that the decision to pursue advocacy as opposed to service delivery resulted from the interests and skills of the leadership around the table at the time. This suggests that the commitment to follow the advocacy agenda is fluid and subject to change. The issues related to service delivery and advocacy are not solved for perpetuity, they regularly resurface and will likely continue to do so as the membership and leadership of the GWC changes and women bring their own perspectives to bear. Another equally pressing concern is whether there will be a membership and leadership to continue the work in any regard.

Membership:

Respondents all agree that the strong leadership within the GWC was responsible for the decided focus on advocacy. While there is some disagreement about whether the leadership should have been as strong as it was, the more current issue is that this strong leadership base is dwindling and the membership, as it now exists, is not likely to produce a new group of leaders to replace it. Respondents expressed great concern for the future of the GWC and for the movement overall.

I can't see the women's center being here in another five years, with a board that doesn't exist. I fear that...like one of those small rural communities, when they can't get a council,...government moves in and takes over, [I fear] that the Women's Policy Office from St. John's ... [or] somebody else will run the GWC and not the women of the community... if they only knew how lost we are in our leadership (01).

A dilemma now is that communities are not mobilized - the source of power within

the advocacy movement is in presenting issues with public strength, the women's community is not mobilized anymore...the original members are not there and no new one have been brought in or encouraged to move in and take over (07).

All respondents see the main challenge now as finding ways to build a committed and active membership and rebuild the movement overall. While everyone agrees that these are major issues, there are strong tensions around how to approach expanding the membership base. Some members believe that the GWC should be open to all women, others fear that expanding the wings too far will result in a weakening of the feminist agenda while also recognizing the dilemma that if more women do not become involved there will be no group.

In terms of defining who is an appropriate member respondents said: "Internally, we are going to have to rethink how we work as councils, how we treat other women....we do not want to become as arrogant as the organizations we want to change"(05), and "I think you have to engage all parties to move the agenda forward, everybody has something to offer...one of the key things is to not be judgmental about people"(08). Another respondent articulated the other side of the argument: "Ideally we should be wider, we are not including women who don't have the same value base. I worry that the voice of the center will be significantly changed if we open the wings too far but the other side of me knows that to be an inclusive feminist organization, I suppose we need to include other women"(01).

Several of the respondents discussed the membership issue in relation to the closed nature of the leadership shop, and how that is likely keeping women from joining (05, 08). But another had no problem with a definitive mission and leadership, stating that "[The GWC] was always honest in relating its mission so that women can come on board and if they agree with this

mission they can take a leadership role”(03).

This discussion indicates the existence of several structural and ideological questions. Who decides the scope of membership? Who decides the focus of leadership? Who decides the mission of the GWC? Has the group been defined in the mid-1980s, never to be redefined? Is the role of the membership to shape and reshape the group to meet the needs of the members or to follow in the path that has been set? These questions, if addressed, have the potential to reaffirm or redefine the existing feminist focus of the GWC, and their resolution may lead to a more fixed or fluid ownership of the groups agenda.

While many of the tensions around membership are not resolved, the group has made some general efforts to expand the membership base. They offered public events for women in the community, including a film series and a workshop on poor bashing but “we are not getting new women, only generating to our own crowd”(02). Also, members have been asked to individually recruit members and to go back and encourage past members to rejoin.

Leadership and membership issues are unsolved and the tensions continue. These are critical issues, that if not addressed directly by the group will, as one member suggested, solve themselves by default (01).

Mobilizing verses Mainstreaming:

Another issue that creates tension and struggles for the GWC is deciding the most appropriate way to influence public policy. Some members favour a focus on rebuilding the movement-type politics of the 1970s and 1980s and others favour working within processes as defined and made available by government.

Those who favour the focus on mobilizing believe that, historically, the women's movement has been able to influence government decision-making when it could mobilize a significant power base. They are concerned that the movement is not mobilized in any public way and no longer exudes personal power nor asserts political power. 'We used to have lots of marches and protests and we went to the seat of political power, we used to feel we could change the world, now we are lulled into inactivity because we feel we can not change anything... people are not willing or interested in marching, or lobbying or getting arrested [for the cause]' (03, 04). Their interest is in reigniting the movement and mobilizing communities to take power. In this regard the GWC has undertaken some work to try and rekindle an interest in creative demonstrations.

In 1999, the GWC, in conjunction with some members of a local seniors group, organized a chapter of the Raging Grannies. The group decided it needed "to try [a new strategy] in order to bring our voices out and have ourselves heard"(02). The Raging Grannies addressed several social and political issues, sometimes in coalition with other groups including the Council of Canadians, the PACSW, and students. The Raging Grannies were successful in gaining significant media attention and attention from some politicians. Some members thought this strategy was brilliant (02), others felt it reeked of the bake sale era, that the media overshadowed the message (01).

The GWC continued in the tradition of trying to dance at two weddings. While the GWC was struggling to create strategies to move political thinking it was simultaneously focussed on creating ways to work within the new realities of neo-liberalism. Some respondents were very positive about how well the GWC did in this regard.

Respondents said that the GWC very quickly saw the ideological shift towards neo-liberalism as a withdrawal of commitment to social development and so kept itself open to new ways of working in the context of the new political reality.

Gander has been very strategic in terms of developing relationships with decision makers, in being able to look at the priorities of government and make that work for [the GWC], and not to naively expect that government would do it because it was the right thing to do, but to present analysis and within that give them [government] the economic bottom line (05).

One member described it as an educational transformative approach rather than an ‘angry, mad’ approach, “we said let us show you the effects of what you are doing and let us show you what else is possible”(03). Applying these conciliatory approaches resulted in the group creating a place for itself within public policy discussion. For example, the GWC has been invited to participate in a process to evaluate the Violence Prevention Initiative, a round table on Our Place in Canada, and has been consulted about specific policies related to civil legal aid and parole.

Undoubtedly these are different strategies than those used in the 1970s and 1980s, and some view them as successful other members have not accepted that the GWC should have gone down this road at all. Some respondents feel less positive about participating in and being invited into government circles, to others it is an example of the processes of the GWC being usurped to meet a government agenda (04, 01).

Most respondents saw the shift in the focus of the group toward social policy research as a mixed blessing, and the loss of some opportunities but the creation of others. As one respondent said, “GWC applied the philosophy of close a door, open a window”(03).

There is still some debate and soul searching about what the GWC has lost by working within the system in these ways. Some members continue to struggle with the desire to regain the independent and effective ways of the past, but the group has essentially shifted course and now focusses most of its efforts within advocacy and social justice toward working within government processes and systems. The issue is not considered resolved, and there is always discussion among members about how to safeguard autonomy while nudging the system toward social justice.

Funding:

Although the records suggest that obtaining enough money to keep the GWC going has always been a major preoccupation for the group, this did not emerge as a major theme in the interviews. Core funding from the province, originally at \$30,000. in 1997, has been steadily increasing and now the centers receive an annual grant of \$75,000. According to the respondents there is enough money to run the center. Finally, the amount of core funding is not an issue.

The dilemma for the GWC in relation to provincial funding has been to be vigilant to ensure that it has not sold its right to speak its truth. One respondent wondered “if provincial funding has silenced the centers a bit, no one seems to be too vocal about [changes to social assistance], but we need to talk about it because that’s definitely affecting women’s lives”(01).

Another respondent was even more direct. She said:

that [the provincial government is trying to take over] the systems that [the women’s movement] had developed to implement action for change [and use them] to provide services to women. In other words the government funding [is a]

means by which women's voices [are] silenced. There are fewer and fewer voices speaking out and up for political change and equal opportunities (04).

The respondents are also concerned with the uncertainty and restrictiveness of funding from Status of Women Canada to do the advocacy work. "As more and more services are restructured and cutback, and when you see women's situations as we do at the GWC the struggle to do the advocacy work is more imperative, yet there is less and less funding"(03, 04). The new way of funding advocacy is also affecting the relationships among the women centers as they are vying against each other to get part of the shrinking SWC pot. This is causing tensions among groups and "time that should be used for advocacy is spent trying to produce competitive funding applications to get projects" (04). The concerns around funding are linked to the larger issues of government support for autonomous women centers, a women's agenda and for the women's movement in general.

Neo-liberalism - how has it been manifested?

In the province of Newfoundland and Labrador, the GWC was at the forefront of the women's community efforts in the mid 1990s to intervene in, and halt, the process of Social Security Reform, which represented a determined shift toward neo-liberal ideology. Ten years later, what do these respondents see as the fundamental social, political and economic changes and how has the shift in ideology affected their ability to set and stay on their own course?

As one of my respondents said with regard to the economy of the province, "the arse has always been out of her,"(01) and while this may be true, the economy took another big hit in the early to mid 1990s when the federal government closed the northern cod fishery. The cod

moratorium led to closures of many other businesses and services and to large-scale migration from small rural communities to larger urban centers. The demographics of the town of Gander, and the issues that women brought to the GWC changed, as families moved in from the outports to retrain or to look for work. People required different services and information and the GWC felt pressured to try and help them meet their needs.

