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**THE CANADIAN POVERTY DEBATE: THE SHAPING
OF FEMINIST POLITICAL INTERESTS (1970 TO 1995)**

by

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**A thesis submitted to
the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research
in partial fulfilment of
the requirements of the degree of**

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Abstract

Focusing on feminist politics in the terrain of federal income security policy in Canada, this thesis asks how the institutionalized women's movement in Canada has pursued the goal of women's autonomy in this policy sphere. It recognizes that this goal may be achieved through various strategies, including securing income support for single mothers, and directly asserting the principle of women's autonomy through a demand for individual, as opposed to family, entitlement to benefits. Of particular interest is whether and with what success the latter strategy of individualization was taken up by the Canadian feminist movement in this policy sphere. A basic premise of this thesis is that political interests are shaped and not given and that our focus, therefore, is on the shaping of feminist political interests on this policy terrain from the emergence of second-wave feminism to the mid-1990s. Macro-level factors, such as social and economic changes, broad political and policy agendas, and the prevailing universe of political discourse, dictate important aspects of "the political." The primary claim of this thesis, however, is that feminist political interests were the outcome of choices made by the institutionalized women's movement itself in the context of policy debate, and that the discursive constructions of the relatively more powerful (liberal) anti-poverty community established the most immediate discursive and ideological conditions for these choices.

The institutional women's movement emerged in the early 1970s with two broad

goals with respect to social security policy: vertical equity and gender equity. In the late 1970s it opted to support a policy approach (i.e. targeting poor families with children) that seemed to satisfy both of these goals. This strategy furthered vertical equity while also attending to women's autonomy by providing for single mothers with children. This choice was conditioned by a critical discursive event within the social policy community; the writing of women into the poverty story - a construction that privileged the needs of single mothers.

What of the more direct strategy for asserting gender equity - the demand for individualized entitlement? While there was an initial impulse within institutionalized feminism towards such a politics it was largely foreclosed and then abandoned as a consequence of the policy stands adopted by the institutionalized women's movement in the late 1970s to mid-1980s.

The early to mid-1990s saw the complete withdrawal of the institutionalized women's movement from the terrain of income security debate. While this change reflected important changes at this time in the broader universe of political discourse, this thesis places the explanatory weight on a second discursive event in the social policy community, namely, the adoption by the social policy community of the theme of child poverty.

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CHAPTER ONE

Social Policy and Women's Autonomy

Introduction

This thesis reflects the politics of a white, middle-class, Canadian, socialist-feminist coming of age in the 1970s and 1980s. As a researcher in the early and mid-1980s working for the Canadian Advisory Council on the Status of Women I had a personal and professional interest in critiquing social policy and programs from the standpoint of the cause of women's autonomy. I was struck, however, by the unwillingness of the dominant progressive social policy analysts to take this issue seriously, quite apart from the conservative and pro-family ideology of the period. A more theoretically informed statement of the politics of this thesis is found in contemporary feminist welfare state and citizenship theory. A central recognition of this body of work has been that most western welfare states, and many social policies, entrench notions of women's dependency. They usually operate within the terms of breadwinning and caring ideologies which designate women as dependent-carers within the family. Social policy has thus been recognized as an important site of struggle for women's autonomy, the core goal of which has been conceptualized as the "defamilisation" of policy.

This problematic applies well to the Canadian case. As a primarily "liberal"

welfare state with a focus on poverty-oriented social programs, the social policy regime of the Canadian state has established women's eligibility for social benefits largely on the basis of their status as wives or mothers, and not as individuals in their own right (Eichler, 1983; 1997; Haddad, 1986; Kitchen, 1980; 1986). Even benefits that have been accessible to women as payment in their own name (most notably, the family allowance) have been granted on the basis of women's status as mothers.

The broad "riddle," then, that this thesis addresses is why the women's movement has never successfully challenged the familial underpinnings of Canadian social policy. The specific research question of this study rests on two related analytic premises: Firstly, that the political interests of any social actor are "constructed" rather than given, and secondly, that the unity of "women's" interests are never guaranteed - they are conditional and historically contingent. The focus of this study then is the question of how the political interests of the women's movement in the social welfare field were shaped; to what extent did the second-wave women's movement in Canada take up the cause of women's autonomy in the federal sphere of social welfare policy; how were these interests formulated; and how successful was the women's movement in advancing this cause? The period of the study is from the 1960s - the time of the emergence of an institutionalized women's movement - to the mid-1990s. It treats national women's organizations outside of Quebec as key representatives of second wave feminism in Canada; the Quebec women's movement operated in a substantially different ideological and institutional environment and constitutes, therefore, a separate case. The focus is also limited to the federal social welfare policy context, while recognizing that important

parts of this struggle take place at provincial and local levels.

This thesis makes both a substantive and a methodological-theoretical claim. Its substantive claim is that while a feminist politics of autonomy had a presence within the Canadian women's movement, it failed to materialize into a full-fledged challenge to the familial basis of Canadian social welfare programs or discourse. The reasons for this failure are partly rooted in the ideological premises of liberal feminism (the dominant strain within the institutionalized women's movement), and partly in the ideological and discursive environment within which the women's movement identified its interests. With respect to the latter, a primary factor was the discursive constructions generated by feminism's allies within the social policy community, namely, national social policy and anti-poverty organizations. The activities of these organizations in writing "women" in to the poverty problem, and subsequently writing them out of the problem, were critical in establishing the terms and conditions of feminist participation in federal social welfare and poverty politics.

The methodological-theoretical claim this thesis makes is that the political interests of the women's movement are a consequence of its own actions within a historically specific discursive and ideological environment. At the most superficial level, the environment is formed by macro-level variables, such as socioeconomic conditions, the priorities of the government in power, and the broad "universe of political discourse." An important terrain of the political exists beyond this, however, at the level of policy debate within the "policy community" wherein the discourses and political agendas of the dominant policy community actors come to the fore. While state actors

are obviously influential in establishing the terms of social policy debate, I contend that it is the interpretations of actors who are potential allies of feminism that form the immediate ideological and discursive context within which the more marginal women's movement identifies women's interests and adopts policy positions.

This thesis thus contributes to our understanding of both federal social welfare/poverty politics and current women's movement politics in Canada, particularly the relationship of the women's movement to the state. On a theoretical level it provides an approach to analyzing politics which expands the perspectives typically taken in these areas - approaches which either ignore the dimension of politics that exists at the level of meaning construction or are overly focused on macro-level phenomenon.

The research process adopted for this study was one of triangulation among the theoretical-methodological framework, documents analysis, and interviews with key informants. My analytic framework established the parameters and direction of my empirical research agenda and was revised in the process. Thus materials produced by the three key "policy community" players - the federal state, social policy/anti-poverty organizations, and organizations comprising the "institutionalized" women's movement - provided a key source of data. These included published articles and reports, and briefs and submissions to legislative committees and commissions. Archival material was also used, particularly for documenting the emergence of the poverty concept and feminist concerns with respect to women, social security and poverty in the 1960s. As a final stage, in-depth interviews were conducted with key informants - individuals chosen mostly because of their involvement in social welfare and feminist politics in the period

of this study (a list of interviewees is provided in Appendix One). The primary purpose of these interviews was to substantiate and refine my hypotheses and analytic framework, although they also served to fill in gaps in information. Secondary materials were also useful in substantiating my theories and providing empirical data.

Outline of This Thesis

The remainder of **Chapter One** elaborates on the political-theoretical point of departure for this project, drawing on feminist political theory on citizenship and the welfare state. Its central focus is the concept of "women's autonomy" (or its reverse, the problem of women's involuntary economic dependency). The standpoint adopted is that while the concept of dependency is problematic, the ideology of women's dependency continues to govern the general position of women, detracting from their freedom, dignity, power, and civil, political and social rights. Attention is drawn to the area of social rights and the insights of feminist welfare state theorists on the mechanisms by which welfare states perpetuate women's dependency and on the possibility for "women-friendly" policies and regimes. With respect to the latter, the concept of "defamilisation" of policy and the strategy of achieving individualization of eligibility to benefits are presented as necessary components of a feminist politics of autonomy in the social policy field. As a final focus, this chapter addresses theoretical issues relating to women's agency. It advances the position that whether and/or how a women's movement pursues a politics of autonomy is a political and historical question about how the political interests of that movement are shaped within particular historical conjunctures.

Chapter Two is an attempt to theorize about the question of how political interests are constructed, towards the goal of formulating a methodology for this study. The discussion draws out key insights from three different areas of political theory. Post-structuralism emphasizes the centrality of discourse and meaning construction, and views politics as fundamentally a struggle over meaning. Social movement theory directs our attention to the question of agency. In Jane Jenson's work, especially, we find a concept of politics that incorporates a focus on struggle over meaning but also achieves a structure/agency balance. Structural-institutional theory within Canadian public policy theory has posited the mezo-institutional level as the key site of politics and provided an important, although not completely satisfying, analytic tool in the concept of the "policy community." By synthesizing these theoretical positions, this chapter elaborates the methodological claim of this thesis: the political interests of actors are the outcome of their own policy choices made in the context of specific policy debates, the conditions for which are profoundly determined by the dominant social policy community actors, and most immediately, by actors who are potential allies. It is shown how this methodological approach departs from those that have current purchase within Canadian studies of poverty and women's movement politics.

Chapters three to six present the empirical findings of this thesis. **Chapter Three** sets the stage by focusing on the origins of the discourses and actors that are central to federal social welfare politics, and of the institutionalized women's movement and its interests in social security policy. A key focus is the poverty discourse that emerged in the mid-1960s and became a "master frame" for social welfare policy debate in Canada.

The discussion highlights the gender subtext of poverty discourse, and the significance of the poverty concept in defining the parameters of mainstream debate and the policy community. The final section of the chapter focuses on the voice of the emerging institutionalized women's movement in the terrain of federal social welfare policy. It highlights the potentially contradictory tendencies of this movement in its concern with both gender and vertical (or income class) equity. The question that emerges, and provides an analytic focus for subsequent chapters, is how such contradictions were reconciled through the policy choices adopted by the women's movement.

Chapter Four is the first of three chapters that reflect the analytic concern with the "shaping" of the interests of the institutionalized women's movement in the sphere of federal social welfare policy, particularly with respect to its ability to assert the principle of women's autonomy. These chapters follow a pattern of initially focusing on the social, economic and political backdrop of the period; then turning to the area of social policy, and the discourses and agendas of both state actors and the progressive sector in this policy area; and finally presenting an argument concerning the shaping of feminist politics in this field, highlighting the moments of policy choices by the women's movement itself and their repercussions for a politics of autonomy.

Chapter Four presents a first moment in this story which occurred in the mid- and late 1970s. A key discursive event in this period was the emergence of a discourse on "women and poverty." This interpretation of the poverty problem was critical in underwriting the increasing involvement of institutional feminism within poverty politics. While a feminist politics of autonomy (i.e. a concern that women get social

benefits in their own right) had a presence within institutional feminism and in the women's movement broadly, its impetus was curtailed through a policy choice made by the women's movement in the late 1970s.

Chapter Five documents a second moment in the shaping of feminist social security politics taking place during the first term of the Mulroney government (the mid-1980s). The institutional women's movement continued to pursue its concern with autonomy, or more precisely, to conduct rearguard action to defend women's existing independent rights. Of particular interest is the course this politics took with respect to income security programs through the fight to defend family allowance benefits. I argue that a further closure of this politics occurred as the institutional women's movement was drawn into the moderate politics of the dominant progressive social policy community.

Chapter Six presents a final moment in the closure of the feminist politics of autonomy in the federal social welfare field, which takes place in the early and mid-1990s. The institutionalized women's movement substantially withdrew from the mainstream social security debate in the early 1990s. This was partly a feature of the reorientation of feminist politics that began in the mid- to late 1980s. I argue, however, that a discursive development, namely, the adoption of the focus on child poverty, was also a critical factor underlying these changes. This discursive/ideological orientation effectively undermined women's claims-making ability and the very credibility of the institutional women's movement as a voice in this policy area.

Chapter Seven concludes this thesis by reviewing its premises, parameters, findings and claims. The implications of this study are discussed with respect to the

current policy predispositions of the Canadian state and the latitude for institutional feminism to protect women's independent rights in the social policy field. Finally, attention turns to some current studies on women's movement, which are assessed in the light of the findings herein.

The Case of Women's Autonomy/ The Problem of Women's Dependency

The case for women's economic independence - their ability "to earn their own subsistence, independent of men" - was made 200 years ago by Mary Wollstonecraft in A Vindication of the Rights of Women (1792/1985). The problem of women's dependency within the family has been a focal point for the largely white, second-wave feminist movement in the west. "The family," with its prescription for a dependent role for women, has been considered by feminists as a primary site of women's oppression (eg. Barrett and McIntosh, 1982). Its relevance continues to be emphasized in the literature on women's citizenship (Pascall, 1986, 1993; Lister, 1990, 1995; Cass 1994). Economic independence is central to women's claims as full citizens.

The concept of dependence has been somewhat problematic, however. Feminist citizenship and welfare state theorists have revealed it to be a highly political ideological construct which has undergone significant shifts in meaning (Fraser and Gordon, 1994). Black feminists have revealed its racialized aspect. They have been critical of white feminists' preoccupation with women's economic dependence, pointing out that dependency is much less common among Afro-American and Afro-Caribbean households (Bhavnani and Coulson, 1986). Nevertheless, the continued force of the

ideology of women's dependency can still disadvantage women who are not actually dependent upon a man, such as black or lesbian women (Lister, 1995: 26,34). The ideology of women's dependency underpins the wage and opportunity structure favouring male workers, and the construction of women as secondary paid workers, and men as breadwinners. In this sense it governs the general position of all but perhaps the most privileged women.

A second theoretical issue has been the false dichotomy posed by dependency/independency. Feminists have pointed out that the distinction between the independence that comes from working in the marketplace (**men's** independence) and working at home (**women's** dependence) is a misleading one. The independence of the former is made possible by the hidden dependence of the latter. Thus for example, Lister argues that "men's dependence on women for care and servicing . . . facilitates their own independence as workers and citizens (1995: 27)." As a way around this dichotomy, some feminists have stressed the need to focus on the "interdependence" of human beings. The problem remains, however, that interdependence between women and men in the household is "skewed in men's favour," and there is a strong element of "involuntariness" in women's economic dependency on men. Involuntary economic dependence implies "an unequal power relationship and the absence of choice" (O'Connor, 1993: 512). While one important solution may be to problematize men's supposed "independence," as Bettina Cass has suggested, the problem of women's economic dependency still remains and still profoundly affects their citizenship status (1994).

Feminists have highlighted how the distribution of resources within the family (including work, time, and money) is partly a function of power relationships, which in turn reflect the independent economic contributions of each partner (Pahl, 1989; Lister, 1995). According to Barbara Hobson, power and dependency in the family operate as a two-way mirror:

a woman's position in the market economy affects her bargaining position in the household; and a woman's position in the household (how unwaged work is divided) affects her earnings and potential earnings in the labor market (1990: 238).

The unequal power relationship that comes with full or partial economic dependency is experienced by women as a lack of control over resources; a lack of rights and a sense of obligation (contributing to "compulsory altruism") and deference (Lister, 1990: 451; 1995: 29; Pahl, 1989).

These insights overlap with feminist analysts who have focused on the practical consequences of women's dependency for their rights of citizenship (Pascall, 1993). With respect to civil rights, while women have made substantial gains in legal rights, they are denied such rights in practice through violence and marital rape, and the lack of public intervention in this area. A second important area is the pressure on women to undertake caring work in the family. As Gillian Pascall has asked: "[t]o what extent do relationships of dependency within marriage and cohabitation allow women the freedom not to do unpaid work" (1993: 117)? Women's relatively lower incomes and security from paid work still make women dependent on the men with whom they live, and "wifely duties . . . are alive and well in practice" (Ibid.). Women tend to feel an

obligation to take on care work, possibly because of a strong affection, but they are also susceptible to pressure given their position in the labour market, and the lack of alternatives. Moreover, as the result of taking up this care labour they are often isolated and deprived of autonomy. With respect to political rights, women's commitment to their families and care work has been a major factor in their lack of representation in legislation, and a barrier to their participation in political activities generally. Poor women are able to participate in political activities even less than poor men because of caring responsibilities (Nelson, 1984).

With respect to women's social rights (rights derived from the market and social welfare policy) citizenship theorists have especially focused on the way women's rights are undermined by systems of social provision that treat them as dependents. Here the work of feminist welfare state theorists has been critical - both in understanding the mechanisms whereby women's dependency has been maintained and reinforced, and in theorizing "woman-friendly" policies.

Feminist Welfare State Theory

A critical point established by feminist welfare state theorists is that the policies and practices of states can advance or impede women's autonomy. States impede women's autonomy mainly by privileging paid work over unpaid work. Full social rights accrue on the basis of paid work, which is the norm for male breadwinners. When many systems of social provision were established women were considered to be dependent on male breadwinners. The focus was on insuring breadwinners against disruptions in their

aspect (Lewis, 1997: 165). Social benefits have been perceived as having provided the basis for the transformation from private patriarchy to public patriarchy:

The welfare state acts as a mechanism of welfare payments from which women disproportionately benefit . . . and, despite all the many problems of poverty levels of income support, it does constitute an alternative to the private patriarch, albeit a public one (Walby, 1994: 391).¹

Early theorizing on the relations of women to the welfare state was embedded in a functionalist/marxist-feminist paradigm in which the welfare state was viewed as functioning on behalf of capitalism to ensure women performed their role as unpaid domestic and care workers within the family (McIntosh, 1978; Wilson, 1977; Bryson, 1983; Land 1979). A body of historical and comparative analysis has subsequently emerged, however, which views these as historical questions. Historical studies on the formation of welfare states have reinforced a focus on political struggle in accounting for variation over time and between welfare states (eg. Jenson, 1986; Hobson, 1990; Ruggie, 1984; Shaver, 1989; Nelson, 1990; Quadagno, 1990). This work reflects the understanding of the state as a site of struggle, rather than a coherent unity with intentions of its own (Pringle and Watson, 1990).