Neo-liberalism has resulted in a general pull back of all levels of governments from providing social services to people. This results in the distancing of government from the people. In the case of Newfoundland and Labrador, the government downloaded much of its social service delivery, including education, health care and social service, onto volunteer boards. The government continues to restructure these boards increasing both the scope of the mandate and the size of the geographical area. At the same time there was an obvious change in the philosophy of service delivery from a client-focussed model to a business model. This resulted in decisions being made based on cost analysis rather than concepts of client need and social development, (03) and materialized in the closure of schools and health services and the distancing of services like social assistance from the client population.

As a result, the pressure on the GWC to help women get access to services and information increased. "I remember there was a struggle to figure out how to get information for clients because the information chain had become much more complicated, people were intimidated by the [process] and the rapidness of the changes"(03). The cutbacks to services also resulted in an increased demand for the GWC to provide services that no longer existed elsewhere. In fact employees in other government programs were sending people to the women centers to have their needs met, whether they were social, financial or legal."(04)

Another serious effect of this determined change in political ideology was the success of the information campaign that resulted in many people buying into the federal government's arguments that the deficit had to be reduced and the way to do that was through cuts in social services. Others who did not necessarily buy this argument, nonetheless, seemed to accept the retrenchment of social programs and the increased emphasis on people looking after their own needs. Respondents believe that this translated socially into 'every person for themselves, and lessened a sense of community and of society responsibility (01, 05). "I think there is a shift to bring things down to the lowest common denominator, its becoming more and more focussed on the individual...I think we lost the political will and political understanding of the greater society"(05).

Not everyone agreed that the changes during the last decade had been detrimental. Half of the respondents said that outcomes, for women in Newfoundland and Labrador generally, and for the GWC specifically, were positive. They believe that the new SWC funding structure gave more leeway to get funding for systemic advocacy and institutional change work (06, 07). Some suggested that the provincial government has a renewed recognition of feminism, that the changes within the political climate were positive and that women's issues had become legitimate within policy discussions. This, they suggested, is borne out in "continuous and increasing funding to women centers."(08), in "[gender analysis] training for public servants, and in including gender analysis as part of environmental assessment process for new industries."(07)

Overall, respondents seemed to accept that these processes are the ones we have and that the best bet is to learn how to work within them. I was struck by the absence of any discussion about either the possibility or responsibility of community-based advocacy groups to challenge

the fundamental values that are the essence of this political arrangement. This surprised me, particularly as these are many of the same people who led the critique of social security reform a decade ago.

What have been the successes?

The GWC has been able to balance the requirements of their service contract with the provincial government with their desire to focus on systemic advocacy. Respondents said that the GWC is one of the few groups that is actually still engaging in advocacy work and moving the issues forward.

All of the respondents believe that the GWC had played a very significant role within the public policy process. They noted the extensive work related to various aspects of access to justice, including enhancement of civil legal aid, changes to the administration of parole and achieving a voice for victims within the parole process. Others pointed to the GWC's work on custody and access, the establishment of the victims' services program and other services for victims of violence. They believe that the work of the GWC, collectively with other women's groups in the province, has resulted in increased services to meet women's needs and to increased access to justice. It has meant assistance for victims going through the criminal justice system, through the victims services program and it has meant the availability of a safe haven to shelter women and their families who are victims of family violence.

One respondent noted that the impact of the systemic advocacy efforts are difficult to establish. She wondered, "Can you trace the increase in civil legal aid directly to the work of the Gender Women's Center? The provincial government has put more money into violence

prevention,.. Can we say we made that happen”(05)? Another respondent is more certain of the measurable impact and she noted that, ”the work on access to justice is still having an impact in terms of informing the Department of Justice, it is referenced and talked about and women in justice are picking it up, it continues and ripples”(06).

What have been the losses?

What has been lost is the independent power base of the women’s movement (04, 05, 06, 07). As noted earlier, locally there are membership and leadership issues. On the provincial level, women and communities are not mobilized (07), and provincial networks are weak (04, 06, 01). The GWC has no real power and only has influence at the discretion of the political power brokers. All it takes is for a government to change or a senior minister to change and it can disappear (05). The changes to funding, within neo-liberalism, have resulted in a loss of funding to create and nurture collective processes. There is no longer any money for the annual political lobbies and conferences. The loss of these events, and all the education and analysis they involved has considerably weakened opportunities for collective action by the women’s movement as a whole (04, 05, 06, 07).

Is the GWC setting its own course?

Clearly, respondents believe that the GWC has made the best of the situation, in trying to continue to focus on advocacy and continue to challenge injustices. But, within this discussion, a question to be considered is whether pursuing what is possible, as opposed to what is desirable, can be considered setting your own course toward social justice?

Respondents commented that “at the end of the day [I] felt that the GWC responded to these changes as opportunities, that GWC was able to see the changes for what they were and therefore use the changes within Status of Women Canada and the Women’s Policy Office as opportunities to work on both service delivery and systemic advocacy”(05,06, 07). Such comments suggest that the course is at least broadly defined by the parameters as set by the state.

At the same time many respondents know that the GWC and the women’s community has to revive or create a power base. “Communities have to get mobilized, their source of power for advocacy is in presenting issues with public strength (07). The GWC and the women’s movement, need to concentrate on building community, outreach, the movement, membership, collectivism, let more people in, change a little, spread its wings, be more inclusive, connect with others in communities and unions, diversity groups, rebuild internal, community, and provincial connections with a broader base(01, 03, 05, 06, 07, 08).

Respondents agree that the work has to continue because inequality and injustice continue, and we have been losing bits of what we have gained and stand a real possibility to losing more if the REAL women and the federal conservatives have their way (01) (03) (05) (06).

The successes of the past and the desire to change the world has kept some women interested, but the women who have experienced ‘the success of the past’ are getting older and tired and moving away. The younger women have not experienced the days of massive marches and protests and occupations, they have not experienced the positive budgets, expanding social programs, new schools and health services. Is a sense of possibility missing? Or is it a sense that we have arrived (01)?

Conclusion

The challenge for the group is to determine how best to continue to push forward with an agenda of equality. To do that it needs an active membership, and power to ensure that it has a voice and can force a foot in the door. Although the group has had some success in the public policy arena it is not a powerful public policy partner. GWC has a small and shaky local membership and provincially the women's movement has little power. Some suggest that the GWC is playing the game as best it can and experiencing success, but others know they are playing by the rules, not making them.

Reflecting on the discussion, the differences in analysis are obvious. In terms of the advocacy work, some respondents believe that the GWC is firmly focussed on its advocacy agenda, while others suggest that the agenda has been consumed by government processes and guidelines. As with where they touch the elephant, their ideas on the role and success of the advocacy agenda is offered within their ideology and perspective. Some respondents favour a critical, social justice definition of advocating to redistribute power and resources, while others define advocacy as any intervention with government or the community on behalf of an individual or group, and others are somewhere in between.

As a group the respondents are, as we would say in Newfoundland and Labrador, 'on two minds about what they should do'. The next chapter will consider their quandaries, comments and suggestions in relation to the themes drawn from the literature and in context of a critical political economy framework.

Chapter VI: DISCUSSION

Alice in Wonderland and the Cheshire Cat

“Cheshire Puss,... would you tell me, please, which way I ought to go from here?

‘That depends a good deal on where you want to get to’, said the Cat.

‘I don’t much care where’ said Alice.

‘Then it doesn’t matter which way you go’, said the Cat.

Lewis Carroll

Introduction

Central to the discussion of neo-liberalism is the essence of the relationships between the state, the market and citizens (Olsen, 2002, Pierson, 1998, Esping-Anderson, 2002, and 1990).

The supremacy of the rights of the market to be as free from government regulation as possible, and at the same time supported by the state through the tax system and public policy, is a central tenet of neo-liberal ideology. My discussion is concerned with the significance of the market - state relationship and how it demands changes in the relationship between government and the voluntary sector.

Neo-liberalism embodies a return to a residual model of social welfare in which the government needs to shed the direct responsibility for providing social programs that was acquired during the development of the welfare state. This is accomplished through expanding the market presence in the provision of social services and off-loading other responsibilities onto the voluntary sector and families. Within neo-liberalism, the government attempts to integrate the voluntary sector into a state plan for the provision of services generally considered part of the welfare state, (Shields & Evans, cited in Graefe, 2001; Scott, 2005; McKeen 2004; McKeen & Porter 2004). Governments also use their funding mechanisms to harness the energy of the

voluntary sector to meet the political needs of the economic system, as noted by Graefe (2000, p. 37) the voluntary sector is “harnessed to underwrite national accumulation strategies.” It is funded to provide services that have been provided by governments, rather than to follow their own autonomous agenda. The needs of the market are met because this move results in a reduction of government expenditures on social services and allows governments to tie taxation policy more to the explicit needs of capital.

The purpose of this chapter is three fold: First, I will consider the experiences of the GWC in light of social justice literature. Second, I will consider, from a critical political economy perspective, whether the GWC was able, and, if it is possible, to work with neo-liberalism to achieve social justice. Finally, considering the case study in relation to the literature and the framework I will conclude with a brief discussion on the importance and potential of, accurately naming the problem and focussing on the goal.