The most recent turn in feminist welfare state theory has been towards developing gender-sensitive conceptual frameworks for comparing welfare states (eg. Orloff, 1993;

1

The advanced welfare states of Sweden and Denmark are viewed as having progressed the furthest in this transformation. They have created increased employment opportunities in the public sector, which benefit women, and evidence suggests that women's extensive ties to public programs and services here has also facilitated their political mobilization (Sainsbury 1994; Simm, 1991; O'Connor, 1993: 508).

1997; O'Connor, 1993; 1996; Lewis, 1992; 1997; Ostner and Lewis, 1995; Hobson, 1994; Sainsbury, 1994; 1996; Shaver, 1990). This work has been both inspired by, and presents a challenge to, the influential "power resource" school of analysis. Power resource theorists begin from the premise that the working class/labour movements are the prime agents in achieving more social rights. They contend that the working class can mobilize politically - by wielding their rights to vote and organize collectively - to modify market inequality and extend social rights (Esping-Anderson, 1990; Korpi, 1989). Social benefits weaken the power of the market and promote working-class solidarity. The focus of this body of theory is on the welfare state regime - a concept that captures the content and character of social provision.

Power resource theorists propose three dimensions that characterize the content of the welfare state: the relationship between the state and the market in providing welfare; the effects of the welfare state on social stratification; and the character of social rights - particularly, the degree to which they decommodify workers. Decommodification is at the heart of the welfare state's emancipatory potential. It signifies the degree to which workers are granted an alternative means of welfare to that of the market, or an ability to opt out of a job without actually losing the job or income (the definition thereby implies the condition of full employment) (Esping-Andersen, 1989; 1990). The clustering of systems along these three dimensions defines regime types, of which there are three - liberal, conservative-corporatist, and social democratic. The liberal regime, as exemplified the United States, Australia, Britain, and Canada, is characterized by a reliance on income or means-tested, poverty-oriented programs,

modest social insurance benefits, and market solutions in the form of employer-sponsored benefits and private insurance. (Canada has never completely fit the model of liberal welfare state, as I discuss in chapter three). In conservative-corporatist regimes, notably Germany, France and Italy, there is a strong linkage of rights to class and status through social insurance schemes, a strong commitment to the maintenance of class structure and the traditional family, and to maintaining the status quo as regards income distribution. The social-democratic regime, as exemplified by Sweden and Norway, typically offers universal benefits and services covering the entire population, ensures a weak influence of the market in distribution, and has a strong commitment to full employment (Esping-Anderson, 1990; Sainsbury, 1996).

Feminist welfare state theorists have pointed to the limitations of the power resource theory and its typologies, criticizing the welfare state regime concept for its gender-blindness. The analytic scheme of mainstream analysis was developed to answer the question of how states affect **class** relations - gender is absent from the framework and, therefore, the agency of non-class actors, such as the women's movement, is ignored (Orloff, 1993; O'Connor, 1993; Sainsbury, 1996). Feminist theorists have made various attempts to gender mainstream theory or devise alternative gender-sensitive comparative frameworks. One approach has been to assess the variability of welfare states on the basis of the degree to which they support the "breadwinner model" (Lewis, 1992; Ostner and Lewis, 1995; Sainsbury, 1994). These analyses have stressed the centrality of breadwinner and caring ideologies in structuring social policy. While this work emphasizes that welfare states vary as to their effects on women and in their structuring

of gender relations, there is a shared view that all western welfare states entrench and reinforce notions of women's dependency within their systems (Sainsbury, 1994; Lewis, 1992). Another approach has been to build upon and gender the theoretical dimensions of power resource theory (i.e. state/society relations, stratification, and the concepts of social rights and decommodification) to understand how the welfare state shapes gender relations and women's secondary/dependent status (Orloff, 1993; O'Connor, 1993).

This theoretical turn within feminist welfare state theory towards a "politics matters" approach has in general stimulated thinking on the question of woman-friendly policy, and the strategies by which it can be achieved. One particularly contentious area of debate with respect to strategies is whether to value care work or not, whether care work can provide the basis for citizenship for women, or whether it is possible for women to seek citizenship on the same basis as men. The question has been posed concisely by Sylvia Walby:

[s]hould women seek support for their existing roles in the family as carers, or should they be seeking to leave such roles behind and enter paid employment (1994: 387)?

This is the classic dilemma of "difference" versus "equality" - i.e. whether it is better to pursue policies on the basis of women's "different" role as mothers and carers, or on the basis of sameness treatment that allows women to compete on the same footing as men. On the one hand, policies that ignore inequality of condition disadvantage women; on the other hand, policies that allow women to do caring work (eg. payment for care work) further entrench the sexual division of labour. Recent feminist theorizations of gender equality and citizenship promote the goal of making the breadwinning/caregiving role the

norm for both men and women - an approach which, as Lister suggests, might help sidestep the dilemma (eg. Fraser, 1994; Lister, 1995). They suggest that "part of the answer lies in problematizing men's failure to fulfil the obligations of citizen the carer (Lister, 1995: 33); and, "to develop policies that discourage free riding . . . the real free riders . . . [being] men who shirk care work and domestic labour, and especially corporations who free ride on the labor of working people" (Fraser, 1994: 613).

Beyond, and to some extent, cutting across, this "care" debate, however, there appears to be a consensus within comparative feminist welfare state literature on the core principles of a woman-friendly policy and regime.

Theorizing Women-Friendly Policy

A core concept in theorizing full citizenship rights for women has been the degree to which states promote the personal autonomy and independence of women (with caring responsibilities). This notion has been advanced strongly within recent feminist welfare state analyses which have undertaken to develop women-centred criteria for comparing welfare states on how they treat women and shape gender relations (Orloff, 1993, 1997; O'Connor, 1993; Lewis, 1992; 1997, Ostner and Lewis, 1995; Sainsbury, 1994; 1996; Hobson, 1994; Jenson, 1997).

A starting point for this discussion has been the feminist critique of the concept of decommodification. As noted above, power resource theorists define this as the degree to which individuals, or "families," can maintain an acceptable standard of living without reliance on market participation (Esping-Andersen, 1990). Feminist theorists have

argued that this concept does not account for gender differences, and that it needs to be complemented with a notion of autonomy - or the degree to which individual adults can uphold a socially acceptable standard of living, independently of **family** relationships, either through paid work or through social security provisions. For Ann Orloff, a necessary measure of women's well-being is the extent to which states, through social provision and employment regulation, affect the capacity of individuals to form and maintain an **autonomous** household - to ensure the freedom from compulsion to enter a marital or other relationship (Orloff, 1993, 1997). Julia O'Connor has drawn out a similar concept with her notion that women's well-being depends on the extent to which states provide "insulation from personal dependency." She views this as being as important for women as "insulation from public dependency:"

the level of personal **autonomy** varies according to the range of services which insulate individuals from involuntary economic dependence on family members and/or involuntary dependence on state agencies (O'Connor, 1993: 511, 512). (my bold)²

Feminist scholars studying the issue of paying for care work have developed a similar theoretical conceptualization which is "directly about men and women's relations to the family, rather than the market via the family" (McLaughlin and Glendinning, 1994: 64, 65). They have offered the concept of "defamilisation" as a way of focusing not strictly on "women's dependency on men," but on the terms and conditions under which people engage in families and caring relationships:

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Also see Lister, 1995. O'Connor and others also note that personal autonomy, especially within families, requires a strong guarantee at both the formal and practical levels of sexual and bodily protection and rights (1993).

[i]f de-commodification is the process which varies the extent to which well-being is dependent on "our" relation to the cash nexus (Esping-Andersen, 1990:35), then defamilisation is constituted by those provisions and practices which vary the extent to which well-being is dependent on "our" relation to the (patriarchal) family (65).³

Lewis has similarly concluded that the key to women's full citizenship is the enhancement of women's choice, and that this ought to be the direction of social policy reform for women (Lewis, 1992, 1997).⁴ The view shared by these analysts is that access to paid work is important and that the state has an important role to play in ensuring women have access to paid work, including the services that make employment a viable option, and in determining the kind and quality of that work (Lister, 1990; Orloff, 1993; O'Connor, 1996). Historically, this has been the primary focus of second-wave feminism. Given, however, that most women do not earn enough income through paid labour (because of part-time labour or care work), and that husbands do not always share their income, feminist theorists have recognized the field of **social** policy, and particularly, income security programs, as an important area of struggle for women.