The Case Study and Organizational Literature

The literature which examines the effects of neo-liberalism for the volunteer sector identifies several key themes related to the changing relationship between this sector and the state. The themes most significant for this research are downloading, mission drift, advocacy chill, and the continuum between mainstreaming and disengaging.

Downloading and mission drift:

The literature tends to separate the concepts of downloading, mission drift and advocacy chill. However, they are very much interconnected and result from the way neo-liberal ideology

influences how governments, define the role of, and consequently provide funding to, the voluntary sector.

Downloading, as discussed within the literature, encompasses the shift of responsibilities for social welfare from the federal government to provincial governments, municipalities and onto the volunteer sector and the family. Downloading is a fundamental issue for social justice work because it results in governments moving away from direct responsibility for providing for the needs of citizens and returning to a residual model of welfare “[in which] the role of the state is highly restricted: governmental involvement is not seen as the first line of response to social problems... but is considered a last resort... [responsibility rests first with] the family, and second the voluntary sector”(Lightman, 2003, p. 62). The right of citizens to share in the resources of the nation as a whole is diminished.

An important change in funding for the volunteer sector has been a shift away from core funding and toward contract funding for service delivery. Through contracting arrangements governments achieve two significant results. First, governments divest themselves of responsibility to provide social services by passing off, or downloading, the overall responsibility for service delivery from the state to the community, and second, by tying funding to service delivery governments exert more control over the agenda of the community sector. (Richmond & Shields, 2004).

These funding arrangements leads to: 1) mission drift, the decreasing ability of groups to follow their own mission, as they modify their activities to fit into funding guidelines (Katherine Scott, 2003; Graefe, 2001) and; 2) advocacy chill, which occurs when organizations lose funding for advocacy work, and groups become hesitant to criticize the sources of their funding

(Richmond and Shields, 2004; Katherine Scott, 2003). This results in harnessing the energy of the voluntary sector to assist a market-state agenda, and in silencing a funded opposition.

The Federal government stopped providing core funding to women's groups in NL in 1997. The women's community, in response to the loss of core funding, followed an approach similar to that taken by the community sector in Quebec. According to Graefe (2001), in Quebec progressive forces have promoted the alliances between the community and government as a clear response to [delivering social services]. Through Forum '97 the Newfoundland and Labrador women's community collectively approached the provincial government to lobby for contracts to deliver specific services. The position of the women's centers was that they were already delivering a broad range of services and wanted this arrangement formalized and funded by the provincial government.

As noted above, Graefe suggests that in the case of groups in Quebec, government took over the agendas of the community to meet the political needs of the economic system. This is a clear example of mission drift, the mission of the group is lost as the group strives to meet the commitments of its funding agreement.

Since the beginning of provincial service delivery funding, there has been a degree of paranoia among women centers in NL about this new funding arrangement. Groups were cognizant of the possibility that direct financial ties to the provincial government could result in a loss of autonomy and a shift away from political advocacy toward more service delivery. This remains an ongoing concern for the GWC. Some members believe that the GWC has lost a measure of autonomy, although less so than is the case for some other women centers in the province. If the GWC had, as happened in Quebec, embraced the role as a provider of direct

services, it would clearly have compromised its mission. The GWC had articulated at most a temporary role in relation to provision of direct service, and always incorporated into political advocacy to encourage governments to establish and fund the needed service. My research shows that the GWC did not accept responsibility for providing new services, but instead creatively described their ongoing activities as fulfilling the requirements of their service contracts. But not without consequence.

Katherine Scott (2003), Gill & Theriault (2003) and McKeen & Porter (2005) suggest that accepting funding to provide services that should be provided by the state creates tensions within social justice groups. Graefe (2001) adds that it has also created significant tension among groups in Quebec where contract funding resulted not only in the state usurping the agenda of voluntary groups, but also in creating significant tension between groups who wanted to continue within those partnerships and those who did not. These same tensions are significant within the experience of the GWC. Although the group did not take on the service delivery work, several of my respondents talked about the tensions within the group and the split in membership between the folks who wanted to provide the services (do some good work) and those who were adamant that they would not deliver direct service. Respondents also noted internal dilemmas related to trying to figure out how to “do the things that need to be done and at the same time advocating for not doing them.”

While the GWC has managed to minimize the service agenda, other aspects of its mission have been impacted by the neo-liberal approach to the voluntary sector. The original objectives of the GWC included to work collectively within women movements, provincially and nationally, toward defining and advocating for a shared agenda. Collective, autonomous action within this

realm has been compromised by the loss of funding support for provincial and national conferences and lobbies. Advocacy now is more in response to government consultations or made to fit within more limiting funding guidelines. This issue is dealt with in more detail in the next section but it bears mentioning here as it represents a definite drift away from the independent advocacy envisioned within the original mission.

GWC has not allowed the province to take over the helm. Even though it the provincial government paid passage and jumped on board its ship, the GWC continues to chart much of its own course, in terms of service delivery. Very clearly service provision has not usurped their mission (03). But cutbacks to social services within neo-liberalism have caused serious problems for the organization. Many members who felt that the group should provide services have abandoned ship, and the crew that remains continues to be divided on the issue of service delivery.

Advocacy Chill:

Richmond & Shields (2004) discuss some of the problems resulting for the voluntary sector within neo-liberal funding policies. These include interference with group autonomy, curtailing the capacity of groups to offer alternative perspectives and stifling of a vibrant independent civil society. Katherine Scott (2003) supports this position, and suggests that “groups are hesitant to undertake advocacy because they are hesitant to criticize the sources of their funding”(p.17).

Advocacy for the GWC occurs on two levels. First there is individual advocacy whereby individual women are assisted to cut through red tape or government and agency bureaucracies

and access services in a respectful way. This would include advocating to workers in income support, social housing, child welfare, legal aid, and within the education system, generally on a very specific issue for an individual woman. This form of advocacy is considered part of the service delivery work which is encouraged and funded through the provincial government service agreement. It has become more crucial as the service provision systems become larger and more complicated.

The second type of advocacy is directed toward systemic issues and structural change. This work happens through several processes. In terms of policy analysis, systemic advocacy is generally funded through the federal government. Funding has come mainly from SWC, and on occasion through the National Welfare Grants and HRDC and its successors. Generally, the advocacy work that is funded through the federal government is aimed at achieving change within provincial government programs and services. Therefore there is often an arms-length relationship between the source of funding and the target of the work. This relationship has traditionally served to allow the GWC to hold on to significant autonomy within its advocacy strategy. Independence is compromised now because of provincial core funding, as suggested by Richmond and Shields, groups are hesitant to bite the hand that feeds them. Systemic advocacy also includes participation in government consultations. In earlier years, the GWC, collectively with other women's groups, created ways to engage in dialogue with governments to encourage changes to policies and programs to meet the needs expressed by women. The provincial government adopted these discussion processes, but not their intentions (04). Consequently, the dialogue with governments now is mainly government initiated and controlled. Participation is within state defined formats and guidelines. Some respondents pointed out that government has

taken over the processes that the women's community developed and misused them and the information it gains through these types of consultations. Most often the discussion questions are prepared before hand, so spontaneous discussion is minimized. Yet, the GWC continues to participate, partially because it is a contract requirement, but also because "you can't just sit back and let it happen, at least you have to complain and tell them you can't be doing that"(01).

The literature suggests that groups lose their autonomy in relation to advocacy through the new funding processes. That the federal government has funded systemic advocacy and the provincial government individual advocacy has been helpful to the GWC in terms of staying at arms length from government control of the agenda. At the same time, it has had to devise and use different strategies to work within the new political reality. The success of the GWC has been attributed to the ability to critically understand the new ideological environment and then create ways to work within that toward its own agenda (05). The strategies have focussed on understanding the agenda of the agency and incorporating the needs of the agency into their overall advocacy plan. This has meant finding ways to articulate the groups needs in the language of the needs of government (06), stating its goals in relation to an economic bottom line, and using the bureaucratic language of inputs, outcomes, efficiencies and effectiveness.

The literature further suggests that the change in discourse also creates a change in meaning, because as noted by McKeen (2004) "social reality is not fixed and has no intrinsic meaning" (p. 21). How we describe an issue or problem defines what it is. McKeen offers an example from within the poverty debate: when the poverty debate turned into a child poverty debate the issue of poverty changed from one of high unemployment and low wages for parents to one of pre-natal development for children. She notes that "instances in which progressive

actors felt compelled to modify their discourses and stances in order to have a voice [they] have unwittingly lent their support to the neo-liberal model”(p. 7). For the GWC, playing the game has resulted in the issues becoming more and more couched in terms that are palatable to the state and, thus taking the political edge off the issues.

Despite the compromises to government agendas, respondents feel that the GWC has been successful in using these new strategies to continue to be able to work within government processes to improve or create services and policies that are of benefit to women’s equality. They cited many examples, which are referred to in previous chapters, in which the work of the GWC has helped achieve very important services to meet women’s needs.

At the same time, the GWC is concerned that contract funding changed the power relationship between the provincial government and the women’s community. Although to date the provincial government has not tried to assert its power to any great extent, the GWC remains concerned that its voice has been compromised if not silenced. The women’s community as a whole echoes this concern and one of my respondents spoke specifically to this issue when she wondered whether the GWC would have been more vocal about changes within social assistance had it not shared a Minister⁷ with that department. Overall, however, the GWC has not acted as if its hands were tied. It has pushed the confines of the ‘box’ on several occasions. When the group ventured to criticize government actions or policies, it has not been reprimanded or brought to task or penalised by the provincial government. However, it has generally tempered its public criticisms and been forced to internalize the debate.