Social/income security payments are viewed as important in giving women an independent income. There is, moreover, agreement in theory that women are best

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Also see Lister, 1995; Lewis, 1997. An advantage of this formulation is that it allows for a consideration of the structuring of civil and social rights to people as receivers as well as givers (of care) within the family.

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Lewis has promoted the vision that women should have the choice to not engage in paid work (decommodification); the choice to do unpaid work; the choice to do paid work; and the choice not to engage in unpaid work (1997). Others have questioned the political feasibility of this vision (Orloff 1997; Hobson 1994).

discourses that shape identity and interests, there is a concern that family-based policy undermines women's autonomy at the level of political agency (eg. Brodie, 1995). It reinforces women's identity as "family members" and defines their interests as synonymous with those of their family.

The strategy of shifting towards individualized eligibility criteria is, of course, not the only one to be pursued to achieve defamilisation in this policy realm. As a strategy oriented towards a "sameness" approach to achieving equality for women, individualization ignores inequality of conditions and, therefore, can disadvantage some women in the short-term.⁵ From the standpoint of meeting the needs of dependent-carers, individualization of benefit entitlement has been viewed as necessary, although not sufficient (Luckhaus, 1994: 161). At a minimum, individualization needs to be complemented by short-term strategies such as those that support women who currently do take on unpaid caring work with little or no financial or practical support (Lister, 1995: 23, 24; Finch, 1990: 52). There is agreement, nevertheless, that individualization of entitlement criteria, with its direct challenge to the familialist, breadwinner/dependent ideology, constitutes an essential long-term strategy for achieving autonomy for women.

The Problem of Women's Agency

This thesis stands outside of the class-centred framework of mainstream welfare state theory in problematizing women's agency in the terrain of social policy. It departs

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For an example of how individualization is a disadvantage to some women in the short-term in the Canadian context, see Katherine Scott, 1996.

as well from the current strand of feminist welfare state literature that explores the role played by women historically in the development of social programs. Rather, this thesis inquires into the activities of the women's movement in relation to the struggle to transform social policy regimes and social programs towards a defamilialized, women-friendly model. It asks to what extent the Canadian women's movement pursued a politics of autonomy - with particular interest in the individualization strategy - as regards federal social and income security policy.

Posing this question raises further complexities, however. Not all feminist movements are going to pursue "women's autonomy" in the same ways across policy areas, social policy regimes, or over time. Firstly, the question of whether and how any social actor is going to take up an issue or strategy is a **political** question. There has been a recognition that political interests are not given but are shaped on the ground as actors struggle under specific historical circumstances, within particular political, socio-economic, and discursive contexts. Secondly, and relatedly, we cannot assume that women/feminists will always recognize their long term interests or want to realize them. The basis of women's unity is never given, it must be constructed. Women's unity is threatened by differences of class, race, ethnicity and nationality (Molyneux, 1985).

This point has been developed by Maxine Molyneux with her distinction between **practical** and **strategic** gender interests. **Practical** gender interests are derived inductively from women's (or men's) positioning within existing gender relations. If realized they would improve (some) women's material situation but would not necessarily fundamentally challenge the gender order. **Strategic** gender interests are

deduced from feminist analyses of women's subordination and the belief that emancipation is possible. By pushing for more satisfactory arrangements for women, usually measures such as daycare and work arrangements, the gendered division of labour can be challenged (1994: 62, 63). Strategic gender interests are not always going to be accepted by all women at all times; the pursuit of strategic gender interests can threaten the short term practical interests of some women, or result in a loss of protection that they cannot afford. We cannot assume therefore that strategic gender interests are primary for women at all times.

With these complexities in mind, we turn, in the next chapter, to address the question of how the political interests of an actor are formed, and through this, arrive at a methodology for this study.

CHAPTER TWO

The Shaping of Political Interests: From Theory To Methodology

Introduction

There has been an increasing acceptance by social analysts of the constructed nature of reality and of political identities and interests. This view has entered a number of theoretical traditions, including marxism and feminism, and is the defining feature of post-structuralism. Adopting this standpoint, this chapter theorizes about the question of how political interests are constructed, with the goal of developing a methodology for this study. Post-structuralist theory provides a starting point for this discussion with its recognition that language or discourse have the power to shape reality and define interests and identities. Anna Yeatman's explication of the power of state discourse has particular resonance for this study. Developments within new social movement theory move the discussion beyond a totalizing view of discourse to bring in "agency." Jenson's theoretical insights, and her concept of the "universe of political discourse," provide a focus on the constraints and conditions within which actors act. This turn is particularly fruitful for problematizing why certain interests and identities emerge and flourish and others do not.

Finally, structural-institutionalism directs our attention to policy terrains and the notion of specialized policy communities which dominate the political debate and policy-making activities in a policy area. The concept of policy community is presented as a potentially useful analytic tool.

The above insights are brought together as a theoretical statement concerning how the political interests of an actor are shaped and as a methodological approach for exploring the shaping of the politics of the women's movement in the federal social policy terrain. The approach developed is contrasted with others which currently dominate in the literatures on women's movement and poverty politics in the Canadian context.

Finally, by way of concluding this chapter, I show how this methodology organizes the structure of the remaining chapters of this thesis.

Post-Structuralism and the Power of Discourse

Post-structuralism is concerned with the "fragmentation and multiplicity of meaning," and emphasizes the power of language and discourse not just in describing the world but in shaping social reality, including political identities and interests. As Rosemary Pringle and Sophie Watson have put it,

Neither social reality nor the natural world has fixed, intrinsic meanings which language reflects or expresses. Instead there has been an emphasis on the relational, historical and precarious character of "reality." Language is also the place where our "identities" are constructed. Subjectivity is produced in a whole range of discursive practices, the meanings of which are a constant site of struggle over power. It is neither unified nor fixed but a site of disunity and conflict (1992: 64).

Discourses are viewed as providing problem-setting frameworks. They are sets of statements that give expression to the meanings and values of an institution and

define, describe, and delimit what it is possible to say and not possible to say . . . with respect to the area of concern of that institution . . . A discourse provides a set of possible statements about a given area, and organizes and gives structure to

the manner in which a particular topic, object, process is to be talked about. In that it provides descriptions, rules, permissions and prohibitions of social and individual actions (Kress, 1985: 6, 7).

Viewed from this perspective, Anna Yeatman describes state policy not as a response to a social problem "out there," but as constituting the problem to which it is seeming to respond (1990: 158). She goes on to suggest that in constituting a social problem, policies also constitute the claims on the political process, and therefore, the claimants making the claims. The discursive construction by the state of child abuse as a social problem, for example, constitutes new "claims" on the political process - claims by advocates on behalf of children, claims by parents, claims by those resisting the politicization of parenting, and potentially, claims by children (1990: 170).⁶

Politics is first and foremost then the struggle over meaning, with discourse itself constituting "the power which is to be seized" (1990: 155). According to Yeatman,

If politics involves the reduction of complexity by means of decisions and policies, the field of political activity comprises all those who seek to affect and to contest how the agenda of policy-making gets framed. Political activity itself becomes preeminently a politics of contest over meaning: it comprises the disputes, debates and struggle about how the identities of the participants should be named and thereby constituted, how their needs should be named and thereby constituted, how their relationships should be named and thereby constituted (Ibid.).

Thus the core labels chosen for a given policy are a critical political issue. Yeatman

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Yeatman also stresses that the state has at the same time developed various rationing strategies with regard to claims and claimants, including, for example, the discourse of more effective "targeting" of social welfare, or by devolving authority to units closer to the front-line (meaning that claims and claimants are brokered much lower down the line, so that it is more difficult for them to elaborate their claims into generalized and generally visible discourses), or by producing elaborate discourses of change that are only window dressing and eat up the energies of advocates of change within these milieux (1990: 172).

provides an example in the use of "family" versus "parents" as core labels: policy in relation to families "can be vaguely swathed in ritual and rhetoric," while policy for "parents," have to be specific and concrete in providing assistance for people who parent (1990: 155). An illustration of this point in the Canadian social policy context can be seen in the approach adopted by the Mulroney government in the late 1980s under the rubric of addressing "child" poverty. The policies announced focused on developmental issues related to "children" (i.e. initiatives announced in 1992 focused on health development during pre and post-natal periods, infancy and early childhood (Canada, Health and Welfare Canada, 1992)) as opposed to the real problem of the high unemployment of their "parents." This case also illustrates another of Yeatman's points - that the meanings of policies are determined by the logic of more dominant discourses (1990: 158). The primary response to the problem of child poverty by the Tories surely reflected the dominant Conservative discourse of the individualization - i.e. that the cause of, and solutions to, social problems lay in the individual.

New Social Movement Theory and Structure/Agency

There has been a backlash, however, against a totalizing view of discourse in which texts are given all the power and no allowance is made for the creativity of people (Jenson, 1990: 66). We cannot account for opposition and contestation without recognizing the possibility of **agency**, of actors playing a creative role in the construction of reality (Jenson, 1990). There has been a growing recognition that social **actors** create meaning and reality - subjectivity, identity, interests - through their actions.

The creation of meaning through action has been a focus of new social movement theory (NSM), which has emphasized the creativity of actors in "naming" themselves and others, and "framing" their issues, thereby mobilizing interests and making opportunities. Jenson has argued that naming is a crucial activity for collectivities. It allows a collective actor to represent itself to itself and to outsiders. The struggle to be self-naming and to resist outside-naming is an important one, as the choice of a name affects a collectivity's strategies for making claims on the political system by helping to generate strategic resources, setting discursive boundaries such that some claims become more meaningful and others less so, and locating the movement in relation to others and, therefore, presenting possibilities for alliances and identifying opponents. Finally, the choice of a name has consequences for the routing of claims through state institutions (1995: 116).

Actors also construct meaning/reality by their "framing" of the problems, their causes, the solutions, and the rationales for joining a cause. A frame is

an interpretive schemata that simplifies and condenses the "world out there" by selectively punctuating and encoding objects, situations, events, experiences, and sequences of actions within one's present or past environments (Snow and Benford, 1992: 137).

Scott Hunt et. al. argue that framing and identity construction processes are integrally linked ("interconnected in a dynamic, almost recursive fashion" (1994: 203)). Through framing, collective actors make claims about the consciousness and character of relevant sets of actors (protagonist, antagonist, and audiences) within a movement's orbit of operation.

An important recognition of some of this work is that "[n]ot all identities, names, frames, or advocacy strategies are possible" (Phillips, 1994a: 196). Some actors/groups are not able to realize their identities, or are excluded. Much depends upon the specific conditions, including socioeconomic, but particularly the prevailing power relations, within which actors act.⁷ The work of Jane Jenson has made an important contribution in developing and conveying this view of politics. Her work represents a move towards examining "the dialectic between the abstractions of structures and the specificity of historical circumstances" (1990: 66). Jenson's approach captures the nexus of structure (the limitations and opportunities provided by existing conditions) and agency (the choices and opportunities that movements make for themselves) (Ibid.). It is an unpacking of the notion that "people make history but not in circumstances of their own choosing."

A strength of Jenson's approach is its ability to problematize, and provide a methodology for, investigating why certain collective identities emerge or fail to emerge. Such an approach also, of course, lends itself as a methodology for the project of this thesis - which is to explore the constraints on the emergence and shaping of a particular political **interest** or strategy (the treatment of women as autonomous beings) of a specific actor (women's movement) within a particular policy arena (federal social welfare policy).

Jenson's concept of the "universe of political discourse," defined as the universe

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Jenson has criticized NSM theory in general for its lack of attention to power (1994: 65).

of socially constructed meaning produced in the course of and resulting from political struggle, is an important theoretical tool in this regard (Phillips, 1994a). She defines it as the terrain on which actors seek in their actions to name themselves to themselves and to others, and have their causes, positions and demands respected and met; a terrain on which meaning systems jostle for attention and legitimacy. The universe of political discourse "filters and delineates claims and in fact determines what is 'political' in the first place" (Phillips, 1996: 257). The universe acts to limit the range of actors considered legitimate, the range of issues considered part of meaningful debate, the policy alternatives feasible for implementation, and the alliance strategies available for achieving change (Jenson, 1987: 65). Prevailing social relations, usually reflecting the unequal balance of power in society, ensure that greater weight is given to some identities and interests and not others, such that some will be privileged, and others will simply be absent.⁸ Institutions materialize and reproduce over time prevailing power/social relations, and also provide a terrain for action (1995: 115). State institutions have enormous power in establishing the terms of inclusion and exclusion by recognizing some actors as legitimate and thus privileging their voice (especially, if we also accept the post-structuralist view of state policy). The availability of allies and the power of opponents affects opportunity for making claims. Phillips uses the concept of the "political opportunity structure" (developed in the work of both Jenson and Sydney

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Collins provides an interesting example of this in her finding that the invisibility of the poverty of Black women in U.S. poverty studies is not because "no problem exists" (as a pure constructivist would maintain), but because of the relatively little power of Black women in making claims, and the biases of white analysts themselves which prevent them from "seeing" this problem (1989).

Tarrow) to describe these constraints (1994a: 196). Influence over the universe of political discourse is jealously guarded so that collectivities attempting to introduce new actors, issues, and policy alternatives must overcome the resistance of what is already established (1987: 66). Since power is relational rather than unidimensional, there may be opportunities and spaces for resistance to and contestation of imposed definitions of identities and issues.⁹ There are periods of stability in which both proponents of change and defenders of the status quo share a common language of politics (1992: 8). There can also be moments of instability, or crises, however, when alternative voices emerge to challenge and modify the hegemonic understandings (Brodie et. al., 1992: 7). The structures are thus created, recreated, and changed by actors struggling (Jenson, 1995: 115). A sharper methodology for this study is obtained, however, if we supplement Jenson's theoretical framework with one set at the mezo level of analysis and highlighting policy contexts.

Structural-Institutionalism and the Focus on Policy Communities

One of the strengths of the Canadian tradition of structural-institutionalist theory within the field of public policy is its attention to the mezo level of politics. It is premised on the notion that the state is disaggregated and there is variation across policy sectors. This theoretical work is broadly concerned with explaining policy outcomes

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Yeatman stresses that part of challenging dominant discourse is being able to problematize the problem-setting frameworks embedded in official discourses, to mobilize around the contradictions and make them a site of struggle (1990: 166).

with reference to structural factors at the mezo level - specifically the internal organizational capacities and development of state versus societal actors, and the structure or pattern of the relationships or linkages between them. With regard to state actors, for example, it perceives the autonomy from societal groups when formulating policy, and capacity to draw on sufficient institutional resources to affect policy design and implementation, as important. Analysts in this tradition stress that the autonomy, capacity and the actions of the state at the mezo level will be more or less influenced by broader institutional macropolitical variables (Coleman and Skogstad, 1990: 17). With regard to societal interests, the level of organizational development is important - that is, the more well-developed an associational system is (the degree to which "representative, well-resourced, autonomous, and policy-capable associational systems exist to articulate the interests of private actors within the sector") the better equipped it is to act as a policy participant, as opposed to a policy advocate (1990: 313).

One of the key concepts with potential for furthering the methodology for this study is that of "policy community." The insight here is that political struggle takes place around specific policy issues and within the confines of a specific set of actors. As Pross has suggested, the entire political community is rarely involved in policy debate; the policy system relies on specializations. "Specialized publics" or "policy communities" are allowed to dominate decision-making in policy fields where they have competence. While the policy community funnels issues from the general public to the decision-making apparatus of the state, it also replaces the general public, which means large numbers of issues never go beyond it or do so only superficially. A policy community

has been defined as

that part of a political system that - by virtue of its functional responsibilities, its vested interests, and its specialized knowledge - acquires a dominant voice in determining government decisions in a specific field of public activity, and is generally permitted by society at large and the public authorities in particular to determine public policy in that field (Pross, 1986: 98).

While there are gradations among them, members of the policy community have shared, or commonly understood, belief systems, codes of conduct and established patterns of behaviour. The community is understood to be divided into the sub-government and the attentive public. The sub-government is the inner core of policy-makers, usually primarily government agencies but it can also include certain institutionalized interest groups which have substantial resources and the capability of interacting on a day-to-day level with government. The attentive public includes any government agencies, private institutions, pressure groups, and individuals who are interested in influencing certain policies but lack the power of the inner core and do not participate in policy-making.

While policy community is an important concept for our purposes, we must be aware of its limitations and situate it politically. Its weaknesses stem from its liberal, pluralist roots. Slightly below the surface of this concept is the liberal-pluralist belief that groups compete to influence public policy on more or less equal terms. The policy community concept as defined above recognizes that there are differences of power **within** the policy community (as in the distinction between sub-government and attentive public) but fails to account for the broader set of power relations within which it exists. In employing policy community, it is important not to lose sight of the broader universe

of political discourse and power relations, and shifts therein.¹⁰ It's necessary, for instance, to situate the policy community within a broader range of actors and inquire as to why some groups become insiders while others remain outsiders; why, out of the full range of organized interest groups or social movements with views on a policy issue, only certain organizations ever attain the legitimacy and recognition as spokesgroups on the issue, and others are marginalized and silenced. By the same token, it is also essential to situate the action within a policy community within a broader view that takes in the overall demeanor of the state towards organized interests or social movements, entailing a consideration of both its openness to the demands of emerging groups, and its involvement in the emergence of these groups. There may be times when the state is relatively open to the voices of civil society and times when it is more insulated. Situating the policy community concept in this way makes visible the political parameters of a policy debate and the potential challenges to the dominant paradigm that might exist.