The GWC has learned how to understand the agenda of the agency and learned how to

⁷The Minister Responsible for the Status of Women at the time, was also the Minister of Human Resources and Labour, the department responsible for income assistance.

incorporate the needs of government into its overall advocacy plan. It has also learned how to articulate the benefits of its work in the language of outcomes and efficiencies, as required and understood, within the government policy process, which generally means the economic bottom line. In addition, the group takes a more conciliatory, transformative educational approach. This is a strategy which likely mollifies a focus on the mobilizing and movement politics from which it grew in the 1970s and 1980s.

In a broader, and perhaps more significant sense, the advocacy chill for the women's community in NL has been actualized through the withdrawal of government funding for the mechanisms of collective analysis. Again, as referred to in earlier chapters, until the early 1990s the federal government financed and supported opportunities for women's groups to get together for education, analysis, planning and lobbying. The loss of funding for these group meetings and collective analysis has restricted the ability of women's groups to undertake collective advocacy, to develop collective strategies and to exert power.

The GWC is still able to engage in systemic advocacy but not independent of government influence in terms of the issue, the process, or the language. The power to draw the lines rests more and more within the realm of the state, and having been nudged into using new language and new tactics, can the GWC say they have retained autonomy or just learned how to make the best of what was available. In reality the power to call the shots is not theirs and in many ways the GWC is just waiting for time⁸.

The literature suggests that groups can have a greater degree of autonomy if the funding

⁸ 'Waiting for time' in this context means that the group is carrying on doing its best to survive while others hold considerable power over that survival. In a cultural context it refers, for example, to the fishers and their families in isolated outports waiting to see how much the merchant will pay for their fish and charge them for their supplies. The merchant, setting both prices, holds the power of their survival.

received from government is core, rather than targeted for service delivery. Complete autonomy within funding has never been the reality for the GWC. Core funding from Secretary of State, and all other funding over the years, has always been for a very specific purpose. The federal Women's Program initially provided funding for the women's centre for a program of activities and more recently for advocacy work aimed at institutional change. Prior to 'social security reform', the parameters of federal funding were more in line with the mission of the GWC but, nonetheless, the funding always came with guidelines. For the GWC, the issue is not so much the switch from core to service or project funding, but the change in government's vision of equality and how that translates into changes in the relationship between government and the women's movement. The impression one can get from the literature is that there was considerable flexibility within government funding, until neo-liberalism prevailed. This has not been the experience of the GWC. There were always guidelines, but the guidelines changed. In previous times, groups may have had more capacity to offer an alternative vision, but they were never truly autonomous of funding criteria. The analysis within the literature has a nostalgic tone, similar to that of the 'golden age of the welfare state'. When we reflect back on what we lost it looks better, in retrospect, than it ever was when we had it.

Mainstreaming or disengaging:

While the GWC managed to hold to the tiller and avoid expanding service delivery, despite funding changes for core services, it seems to have veered off course in relation to its advocacy work.

Related to this concern and to the question of rekindling social justice is the dilemma

described by Briskin (1989, cited in Carroll & Coburn, 2004, p. 86) that is the tension between mainstreaming (reaching for an equality agenda from the inside, at risk of institutional co-optation), and disengaging (critiquing the system from a standpoint outside it at risk of marginalization). According to Amanda Scott, (2003), the “politic of mainstreaming advocates that the existing system be moved to change its priorities and the ways it acts”(p.11) while, “the politic of disengagement is sceptical of the state’s ability, and institutions and bureaucracies more broadly, to promote women’s concerns and to act as a progressive change force for women”(p. 8). Essentially the question is whether a group believes it can better effect change through working within the system and its processes, or whether its position is that the only real change can happen from working outside.

The work that the GWC now calls advocacy work is really social policy research done within the limits allowed, supported and funded by the state. Its purpose is always to tweak the existing policies or systems, not to engage in a critical analysis of the distribution of power and resources or to consider whether an equality agenda could be better served by a significant structural change.

SWC insists that community groups have partners within the system, and therefore advocacy work is generally done in cooperation with government departments and agencies. This changes the dynamic of the research as the GWC does not have autonomy with regard to research design, findings, or recommendations. All components have to be articulated, designed, conducted and presented in ways that are agreeable to the partners. The advocacy work then focusses more on suggesting changes to enhance programs and policies to better meet women’s needs, rather than on a critical analysis of the basis of the program or a challenge to the

distribution of power and resources. But by virtue of receiving funding to do the research within partnerships with government the GWC is granted a legitimacy within social policy discussion, which respondents state has allowed them to achieve concrete results. This arrangement seems to change the focus from what is desirable to what is allowable.

The GWC has adhered to the partnership requirements of SWC funding. However, in creating and participating in processes of collaboration with provincial government agencies, the GWC has achieved some success in pushing the parameters of these funding programs. The group has used project funding to critique policy and program issues in ways that facilitated the creation of opportunities for mobilization and collective analysis within the women's community. For example, the work related to parole policy involved grassroots work by each women's center in NL and expanded to encompass actions by groups in the Atlantic region through coalitions with unions and other women groups. In relation to research on civil legal aid, women centers across the province participated, along with their clients, in focus groups to critique civil legal aid policy and make recommendations for change. The custody and access work took the same approach to building knowledge from the ground up. The results of pushing the parameters are that generally the research was seen to represent the concerns within the provincial women's community and because the approach was more educational than confrontational, the group was successful in making some worthy changes to systems that are important to women. Very clearly the GWC chose mainstreaming, and all respondents believe that the group has experienced considerable success toward its mission by choosing this route.

However, the politic of disengagement would question whether these inroads are really enhancing women's equality. Amanda Scott (2003) questions whether state power can be used to

achieve women's liberation, or whether instead, working within the state serves to change the focus from structural problems to bureaucratic clumsiness and whether putting women's issues within the institution reduces the focus on social transformation and can lead to redefining political issues as social problems. The question that stems from this analysis is whether the GWC is working for or against social justice by participating in processes that limit the scope of discussion to bureaucratic clumsiness, or that changes political issues to social problems?

The next section of this chapter will explore this question and others, by examining the work of the GWC through a critical political economy framework.

The Case Study and the Framework Literature

The issue for this section is whether the GWC, through struggling to chart its own course within neo-liberalism, can achieve social justice within a critical political economy definition. Critical political economy defines social justice as the active pursuit of a world in which, people are supported to shape their own lives and reach their potential and, in which, resources, processes and structures are designed by and controlled for the mutual benefit of all citizens (Gindin, 2002).

Clearly the mission and work of the GWC has been toward helping women take control of and shape their own lives. This has been addressed through actively pursuing change within processes and structures that define women's ability to be free to act and to be supported by the state within those actions. Examples include the establishment of CARA transition house, the achievement of laws governing the division of matrimonial property and services to aid women in becoming free from violence. All these efforts have been in the interest in reshaping or

creating and enhancing women ability to be free.

Some of the strategies that the GWC developed were somewhat successful. Its strategy of articulating the work that was already being done by the center as fulfilling the requirements of the service contract has not been challenged, and has resulted in the group keeping control of their service agenda. In this instance, the group was always clear about its service role and did not deviate. This same clarity of purpose was not evident within their advocacy agenda. The group did not seem to clearly ask, advocacy to what end?

While the members achieved an understanding of the structural and ideological changes within neo-liberalism, there seems to have been a lack of critical analysis about how these changes were grounded in the fundamentals of the relationships between the state, capital and people. Consequently, there was no exploration of whether or how the work the group engaged in was the best work to do, toward social justice. The work was not aimed at altering the distribution of power, but merely limited to gaining women more equal participation and representation, with men, within existing systems and processes.

From a CPE perspective the structures of society are used to organize and control the social, political and cultural aspects of life to create common values to compliment the accumulation of wealth. The role of the welfare state is to safeguard capital's interest by reigning in the power of people to affect change and to assuage the anger of those who would use their energies to create movements to challenge the supremacy of capitalism as a way of organizing our economy (Mahon, 1977). James O'Connor identifies two essential functions of the welfare state in capitalist economies, accumulation and legitimization, through which the state helps to create the conditions for private profit making and helps to ensure social harmony by providing a

justice system and services to citizens and by promoting a shared value system (Armstrong & Armstrong, 2003). Therefore, the role of the GWC by virtue of the way it works within those structures helps to legitimize accumulation and promote social harmony by supporting the structures, processes, laws and values of our present system.

Although the GWC is very creative in finding ways to have a voice in policy discussions and to hold on to its advocacy role, the efforts will only be useful as long as the power brokers are willing to let them into the discussion. Within this relationship, the group has very limited power of its own. The collective power possible within coalitions, networks and a mobilized women's movement are not realized.