My Theoretical-Methodological Position

A methodology for inquiring into the shaping of the political interests of women's organizations within the sphere of social welfare and poverty policy is achieved, then, by combining the post-structuralist insight of politics as a struggle over discourse and meaning with Jenson's "structure and agency" balanced concept of political struggle, and

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I am indebted to Rianne Mahon for these points.

with the notion of the importance of focusing on the mezo-level of struggle via a nuanced and situated interpretation of "policy community." These concepts suggest that this inquiry is an historical one set at the level of struggle over discourse or meaning construction, and that the terrain of action is the policy community specific to federal social welfare/poverty policy but situated within the broader socioeconomic and political context, and universe of political discourse.

Women's organizations identify "women's" interests (formulate their political interests) in the context of particular **policy** debates. Their interests (and indeed, their identity) are the outcome of their own policy choices, but choices made within discursive parameters established by other, more powerful, policy community actors, including state actors but most significantly, the potential allies of the women's movement within "mainstream" debate.

At the broadest level, the story of the shaping of feminist politics takes place within an historically specific social, economic and political context and broad universe of political discourse. Socioeconomic conditions, for instance, provide the "raw materials" within which actors must work in developing their discursive interpretations. The broad universe of political discourse determines the demeanor of the state vis-à-vis the claims of social movements, and, therefore, the potential of these groups for making new claims and ultimately altering the universe of political discourse. These factors are relevant, but not sufficient in themselves, however, in determining politics. It is important to bring in the constraints and possibilities inherent in the universe of political discourse specific to the particular policy terrain. This discursive context is the more

immediate one within which the women's movement defines its interests. State actors are obviously important in defining the terms of this discourse. They introduce a political agenda and discourse in the terrain of social policy that specifies the broad parameters for social policy debate for a certain period of time, including the policy issues to be addressed and the policy options considered feasible. Organizations which gain legitimacy as the "progressive voice" on social policy, however, are also important in formulating and generating our notions of the problems. It is their interpretations and political agendas that directly constrain the politics of the even more peripherally located women's organizations, defining their basis for making claims and conditioning their policy choices. The investment by the women's movement in a particular strategy serves subsequently to constrain its future policy choices.

This theoretical-methodological position represents a departure from two other types of approaches that are current in the literature on Canadian social policy politics and feminist politics. It contrasts, firstly, with approaches that fail to enter "the political" at the level of meaning construction. Rodney Haddow's account of federal poverty politics provides an especially pertinent example (1990; 1993). Haddow's study assumes "poverty" as an organizing principle - from which the "poverty community" (ie. those organizations concerned with poverty) comes into being. His study is thus limited to the narrow grouping of primarily liberal (or social-liberal) organizations that state actors were willing to recognize. Any organized interests or identities that challenge the poverty paradigm are not considered part of this community and are precluded from the analysis. This problem also intersects with the problem noted above concerning the need

to situate the policy community concept in a broader political terrain. In ignoring the voices beyond the confines of the policy community, Haddow fails to inquire into the potential challenges to the liberal paradigm and the poverty concept itself, including those posed by the women's movement. Such an analysis is not able to grasp the politics of poverty. Only by problematizing discourse and the construction of meaning can we fully explain the continued resonance of "poverty" as a public and political issue, and when and where potentially competing ideologies exist but are suppressed, marginalized, or fail to flourish. It should be noted that Haddow's exclusion of the feminist voice in his work also reflects the premise, which he adopts from mainstream welfare state theory, that poverty politics is a class-based one, and only class-based actors are relevant (1993: 11-16).

The methodology outlined herein departs, secondly, from approaches in the study of women's movement politics that focus predominantly on macro-level variables, especially state discourses. There are a number of recent studies of feminist politics that focus on "how the state organizes women's interests" that refer almost exclusively to macro-level discourses (i.e. the claims of the neo-liberal state) (eg. Bashevkin, 1998: Brodie, 1995; 1996; 1998; Gotell, 1998) - a discussion that I take up again in chapter seven.

Explanations based on macro-level factors alone, however, give undue explanatory weight to structure and, therefore, underplay the importance of human agency. Such approaches fail to reveal the potential openings for alternative approaches. Based on the analysis in this chapter, I suggest that a more complete explanation for

these events or processes is possible by also taking into account the shifting discourses and agendas at the mezo level of the policy community. It is at this level of the political that agency (ie. the choice-making activities of a political actor) comes into view.

Conclusion and "Map" of the Substantive Chapters of This Thesis

This chapter has interrogated three areas of political theory with the goal of developing a theoretical framework for understanding how political interests are shaped. The analysis achieved here reflects a view of the political which from the outset problematizes meaning construction, strives for a structure/agency balance, recognizes the significance of power relationships, and the importance of both macro and mezo-level data and events. Applying this approach to the question of how the political interests of the women's movement were shaped in one particular policy terrain (federal social welfare policy), our understanding is that these are the outcome of the movement's own actions (policy choices) within ideological and discursive constraints established by the more dominant actors in the policy community. Given the marginal political status of the women's movement in the social policy field, the interpretations adopted by established policy community actors who are their potential allies pose particularly powerful constraints. The latter consideration has been largely overlooked by other recent studies of the shaping of women's movement politics, while current studies of poverty politics have generally failed to problematize meaning construction.

This theoretical-methodological approach has guided the breakdown and structure of the empirical chapters of this thesis. The four empirical chapters are

structured around distinct periods of policy struggle in federal poverty policy. Chapter three focuses on the **origins** of the discourses and actors that came to make up or dominate social policy debate in Canada, and of the interests of the emerging women's movement in the federal social security policy field. Chapters four to six focus on the **shaping** of feminist politics in three periods of policy struggle. These moments were selected not because they correspond to other major periodization criteria such as shifts in political regimes or philosophies (although these shifts figure in the story), but because they were periods in which feminists took critical stands with respect to a politics of autonomy in the federal social security field.

Each chapter begins with a description of the social, economic and political context which briefly takes into account socioeconomic conditions of the period (i.e. the state of the economy, employment, poverty, the family, and women's roles) and quickly moves to a discussion of the political milieu and universe of political discourse. These features determine broad aspects of "the political," but they are primarily a backdrop to the story of each chapter.

The focus then shifts to the realm of **social** policy. Considered firstly are the discourses and agendas of the state, which determine the broad parameters of social policy debate. We turn secondly to the discourses and agendas of the progressive sector, which are crucial for defining the terms and conditions of the participation of the women's movement in social policy politics. An attempt is made to distinguish, within the broad universe of progressive interest groups, marginal actors from mainstream actors, reflecting the analytic point that any policy community is a political construct -

with some groups achieving credibility and others remaining marginalized.

The final focus of each chapter is on feminist politics. Attention is paid initially to the broad characteristics of the women's movement in the given period and its orientation towards social welfare policy and poverty issues. The discussion then turns to an analysis of the shaping of feminist politics. Our overarching interest (in chapters four through six) is the ability of the institutionalized women's movement to assert the principle of women's autonomy in the terrain of federal social welfare policy and in particular to pursue a politics of autonomy/individualization of entitlement. This discussion highlights the critical moments of policy choice by women's organizations themselves, and their implications for the subsequent ability of the women's movement to pursue individualized treatment and/or to advance other strategies for achieving women's autonomy in this policy area.

that were oriented to social liberalism and poverty-oriented reform emerged in the early 1970s as the voice of "progressives" on the terrain of national social policy debate.

A second major focus of this chapter is the origins of feminist interest in federal social programs. This occurred with the formation of the second-wave women's movement, and specifically with the emergence of the blueprint for feminism provided by the Report of the Royal Commission on the Status of Women (RCSW). The RCSW Report provided both the impetus for the formation of an institutionalized women's movement which was to become the official voice of feminism within the federal field of social security, and the initial agenda of this movement with respect to social programs. The feminism espoused by the Commission established three impulses with respect to social welfare and income security: gender equity or a concern with pursuing women's autonomy; a socialist vision of achieving a more level playing field vis-à-vis social programs; and a liberal concern with achieving vertical equity or addressing poverty. A critical analytic issue arises however, with respect to these political impulses: a potential contradiction exists between the goals of gender equity, based on a vision of women's individuality and individual rights, and vertical equity, which assumes a familial and dependent vision of women. The historical question that emerges (and provides the analytic focus for the subsequent chapters of this thesis) is how feminist political interests were shaped around these two divergent interests. To what extent were feminists drawn to the liberal focus on poverty, and did their concern for women's autonomy pose a real challenge to the poverty concept?