It is worth considering whether the strategy of mainstreaming can be seen to compromise the potential to build a power base within the women's movement. It is true that the GWC has negotiated and developed an independent relationship with government, through strategies as clearly articulated by my respondents. Through these relationships it has achieved some structural modifications, but the power to sustain those changes and to move towards larger structural adjustments have been compromised by acting outside of the strength of the collective.

In its defence, the records show that the GWC tried on several occasions to ignite some fire within the women centers network. The group can consider whether the energy that went into the social policy work, if applied to rekindle the movement, could have achieved a greater result.

According to Gindin, (2002), "...any attempt to significantly change Canada will have to depend more than ever on a more mobilized popular base ..." (p. 5). Gindin also suggests that "...our sense of social justice is affected by what we believe is possible... [and therefore] social justice demands reviving the determination to dream" (p. 2).

What is the dream? Is it to keep nudging structures to make room for women, or is it toward creating a vibrant women's movement through which dreams of social justice have some possibility of being realized? Gindin & Panitch (2000) suggest that groups "... have not so much abandoned the idea of change but, like the Greek god Procrustes, who adjusted the size of his guest list to fit the size of his bed, they have shrunk the meaning of change to fit what capital and the state will accommodate" (p. 2). Further, they suggest that "every progressive social movement must, sooner or later, confront the powerful tendency of capitalism to cripple our capacities, stunt our dreams, and incorporate our policies"(p. 4). Neo-liberalism undoubtedly endeavours to harness the capacity of the volunteer sector and influence the mission and goals of social justice groups.

If groups continue to work within the welfare state then the work to achieve social justice becomes a Catch 22 situation. Progress in terms of small steps toward equality can result in figuratively shooting yourself in the foot, because these small steps can create the illusion that power structures can be changed from within. This is what happened within the welfare state and is what has happened to GWC. The harshest aspects of society are softened and groups lose their critical edge and momentum to challenge the essence of the power structures. Gindin (2002) suggests that, what "Marx understood so well when he criticized the Utopians of his time was that if you don't bring your dreams into the belly of the beast - if you try to build around, rather than against global power- you ultimately offer illusions rather than hope" (p. 6). From this perspective social justice can only be achieved from a standpoint outside the system because it requires that the basis of the system, the power of capital, be changed.

CPE suggests that people have the ability to effect such change. Through its examination

of human agency, CPE emphasises the importance of people's actions in shaping the course of history. The capitalist system is not immutable but can be influenced and changed by people. But people need to believe that they can shape the course of history. As Evans and Wekerle (1997) suggest, one of the most problematic impacts of the prevailing discourse of economic restructuring is the implication that these global economic forces are inevitable, unable to be influenced or controlled by citizens. The rhetoric has convinced many that this is best that can be done. People are encouraged to be reasonable about their expectations of government and about governments ability to meet those expectation within a global economy. Referring back to Gindin: our sense of social justice is built on what we be believe to be possible. Then it should be the goal of community based groups to help create that sense of possibility, that collectively we can have power to create social justice.

The CPE literature is sparse in terms of concrete suggestions for people and groups to undertake to help move society closer to the goal of social justice. CPE focusses more on analysis and understanding, rather than tools for change. The need to create an alternative discourse, to facilitate an alternative understanding, is discussed by Evans and Wekerle (1997), and is also central to the Education Political Literacy (EPL) project within the work of the Metro Network for Social Justice (MNSJ). This project is described in detail by Janet Conway, in *Identity Place and Knowledge* (2004). Briefly, the goal of the EPL project was to increase political literacy among activists about the functioning of the Canadian political economy. This is the sort of education and discussion that was missing within the analysis of the GWC. The leadership of the MNSJ was divided concerning the relevancy of the EPL project. Some people wanted to continue along with traditional fight back strategies, 'a war of manoeuvre', while EPL theory was based on

creating 'a war of position', creating new understanding and discourse. During the last several decades social justice has been somewhat successful with employing war of manoeuvre strategies, but the playing field has been significantly altered and some institutions of society, such as the media, which were often instrumental to that success are no longer as helpful. In addition, society in general, because of the acceptance of the inevitability of economic restructuring, is no longer as sympathetic. The power of manoeuvre is weakened by the dominant discourse. Perhaps the only way to alter the balance of power is through the creation of new discourse. Taking a lesson from the MNSJ, it is important to do the internal work first, so that the leadership and the membership of the group accepts this as the right course. Perhaps a strategy for community-based advocacy groups is to challenge and discuss the foundations of the dominant discourse and begin creating new language and new understandings, to create other truths about the relationship between economic policy and government. It is possible to integrate challenging analysis into everyday discussions, in fact it is probably the only way to begin to expand the realm of possibility.

Perhaps a new form of consciousness raising is called for, focussed on understanding how "the political and social aspects of life are being marginalized by a strictly economic logic." (Clement, 1997, p. 5). We can then approach our self-education and group education with an expanse of knowledge about how the welfare state facilitates and solidifies the current arrangement. This should help us be less sidetracked.

Conclusion

The organizational literature tends to focus the discussion of neo-liberalism on

considering the impact of funding arrangements on the autonomy of the voluntary sector. The framework literature helps to focus debate more on the basis of neo-liberal ideology. The framework literature suggests that the discussion in the organizational literature does not go deep enough with its analysis. The issue that needs to be addressed is the relationship between ideological foundations of neo-liberalism and the essence of social justice. If we focus discussion only on the impact of funding arrangements the fundamental conflict between the ideology and social justice will be overlooked.

The GWC did not seem to have a clear understanding of how the current political ideology regarded community-based advocacy. Although it was able to see some clear shifts in government processes and carve out a space for itself within these changing processes, its analysis did not extend to truly understanding how neo-liberalism viewed autonomous advocacy. The GWC may have been more successful in advancing its advocacy agenda had it clearly understood the core of neo-liberal ideology and from that basis created ways to articulate and focus on their overall advocacy goal.

It seems that during recent years, groups became so preoccupied with reacting and trying desperately to hold on to what they had that they did not put enough effort into really deciding where they wanted to get, or exactly what was keeping them from getting there. Consequently decisions were taken to make the best of the present situation which may not have been the best decision for the long haul.

The best lessons from the experience of the GWC is to always know where you are going and what you are dealing with, and ensure that every step and action you take today in leading you there; take a lesson from the Cheshire Cat. The Cat missed a point however, in not

recognizing that even if Alice knew where she wanted to go there were forces, more powerful than her alone, determined that she not arrive there. So the second lesson, is be sure you know what is stopping you.

Chapter VII - CONCLUSION

All truths begin as blasphemies.

George Bernard Shaw

I came to this thesis process with more than twenty years of involvement with the voluntary sector and with a sense of urgency to understand why feminist organizations particularly, and social justice groups generally, seem to be running as fast as they can and still losing ground. Essentially, I had two goals for my research. The first was to identify strategies that community-based advocacy groups could use to rekindle social justice, through a critical analysis of the issues at the heart of the loss of power and influence. The second goal was to acquire knowledge and analysis to explore and articulate what was happening to social justice work and within this, to understand my instinctive feeling that the approach taken by the GWC, although considered successful by some people, was not the best course toward social justice. The knowledge that I have gained related to the first goal comes from the analysis of the case study and the academic literature. The answer to my second goal comes from considering the literature and the experience of the GWC within the critical political economy framework.

In this chapter I will discuss what I have concluded, based on my research, to be an answer to my research question. How can community based advocacy groups rekindle social justice within neo-liberalism?

As I neared the completion of my research I had occasion to reread William Ryan's "*Blaming the Victim*", first published in 1971. I was struck by the fit of Ryan's analysis with my dilemma of trying to decide whether it is possible to work toward social justice within neo-

liberalism. Ryan writes that the typical victim blamer is doing reasonably well in a material way; has a good job, and basically likes the social system pretty much the way it is, at least in broad outline. He⁹ heartily approves of the profit motive as the propelling engine of the economic system despite the negative side effects and substantial residual inequalities. On the other hand he is acutely aware of poverty, social discrimination, exploitation and depravation and moreover he wants to do something about it. This is not an extraneous concern but rather central to his value system and belief about the worth of the individual, equality, and the importance of justice. He cannot side with an openly reactionary, repressive position that accepts continued oppression and exploitation at the price of a privileged position of his own class. He is, however, more allergic to radicals than reactionaries. He rejects the extreme solution of radical social change, since this threatens his own well being. Ryan says that the solution is brilliant, turn attention to the victim, what's wrong with the person?

Ryan's theory relates to my queries in two ways. First, neo-liberal ideology is based on improving individuals so that they can fend for themselves and not need any help from government; find out what is wrong with the person and get them to fix it. Second, the portrait of the victim blamer closely resembles the 'typical' advocate for social justice and equality, of which I am one. We operate from basically the same premise: tinker with the system in ways that threaten neither the establishment nor ourselves. We will try to get the system to make room for women, by adjusting services or opening doors to women in politics and business. But we do not go deep enough with our analysis to consider whether the present economic and political system

⁹Ryan, who published in 1971, used 'he', rather than the currently more politically correct he/she or s/he. Although I am offering his theory in precis I use this terminology, as it is fitting with the times. Within my discussion 'he' means 'she and he'.

can accommodate equality and social justice. It is just too challenging to our lifestyle.

Within the last few days, I was given a recent article written by Ann Curry-Stevens, in which she discusses the situation of social policy advocacy, within present political arrangements. Curry-Stevens suggests that the alternative for social policy advocacy is to ground practice in social movements. As I read the article I was again brought back to the 1970s and my first years of study at Memorial University, in the then new, and now defunct, Center for Development of Community Initiatives. The basis of the program of study was community development and we, like Curry-Stevens, discussed measuring success by capacity building. Although we called it community development, not capacity building, the elements were the same; empowerment, organizational development, and grassroots leadership development. After finishing that degree program I worked with Memorial University Extension Services and we articulated the value of our work in the same language. We worked in rural communities toward community development and we were successful in encouraging rural people in their ability to take ownership of their communities and in assisting them to establish groups through which they could operate. Capacity building is as far as it got. The present situation in rural Newfoundland is that the economy is gone and so are most of the people. This reality makes me hesitant to suggest that a return to similar processes has any more potential to be successful in altering power structures or creating social, political or economic justice, now than it did then, if that's as far as we take our analysis and is the limit of our goal. One of the cases that Curry-Stevens refers to as a successful example of capacity building within social movements is the Metro Network for Social Justice (MNSJ) campaign related to social security reform. I had read Janet Conway's *'Identity, Place and Knowledge'*, a case study of the MNSJ and find the idea of political literacy a

useful strategy. Conway describes how this effort to influence the SSR failed and how the organization fell apart because of internal tensions over strategy. Curry-Stevens cited several other examples, all of which stopped at capacity building without concrete results. She suggests that social movements are the answer to influencing social policy but in all the examples she references there have been no successes, beyond organizational capacity building.

The third experience occurred around this same time. The Newfoundland and Labrador Federation of Municipalities was holding its annual meeting in Gander and I happened to catch an interview with one of the Mayors on our local CBC radio. He, of course, was talking about the economy of rural communities and said that each community had developed an economic development plan, each region had a similar plan and each zone had another plan incorporating all the plans down the line. The problem was, as he said, that governments were not providing the resources to support the implementation of any of these plans. So we have vital local council, we have vital regional organizations and we have vital zones. That's a lot of capacity already built. But to what end? To keep people occupied? Listening to him affirmed the value of my question, capacity for what purpose?

I believe that opportunities for people to learn, gain confidence, assume community leadership, and express opinions, are good, vital and necessary. However, to achieve social justice we have to find ways to get beyond placating ourselves by accepting that successes, in capacity building or community development, without structural outcomes, are sufficient.

While I cannot say that I have done an exhaustive literature review, I have searched the literature to find some strategies to suggest that community-based advocacy groups consider in their struggles for social justice. I have found the literature, outside critical political economy,

somewhat lacking in inspiration. And within the critical political economy literature there is inspiration but few concrete suggestions. The experience of the GWC has inspired some suggestions, and I have gleaned others from the literature.

The first is that groups should be sharply aware of their mission. The GWC was very clear that the organization was not for service delivery and stayed very focussed on the goal of keeping service delivery to a minimum. The group does not seem to have reached the same clarity of purpose in terms of its advocacy work. While the GWC was determined to focus on the advocacy agenda, there was no clear understanding of where this agenda was supposed to get them, or women or society. This suggests that they were successful in following goals that they had articulated, but not in clearly articulating all goals. Had the GWC created a specific mission in terms of its advocacy work it could have served as an anchor against which they could have considered each of the steps they took along the way. Any deviation from the course, or away from the mission, should be intentional as opposed to just floating with the tide in an uncharted direction.

The second suggestion is that advocacy groups must consider whether the structure and the mission are compatible. As government funding for the structure is increasingly limiting the advocacy role, this question is becoming more critical. If the two are not compatible, then which takes priority? The GWC is facing very serious issues around membership and leadership to sustain the organization. The GWC should consider whether the best strategy is to focus efforts in addressing these issues, or to step back and ask, to what end? Perhaps it is worth stepping back from those immediate issues to consider how the women who still have a passion for social justice can use their energy to work toward it. If the mission is the priority and the structure

cannot accommodate the mission then the creation of a new structure is called for. It is not a failure to have done what you can within a particular structure and then recognize that the structure does not and cannot meet your goals. Simply stepping back to consider this question may bring into view new ways of making the structure work.

The third suggestion is to rekindle dialogue. The political literacy campaign of the MNSJ is grounded in the belief that people must be the authors of their own emancipation and to do so they must understand their shackles. The discourse of neo-liberalism has resulted in changing societal expectations. “The restructuring discourse portrays less government spending in general and a reduced welfare state in particular as the inevitable, necessary and desirable “adaptations” to forces that are considered beyond the control of individuals and nations.”(Evans, 2002 , p. 80). Critical political economy suggests that peoples actions, human agency, can alter the course of history. Groups need to create opportunities for dialogue to name the shackles, structure their own analysis, and reclaim their collective power. Social justice groups simply cannot leave people in a situation of hopelessness. Remember that this system is one short period in time, just like the feudalism, laiser faire capitalism and the goddess culture of many centuries ago, and others will follow.

And fourth, if your goal is social justice be prepared for some personal discomfort. It is hard to get ahead with your legs in shackles. If shackles are defined as the strings attached to government funding, efforts will be focussed on changing those funding arrangements of learning how to work within them, as was the experience of the GWC. Alternately, if shackles are our own lack of imagination in creating ways to realize and exercise our collective power then we reopen doors to great potential.

The farmers in *The Grapes of Wrath* felt powerlessly caught up in something larger than themselves. Community-based advocacy and social justice seem to be immersed in that same powerlessness. The state is not larger than people and it can be influenced and controlled by the exercise of collective power. Discussion and debate, within the confines of government funding, greatly limits our capacity to realize our collective potential. Social justice can happen without government funding and likely can only happen without government funding. Consider the words of Audre Lorde, 'the masters tools will never dismantle the master's house'.

EPILOGUE

Just because you're paranoid it doesn't mean they're not out to get you!

Author unknown

Throughout my discussion and analysis I seemed to be dwelling on the fact that any sort of power or influence the GWC had to participate in and influence government decision-making was granted through government processes, and was therefore tenuous and could be withdrawn as easily as it was granted. Admittedly, I am a little paranoid about security within any relationship when one side has all the power and the other, therefore, has none.

As I was in the midst of drawing some analysis out of the combined literature and case study and trying to convince myself that I should be more positive about mainstreaming than my critical political economy perspective could accommodate, there were several significant, and disquieting, occurrences related directly to my project and analysis.

The first alarm was sounded when I received an e-mail from a women's group in Newfoundland suggesting that the Women's Policy office (WPO) had 'underhandedly jeopardized' a project application that the group had submitted to SWC to do research around poverty and gender. According to this correspondence the WPO questioned whether the group had the expertise to do the work and suggested that the work the group was proposing was a duplication of work that the provincial government was undertaking itself, within a provincial poverty strategy. It has become common practice within the SWC funding application process

that groups ask for a letter of support from the WPO. There has never before been a case where the WPO opposed a community-based project. In this instance, the letter of concern, rather than support, went directly to senior officials at SWC, without sending copies to the group or to the SWC office in NL. Women are concerned, among other things within this incident, that the WPO has the final stamp of approval for SWC advocacy projects.

As referenced in the preceding chapters, women groups in NL have felt a degree of security related to having their service and advocacy work funded by different levels of government. This new development, naturally, caused immediate alarm and concern that the province was gaining control over advocacy funding. There was a great deal of discussion and women's groups voiced their opposition to the WPO about working against the women's community.

Then, the new funding criteria for SWC were announced and whether the WPO could veto advocacy funding applications became a moot point, as there no longer is any funding for advocacy work available from SWC, in any event. The new mandate severely weakens the equality agenda of SWC. In the first instance the statement of mandate does not even include the word equality, but speaks to women's participation; and participation in economic, social and cultural situations.... political participation is an obvious oversight! And it gets worse... specifically ...SWC does not provide funding for advocacy activities and lobbying of federal, provincial and municipal governments. Judy Rebick calls this "a dramatic restructuring of the Canadian state that will further marginalize those who have the least political power in society". Rebick suggests that 'those who support the fight for equality in society have been responding to these assaults one by one without fully recognizing the fundamental changes they represent

(2006).

Now there are two fight back campaigns, directed at both levels of government, consuming the energy of the women's community.

I must return to my statement that any power granted to groups by the system is tenuous. The only real power is that which we collectively make and take for ourselves. How much more will be lost before we decide to stop spending our time fighting rearguard.

There are times in life when we wish we were wrong and although I could see it coming I was hoping it was just my paranoia.

References

Armstrong, P & Armstrong, H. (2003). *Wasting away, the undermining of Canadian health care.* 2nd edition. New York: Oxford University Press.(p. 5 - 9).

Battle, K. (2001). *Relentless Incrementalism: deconstructing and reconstructing income security policy.* Ottawa. Caledon Institute.

Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation.(1985). *Project Haven: Applicants information guide.* Canada.

Canadian Association of Social Workers (2005). *Code of ethics.* Canada. CASW.

Canadian Advisory Council on the Status of Women. (1993). *Expanding our horizons. The work of the Canadian Advisory Council on the Status of Women.* Canada.