Social, Economic and Political Backdrop: A Shift to "Social Liberalism"

The 1960s and first few years of the 1970s belonged for the most part to the golden age of economic performance in Canada that had begun following the Second World War and featured a growing economy, rising incomes, relatively low rates of unemployment, and low rates of inflation (Canada, Royal Commission on the Economic Prospects, 1985; Brodie and Jenson, 1980; Rice, 1985). Unemployment and inflation began to appear however, in the late 1960s, and by 1968 the Economic Council announced that Canada had a serious poverty problem - a discovery of high numbers of "working poor." At the same time the character of Canadian society and economy was being dramatically affected by a dropping birth rate, rising divorce rate, and the increasing rate of entry by women into the labour force. While the one-earner family was still the norm in 1961 (representing 65% of families), there were as many two-earner families by the end of the decade (Status of Women Canada, 1996:7). Increasing divorce contributed to rapid growth in the number of single parent families (in 1961, 8.4% of all families were one-parent families; in 1971, they represented 9.4% of families) with the majority of the new single parent families headed by women (Boyd, et. al., 1976: 19).

The Canadian welfare state was, by 1960, predominantly "liberal" in character within the meaning of the term developed by Esping-Andersen. Its social policy had a "residual" orientation, reflecting the idea that public intervention occurs only after the family and the market fail. It was dominated by means-tested assistance programs in which benefits were miserly, meant to be short-term, and often punitive and stigmatizing (Haddow, 1993; Myles, 1996). As many analysts have pointed out, however, the

Canadian welfare state was never a pure case of liberalism; both during and after the war Canada's social policy system acquired important universal (citizenship-based) and insurance-based elements, appearing in such programs as a national program of unemployment insurance (1940), the family allowance (1944), and old age security (1951). Nevertheless, by 1960 Canada's social welfare system was still primarily reliant on provincial and municipal means-tested programs, providing benefits to highly visible persons (eg. the blind, disabled, single mothers) who were classified as unemployable, and therefore deserving.

An important shift in the social policy regime and in the broad universe of political discourse took place in the 1960s. Against a backdrop of the relative economic security of the early and mid-1960s the Canadian welfare state and political discourse shifted in the direction of "social liberalism," a term coined by Rianne Mahon to capture the Canadian welfare state of that time, which she characterized as a form of "social democratic" liberalism, as opposed to "laissez-faire" liberalism (1997; 1997a). This shift was evident in both a new policy direction and in a new openness by the state towards the voices in civil society. There was a renewed emphasis in this period on the issues of social justice, equity, and democracy, in response to new demands for equality and democratic participation by new social groups representing the marginalized. In Canada, they included aboriginal peoples, youth, women, the poor, and ethnic, cultural and language groups. It was a time of social program innovation and expansion, with pressures also coming from the growing nationalist movements in Quebec and English Canada, the then powerful labour unions, and the social democratic, New Democratic

Party party (Jenson and Phillips, 1996; Haddow, 1993; Mahon, 1997). The themes of national identity, equity and social justice for the marginalized gained a foothold in the Liberal party in power in this period (Jenson and Phillips, 1996). A number of new social programs were implemented which, as analysts have noted, made the social benefits available to Canadians even more distinct from those available in the United States (Jenson and Phillips, 1996: 116, 117; Myles, 1996: 136). The period of 1965 to 1971 brought universal health insurance (1968), extended cost-sharing in health and education (the Established Programs Financing Act, 1964), a major reform of social assistance (the Canada Assistance Plan (CAP), 1966), substantial improvements in unemployment insurance including the addition of sickness benefits (1971), and two new old age pension programs including the first national contributory pension plan (the Canada and Quebec Pension Plans, 1966) and the guaranteed income supplement (1967) (Haddow, 1993; Myles, 1996; Ursel, 1992).

These programs represented a substantial expansion of federal responsibility for meeting social need. Through the Canada Assistance Plan for instance, the federal state for the first time took on responsibility for social services and income assistance for single mothers (the latter being previously covered under provincial categorical assistance programs). CAP provided for a federal-provincial sharing of the cost of social assistance and social services. While it was a selective program targeted to the poor, it incorporated aspects of collective provision and citizenship rights through its provision of social services designed to enable independence (eg. daycare, homemakers' services, health, counselling, rehabilitation, community development), its requirement for national

standards, its use of needs-testing as opposed to means-testing, and its provision of an appeal mechanism (Moscovitch, 1996).

The social liberal character of policy reform in this period was matched by the relatively greater openness of the federal state to emerging social movements and new collective interests. Claims for access and claims on behalf of groups to redress past wrongs could be heard, although by no means did this constitute "equal" access (Jenson and Phillips: 119). The themes of community development and citizen participation became integral to Liberal governance. From the mid-1960s to early-1970s the federal state provided a significant amount of funding to the voluntary sector and various interest groups (Loney, 1977; Pal, 1993). In the late 1960s/early 1970s the Department of Secretary of State Citizenship Branch extended funding to multicultural groups, official language minorities and the socially disadvantaged, especially women, aboriginal groups, youth, and social action groups such as those representing "militant poor peoples" (Felt, 1978; Jenson and Phillips, 1996; Pal, 1993). The Department of Health and Welfare's National Welfare Grants Program sponsored community-based poverty organizations (Haddow, 1993: 177).

The Emergence of the Discourse on Poverty and the Limits of Social Liberalism

The civil rights movement that emerged in the 1960s in the U.S. paved the way for the discovery of "poverty amidst affluence." A similar discovery was made in Canada, as in several other western nations, and poverty became a prominent public issue

in Canada in the late 1960s and early 1970s.¹¹ Poverty and the policy agenda that followed were as much socially constructed and justified phenomena as they were objective ones. In Canada, the early discourse on poverty and the emerging agenda for social security reform were largely the work of the federal Liberal party and governmental commissions and agencies struck to address the issue. The federal Liberals announced a "war on poverty" in April 1965, following a like announcement by the U.S. president in 1964. The late 1960s was a period of intense research and data collection on the issue, with the federal state and governmental bodies leading the way. A research and co-ordinating body (Special Planning Secretariat) was established within the Office of the Privy Council, whose reports, notably Meeting Poverty - Profile of Poverty in Canada (1965), were critical in the initial conceptualization of the problem, as were other studies on poverty prepared for the Liberal party (eg. Head, 1969).¹² Other important players who drew public attention to the issue and placed reform of the social security system on the public agenda were the Economic Council of Canada (1968), and the Special Senate Committee on Poverty (1971).¹³ An important focus of these works was measuring poverty, for which the statistical report on poverty by Jenny Poloduk of

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The discovery of poverty was also made, for instance, in the U.S., Britain and Sweden.

12

Studies prepared by members of a Task Force on Poverty for the Harrison Liberal Conference held in Harrison Hot Springs, British Columbia in November 1969 contributed to the picture of poverty in Canada.

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The Senate Committee was chaired by Senator David Croll, and had been struck on the advice of the ECC.

the Department of Statistics, served as the key reference (Podoluk, 1968).¹⁴ The issue also prompted a number of academic reports on poverty (eg. W.E. Mann (1970), John Harp and John Hofley (1971)), and a left discourse (as will be discussed later in this chapter) (eg. Ian Adams, et. al.(1971); and Ian Adams (1970)).

The new discourse on poverty both reflected and reinforced the humanistic and democratic messages of the social liberal thrust - human dignity, decency, equality and justice. The discourse engendered a new sympathy for the poor. There was a recognition that the economic system had not produced adequate incomes for everyone and that there existed a serious inequality of income distribution. The new poverty concept enveloped the notion that poverty was a structural feature of the economy and of modern technological life, as distinct from the long-held view that it was due to the personal failings of individuals. It was a movement to destigmatize the poor as the innocent victims of structures:

. . . widespread poverty exists in Canada in the midst of affluence, not because of individual inadequacy or original sin, but because of an economic system which utilizes technological invention to the maximum degree in its pursuit of increasing production and profits. The individual worker is dispensable when the machine can do his job more effectively and efficiently (Head, 1969: 8);

The poor, after all, are not, as some still pretend, poor of their own accord. The poor have no uncommon moral flaw that sets them apart, let alone condemns them. They are casualties of the way we manage our economy and our society . . . (Canada, Parliament, Special Senate Committee on Poverty, 1971: xxvii).

This new discourse also promoted a more humanistic definition of poverty as the relative

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Podoluk followed the approach of Mollie Orshansky's statistical profiles of poverty for the U.S. prepared in the early 1960s. Podoluk also served as the consultant on poverty for the RCSW.

feeling of inequality and indecency created by comparison to the standards and lifestyles of others:

In the affluent society, the poor man feels poorer. Affluence is closer to him with television and other means to show him that the "average" man gathers more and more material benefits because he has some surplus income (Schlesinger, 1972: 6,7).