Carroll, W. & Coburn, E. (2004). *Social movements and transformation.* In W. Clement & L. Vosko (Eds). *Changing Canada: political economy as transformation.* Canada: McGill - Queen's University Press.

Carter, S. & Clarke, C. (1994). *Social security reform. Highlights of the federal government's discussion paper.* *Perception.* 18 (2). 7 -9.

Clement, W. (1997). *Introduction: whither the new Canadian economy?* In W. Clement (Ed). *Understanding Canada, building on the new Canadian political economy.* Canada: McGill - Queen's University Press.

- Conway, J.(2000). Knowledge and the impasse in the left politics: potentials and problems in social movements practice. *Studies in Political Economy*. Summer 2000. 62. 43-70.
- Conway, J.(2004). *Identity, place, knowledge: social movements contesting globalization*. Nova Scotia: Fernwood Publishing.
- Curry-Stevens, A. (2003). Arrogant capitalism: changing futures, changing lives. *Canadian Review of Social Policy*. Spring/summer. 51.137-142.
- Curry-Stevens, A. (2006). Rooting social policy advocacy in social movements. *Canadian Review of Social Policy*. 56. 113 -130.
- Dominelli, L. (1999) "Neo-liberalism, social exclusion and welfare clients in a global economy." *International Journal of Social Welfare*. 8. 14 -22.
- Esping-Anderson, Gosta. (1990). The three political economies of the welfare state. In *The Three Worlds of Welfare Capitalism*. Cambridge: Polity Press.
- Esping-Anderson, Gosta. (2002) Towards the good society, once again. In *Why we need a New Welfare State*. New York: Oxford Scholarship.
- Evans, P. (2002). Downloading the welfare state, Canadian Style. In G. Goldberg & M. Rosenthal. *Diminishing welfare, a cross national study of social provision*. Westport, CT. Auburn House.
- Evans, P. & Wekerle, G. (1997). *Women and the Canadian welfare state*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press.
- Gander Beacon*.(1983, May 4). 25(18), p.16A. Newfoundland. Robinson - Blackmore

- Gander Beacon*. (1983, May 11). 25(19), p. 2A. Newfoundland. Robinson - Blackmore.
- Gander Beacon*. (1985, February) 28(8), p. 15A. Newfoundland. Robinson - Blackmore.
- Gough, I. (1979). *The political economy of the welfare state*. London: MacMillan Education.
- Gill, C. & Theriault, L. (2003). Valuing volunteering without recognizing the reality of the volunteer sector. *Canadian Review of Social Policy*. Spring/summer. 51.132-136.
- Gindin, S. (2002a). Anti-Capitalism and the terrain of social justice. 53(9). Retrieved August 3rd, 2006 from <http://www.monthlyreview.org/0202ginden.htm>.
- Gindin, S. (2002b). Social Justice and globalization: are they compatible? *Monthly review*. 54 (2). Retrieved August 3rd, 2006 from <http://www.monthlyreview.org/0602gindin.htm>.
- Gindin, S. & Panitch, L. (2000). Rekindling socialist imagination: utopian vision and working-class capacities. *Monthly Review*. 51 (10). Retrieved August 3rd, 2006 from <http://www.monthlyreview.org/300gind.htm>.
- Graefe, Peter. (2001). Whose social economy? debating new state practices in Quebec. *Critical Social Policy*. . 21(1). (pp. 37-58).
- Heilbroner, R. (1992). *Twenty-first century capitalism*. Toronto. House of Anansi Press.
- Human Resources and Development Canada. (1994). *Agenda: jobs and growth. Improving social security in Canada*. (Catalogue Number SC-036-09-94). Hull, Quebec. Canada.
- Jenkins, M.(2002) *An evaluation of the LEAP program in Sudbury*. Masters Thesis. Carleton University.
- Jenson, Jane. (1997). "Fated to live in interesting times: Canada's changing citizenship regime."

- Canadian Journal of Political Science. 627 -644.
- Jensen, J. & Saint-Martin, D. (2003). New routes to social cohesion? citizenship and the social investment state. *Canadian Journal of Sociology*. 28.(1). 77-99.
- Lightman, E. (2003). *Social policy in Canada*. Ontario: Oxford University Press.
- Martin, Greg. (2001). Social movements, welfare and social policy. *Critical Social Policy*. 21. 361-383.
- Martinez, Elizabeth. (2000). *What is neo-liberalism? A Brief Definition*. Global Exchange
retrieved February 12, 2006 from:
<http://www.globalexchange.org/campaigns/econ101/neoliberalDefined.html>.pf
- Macbeth, D. (2001). On reflexivity in qualitative research: two readings and a third. *Qualitative Inquiry*. 7(1). 35 - 68.
- Mahon, R. (1977). Canadian public policy: the unequal structure of representation. In L. Panitch. (Ed). *The Canadian State: Political economy and political power*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press. 65 - 198.
- McFarland, J. & Mullaly, R. (1996). *NB works: image and reality*. In Pulkingham, J. & Ternowetsky, G. (Eds). *Remaking Canadian social policy*. Halifax. Fernwood Publishing. 206 - 219.
- McKeen, W. (2004). The shifting discourses of the progressive social policy/child poverty advocacy community. *Canadian Review of Social Policy*. Spring/summer.53. 88 -107.
- McKeen, W. (2004). *Money in her own name*. Toronto. University of Toronto Press.

- McKeen, W. & Porter, A. (2003). "*Politics and transformation: welfare state restructuring in Canada.*" In W. Clement & L. Vosko (Eds). *Changing Canada: political economy as transformation.* (pp. 109 -134) Canada: McGill- Queen's University Press.
- Olsen, G.(2002). *The politics of the welfare state.* Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Phillips, P. (2003). *Inside capitalism.* Halifax: Fernwood Publishing.
- Pierson, C. (1998). *Beyond the welfare state: the new political economy of welfare.* Pennsylvania: Pennsylvania State University.
- Poverty Issues Advisory Committee, Social Planning Council of Ottawa - Carleton. "*The poverty crisis 2005.*" Report on the Peoples Hearings II. Held December 2004 - April 2005.
- Rankin, P. & Vickers, J. (2001). *Women's movements and state feminism: integrating diversity into public policy.* Canada. Status of Women Canada.
- Rebick, Judy. (2006, October 16). A nail in the coffin of women's equality? Rabble News.
Retrieved November 6, 2006, from <http://www.rabble.ca>.
- Reisch, M. (2002). Defining justice in a socially unjust world. *Families in society.* 83 (4). 343 - 354.
- Richmond, T. & Shields, J. (2004). NGO restructuring constraints and consequences.
Canadian Review of Social Policy. Spring/summer. 53 - 67.
- Rice, J. & Prince, M. (2000). *Changing politics of Canadian social policy.* Toronto: University of Toronto Press.
- Rubin, A. & Babbie, E. (1997). *Research Methods for Social Work.* Brooks/Cole. 3rd edition.

- Ryan, W. (1976). *Blaming the victim*. New York: Vintage Books.
- Scott, A. (2003). “*Working within a state of contradiction.*” Master Thesis, Carleton University.
- Scott, K. (2003) *Funding matters: the impact of Canada’s new funding regime on nonprofit and voluntary organizations*. Canadian Council On Social Development. Summary Report. National Library of Canada.
- Stake, R.(1995). *The art of case study research*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.
- Vickers, J., Rankin, P. & Appelle, C. (1993). *Politics as if women mattered*. Canada: University of Toronto Press.
- Yin, R. (2003) *Applications of Case Study Research*. Thousand Oaks. CA: Sage Publications.

Appendix

Appendix 1

Document List

Reports

Secretary of State / SWC - Status of Women Canada

Funding Applications to Secretary Of State / Status of Women Canada

1994 -1995

1995 - 1996

1996 - 1997

1997 - 1998

Activity and Financial Report April 1995 - October 1995

Activity and Financial Report April 1995 - March 1996

Activity and Financial Report April 1996 - March 1997

Activity and Financial Report April 1997 - March 1998

Projects:

1996 - 1997 Justice Project - Parole

application

funding approval

project report

2000 -2005 Legal Aid and Custody and Access final reports

2004 - 2005 Attitudes Project -

Project Application 2003

Funding Approval January 2004

interim reports, July 2005, March 2005, January 2005, Sept 2004

Status of Women Canada

1996 Consultation Process and Report re: structure and funding changes

Women's Policy Office -

Background work related to provincial government funding Forum 97

Communication related to development of first service agreements

Service Agreement 1998 - 1999

Service Agreement 1999 - 2000

Service Agreement 2000 - 2001

Service Agreement 2001 - 2002

Service Agreement 2002 - 2003

Missing 03/04

Service Agreement 2004 - 2005

1998 - 1999 (quarterly reports for first, second and third quarters)

Annual Report 1999 - 2000 (quarterly reports included)

Annual Report 2000 - 2001 (quarterly reports included)

Annual Report 2001 - 2002

Annual Report 2002 - 2003

2003 - 2004 (3 quarterly reports - June, October, Dec)

Annual report 2004 - 2005 (plus 1 semi annual)

Analysis of service agreements - 2001 - 2005

1999 - WPO new reporting format

Correspondence

SWC

From SWC - Dec 1995 - clearly states no funding for service delivery

To SWC - Feb 1996

From SWC - Apr 1997

To SWC - October 1998- waiting fro funding

To SWC - Oct 1998

From SWC - Feb 1999

letter to Sandra Kelly re G F-W Women's Center

Support letter to fed re: lifelong learning initiative

Other documents:

Coordinators Reports

2004 - 2005

2003 - 2004

2002 - 2003

2001 - 2002

Minutes

2004 - 2005

2003 - 2004

2002 -2003
2001 - 2002

Newsletters 1995 -2005 - sporadically published
Newspaper clippings
correspondence 03 - 04
04 - 05

2001 - LEAF Conference - Toronto - Civil Legal Aid presentation
2005 - LEAF - NAWL 20th anniversary conference

2005 - Feminist Coalition Meeting

2002 - Women's Conference Calls
Health Forum 2001- infiltration
Lakeside Kitchen Coalition - 1997
Women's Conference and Lobby 1996 - last ones
Women's Forum 1997 - provincial funding

1995 - Paul Martin - deficit reduction
closure of CACSW
move women's program to Status of Women Canada
provincial conference call to discuss issues
response from provincial groups to federal cuts - PAAFV, TIA, CB women's center,
Gander women's center etc
fightback conference calls Jan 26th, Feb 9th, March 2nd, March 21st,
and related materials

1995 Women's Economic Network

Other funding
Graduate Employment Program - 1998
HRDC employment and education needs project 1996 - 1997 with follow up discussion

Appendix 2: Letter of Introduction

Elaine Condon, Student
 Masters of Social Work Program
 Carleton University
econdon2@connect.carleton.ca
 (709) 256-1937

Dr. Pat Evans, Supervisor
 School of Social Work
 Carleton University
Pat_evans@carleton.ca
 (613) 520-2600 ext 3662

Professor Antonio Gualtieri, Chair
 Carleton University
 Research Ethics Committee
ethics@carleton.ca
 (613) 520-2517

Dear _____,

I am a student in the Master of Social Work Program at Carleton University. As part of the requirements for completion of my degree, I am undertaking a thesis research project to consider the impact on social justice, related to changes in the relationship between government and community based advocacy groups. This will be accomplished in part through a case study of The Gander Status of Women Council.

As you have had an extensive history of involvement with this group I am asking you to participate in a one-on-one interview with me to discuss your knowledge of this group in relation to my thesis questions. I anticipate that the interview will be one hour in length. The time and place will be arranged at your convenience.

The focus of my thesis is to consider what have been the challenges to community based social justice in relation to the changes in the welfare state. Particularly I want to look at the 1995 - 2005 era, during which there were significant changes in the state funding of social services and feminist organizations. The Gander Status of Women Council (GWC) has managed to remain an independent community based advocacy organization. I want to explore the ideas, processes, critical thinking and planning, that have helped to maintain this independence, as well as the issues and problems that were met along the way.

If you agree to participate in the study, you may choose whether or not I will be permitted to use a micro cassette recorder to audio tape the interview, in addition to taking notes. All interview

notes and recordings will be accessed only by myself and supervisor, Dr. Patricia Evans.

You will be asked to comment on the GWC from the perspective of your particular involvement. Given the small number of participants in this study, it is not possible to assure you anonymity during the course of collecting the information or in the final report. I will not use your name but I cannot assure that others will not assume your participation. I will only use your responses, whether as quotes or paraphrased, with your permission. I will not associate your name with your responses.

Your participation is completely voluntary and you have the right to not answer any question(s). Your participation may also be discontinued at any time, for any reason, without explanation and with the option to revoke any data you have provided to that point.

I believe that this is a positive endeavor. It is my intention to discover and relate the positive aspects and the successes experienced by the GWC so that they may be shared with other groups who are struggling with some of the same issues.

Thank you for taking the time to read this letter. I will follow up with a phone call to you within a few days and hope that you will agree to participate in the research. Each key informant has been identified because of their unique perspective and I believe that yours will be a great help to me in unraveling the unique successes of the GWC,

Sincerely,

Elaine Condon

Appendix 3: Informed Consent Form

Elaine Condon, Student
Masters of Social Work Program
Carleton University
econdon2@connect.carleton.ca
(709) 256-1937

Dr. Pat Evans, Supervisor
School of Social Work
Carleton University
Pat_evans@carleton.ca
(613) 520-2600 ext 3662

Professor Antonio Gualtieri, Chair
Carleton University
Research Ethics Committee
ethics@carleton.ca
(613) 520-2517

I have been approached by Elaine Condon to participate in a Master of Social Work thesis project regarding the impact of neo-liberalism on community based social justice work. I have read or have had read to me, the Informed Consent Form, and I understand and consent to the following:

- I will be one of a maximum of 12 people interviewed and my participation is entirely voluntary;
- I have a right to not answer any questions;
- I have the right to withdraw at any time;
- If I exercise my right to withdraw, I can decide at that point whether or not to give the researcher permission to use the information I provided to that point;
- The interview will take approximately one hour;
- I do/do not consent to be tape-recorded via audio cassette;
- I understand that I will only be quoted with my permission and that responses will not be attributed to me;
- Anonymity cannot be guaranteed as there are so few participants and each person's experience is unique. However, the researcher will take precautions with respect to the selection of meeting place, coding of data, storage of data and disposal of the data at the end of the project. Interview

notes and audio tapes will be stored separately from the signed Informed Consent Forms in a locked cabinet in the researcher's home. All records of interviews will be destroyed after the research is complete, or by April 2008;

- There is minimal risk to me as a government employee as I will not be asked to comment on government policy or practice but only on the activity of the GWC;

- I understand that there are minimal risks to my participation. I am being asked to discuss my experiences with, and opinion of, the GWC. As there are only a few participants and most of us know each other there is the possibility that others will not share my views and opinions.

- I understand that the main purpose of this research is to fulfill partial requirements for an M.S.W. degree and therefore the results of the research will be presented to Carleton School of Social Work in thesis format. The research findings will also be presented to the GWC in either hard copy or electronic form. The research results may also be shared with other groups through discussion papers, conference presentations, workshops, classroom presentations, academic journals, and other media sources.

- In the event that I should have any questions, concerns, or complaints about the project I can contact the researcher's supervisor, Dr. Pat Evans at (613) 520 2600 ext 3662, or Professor Antonio Gualtieri, Chair, Carlton University Ethics Committee at (613) 520-2517.

Participant's name

Participant's signature

Researcher's signature

Date

Appendix 4 - Interview Guide

1. Tell me about your involvement with the Gender Status of Women Council. When did you become involved? In what capacity have you been involved?
2. When you became involved, what was your understanding of the role/mission of the group in relation to advocacy and service delivery?
3. What do you see as some of the major political, social, and economic changes that occurred within the past decade and how have they effected the advocacy work of GWC? What have been the issues, dilemmas, tensions, struggles, for the GWC associated with these changes?
4. Think about the work of the GWC in relation to the changing political climate over the last decade, such as funding changes, pressures to deliver services, political pressures etc. Has the GWC been able to continue to do effective advocacy work within this changing climate? why, or why not?
5. Think about the challenges and obstacles that the GWC has faced. What are the strategies that have been used to cope with these and are these strategies still relevant?
6. What critical factors, ingredients, internal processes, community connections etc, influence the work of GWC right now and do you think they will still be critical in the next five years?
7. What has been the role and impact of the GWC within the public policy process? What has the GWC meant for women and the community?
8. What maintains you and the GWC? What keeps the agenda alive? Why does the GWC struggle to hold onto the advocacy agenda? What do you seen happening in terms of community advocacy work and the GWC in the next five to ten years?
9. Is there anything else you would like to add?

Thank you

APPENDIX 5

SCHEDULE "I"

The objects for which the association is established are to contribute to the growth and improvement of the status of all women in general and particularly in the Gander and surroundings area by:

- I) informing and educating women and the general public to further the elimination of discrimination on the basis of sex, race, marital status and sexual orientation.
- II) striving to support the establishment, protection, and guaranteeing of equal rights for women.
- III) establishing and maintaining a centre in which to carry on activities to promote the objectives of the association including the provision of emotional, moral and/or physical support for women in need.
- IV) Promoting changes in legislation, attitudes, customs and practices to benefit women.
- V) encouraging the development and improvement of services facilities to meet the needs of all women, including day care services, health and all other types of services used by women.
- VI) Promoting the principle of equal pay for work of equal value and also equal educational opportunities.
- VII) facilitating communication between individuals and groups concerned about the status of women.
- VIII) purchasing, leasing or acquiring any land, buildings or property real or personal which may be requisite for, or conveniently used for the promotion of the objectives of the association and in this connection, to sell, mortgage, give in exchange or otherwise dispose of the same.
- IX) raising funds by any legal means and seeking and obtaining funds and/or accepting gifts, donations and grants for the promotion and advancement of the association's objectives and or by donating or lending money as the association deems fit.
- X) to make such bylaws as may be deemed necessary and advisable concerning the administration and management of the affairs of the association and from time to time to alter and/or repeal any such by-laws.