This contrasted with the absolutist definition that continued to dominate in the United States. As the Jenson and Phillips thesis suggests, the poverty discourse also represented a terrain on which the themes of justice and equity were linked with that of national identity. These themes are clearly linked in documents such as the following:

If we draw a profile of a Canadian living in poverty, he looks like this:

- * He lives in a substandard, crowded home
- * He has a poor education
- * His health is bad;
- * His income is low;

And as for the stream of Canadian life - socially, economically, politically, culturally, he's not with it.

His living conditions are bad because his income is low. His education is poor, probably because he came from a poor home. His health is bad because his living conditions are bad and always have been bad. His income is low because he has poor health and a poor education.

And he, too, is a Canadian. (Canada, Office of the Privy Council, 1967: 11,12).

Never far below the surface were Keynesian economic concerns about the costs of low productivity and lost output (eg. Economic Council of Canada, 1968: 105). A careful reading of the material on poverty of this period reveals that beneath the surface of its humanism lay a concern for reinforcing middle-class values and aspirations - the work ethic and consumerism. A large part of the early reports on poverty were descriptions of the poor and their hardships. The implicit "other" in these descriptions were the middle-class, and the implicit lesson was that poverty stands as the unfortunate

destiny - a disease, scourge, or trap - that would befall those who strayed from the middle-class course of earning and spending:

[The rural poor live]. . . in the dingy squalor of the rural slum, which can be identified by ill-health, insecurity, frustration, mental and often physical in-breeding, suspicion, fear of change, and apathy (Schlesinger, 1972: 19).

The poor do not participate in community life to the extent the more affluent groups do. . . The poor are alienated from society because of society's apathy or prejudice towards the poor. . . (Canada, Office of the Privy Council, 1965: 7).

These persons can't plan their budgets; they have no money to plan.

These figures mean that opportunity is limited.

low income can stifle initiative.

poverty breeds poverty.

Of course, if you are like most Canadians, you never see these people (Canada, Office of the Privy Council, 1967: 10, 11).

Also apparent in the above quotations is the implicit gender bias of the discourse on poverty, an aspect that will be discussed in detail later in this chapter.

Embedded within the very poverty concept was a limited vision of reform with its predominant focus on targeting the disadvantaged. This vision ultimately constrained Canadian social liberalism. While the social reform agenda and debate that followed the "rediscovery of poverty" could be seen as a continuation of the qualified liberalism of the Canadian post-war social policy regime, it was also profoundly trapped within the confines of its narrow targeting-the-poor vision.¹⁵ Both the CAP and Health and Welfare's white paper proposal for an income-tested family income security plan in 1970 reflected a strong targeting orientation. In the case of the latter, it was at the expense of

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Mahon has similarly observed that the "rediscovery of poverty" cast a shadow over the social policy reforms from the mid-sixties on, with programs targeted to the poor gaining a new popularity and derailing the drive for universality (1997: 23).

universal measures (i.e. the family allowance program was to be eliminated), although the proposal failed to pass in Parliament (Canada, Minister of National Health and Welfare, 1970). The new reformers tended to dismiss traditional assistance programs such as the CAP as ineffective. The new model that gained popularity within the government-dominated social reform elite (i.e. the model represented in the ECC's 1968 report, the Croll Committee's report, Health and Welfare's 1973 proposal) was as Haddow points out, however, equally liberal and targeted (1993). It was a milder version of the targeted, paradigmatically liberal guaranteed annual income (GAI) plan developed by US economists, providing for some income redistribution, but incorporating work productivity and incentives. It sought to provide enough benefits to allow the poor to survive; it sought to maintain a work incentive to low wage workers (benefits would be reduced based on amount earned), and it aimed to ensure that all workers would receive some benefit. Health and Welfare's 1973 orange paper, which initiated a formal federal-provincial review of social security, advocated a full GAI plan, based on a critical distinction between those able and expected to work and those who are not. One tier of benefits would go to low wage earners as an income supplement, and a second tier would provide a low level of income support for those not expected to work. The latter group would also be provided with social and employment services to help them prepare for employment. The Canadian ideal also allowed for the retention of modest universalist and insurance-based elements and comprehensive social services (Canada, Government of Canada, 1973).

Gender and Women in Poverty Discourse

The poverty concept also enshrined a specific model of gender relations: the male breadwinner family model. Oriented to forcing male breadwinners into the labour market and reinforcing the work ethic for this group, the reform model equated poverty with the absence of a male breadwinner. The family was considered the basic decision-making unit for studies of consumption and poverty, and the male breadwinner family provided the implicit model for this research.¹⁶ The male breadwinner was considered the main contributor to family income, and the representative of the family unit. Families were classified according to the characteristics of the male family head - his earnings, age, race, etc. It was assumed that family members pooled their incomes and resources. Women and children were viewed as dependents, under the protective wing of a male breadwinner. This discourse conveyed a tender attitude toward mother and child as captured in the NCW's poetic rendition of a section in the UN Declaration of Human Rights that closed its 1971 Statement on Income Security:

The mother and child shall have special care, for in them is the source of life and goodness. They shall receive all good things, food and air and sunlight, clothing, warmth and shelter, healing protection and love (1971: 33).

This construction meshed with the almost hegemonic belief in the "sanctity of the family;" the view that the family was the fundamental social unit. This belief was

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"The combined financial resources of the family unit, rather than the income of individual family members, determine the level of living which can be achieved by the family (Podoluk, 1968: 1)."

heavily promoted in the post-war period by public and private social welfare agencies.¹⁷

It was incorporated into the language of social security reform in the early 1970s:

. . . the Task Force recognizes the importance of the family in contemporary society and stresses that social security programs should be designed so that they contribute to the successful functioning of the family (CCSD, 1973: 5)

The term "breadwinner" was in common usage in these discussions (eg. Canada, Minister of National Health and Welfare, 1970; NCW, 1971; 1973). The concept of the minimum income (GAI) was tied to the notion of the family wage (eg. Canada, Government of Canada, 1973; NCW, 1973: 16).

Mainstream poverty analysts generally failed to see women's poverty. Documents of this period reflected the particular standpoint of middle-class and elite men who thought and wrote them - a discourse in which men were the norm and women were the "other." As noted earlier, women were largely invisible in the typical description of poverty - the poor were depicted as men:

The low income person often lacks self confidence and has a low level of self esteem, characteristics which make him vulnerable to the blandishments of sales men who induce him to buy by flattering his ego. He is prone to impulse buying and vulnerable to fraud and deception (Canadian Association of Social Workers, 1970: 7);

The odds against a child's ever lifting himself out of poverty are greater if he is raised in rural or under-developed areas rather than urban areas, and if his parents are unemployed rather than working (Canada, Parliament, Special Senate

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Social welfare agencies (dominated by the social work profession) had since the war encouraged a concern about the fragility of the nuclear family, constructing issues like "the problem family", the "deserted family", and the "unmarried mother" (eg. the Canadian Welfare Council produced reports on family desertion (1925; 1941; 1956; 1961, and 1968)). This discourse was perpetuated through the 1970s and 1980s by the CCSD and the Vanier Institute of the Family.

Committee, 1971: 39);

The poor man goes to jail far more often than the middle class lawbreaker, his sentence is usually longer. He cannot provide bail as easily, and spends more time in jail. He is . . . classified more often as mentally ill and committed more frequently to public mental hospitals. He is more often taken advantage of by those whose education and training enable them to exploit him (Baetz, 1970: 100);

Just so long as we think of a hypothetical 'mankind' and not of individual human beings living in poverty - the very old and the very young, the distracted parents struggling for their children's food, jobless youth adrift on the streets and falling into delinquency and crime, yes - the socially inadequate who drink too much, beat their wives and children, and seem shiftless and lazy - just so long as we do not comprehend and feel these things, we shall fail to experience that hot human indignation that will insist on the provision of help truly geared to alleviate personal suffering. (Baetz, quoted in Robinson, 1967: 12).

The conventional approach to counting women's poverty at this time was to count only those women who were husbandless. Poor families were generally treated as representing "men's poverty" (Adams, 1970: 62). Poverty discourse was also influenced by the politics of race (especially in the United States), the claims of aboriginal groups, and Quebec nationalism; full discussions of the poverty of "minority" groups, such as Eskimos, Indians, French-Canadians, and Negroes were commonplace. Very few reports on poverty in the 1960s and early 1970s addressed women's poverty (Mann, 1970; Harp and Hofley, 1971; Adams, et. al., 1971).¹⁸ Women were sometimes recognized for their supportive roles in either helping to keep their families out of poverty or keeping their families intact during the experience of poverty (eg. Poloduk, 1968: 130):

The process of trying to stretch an unstretchable budget for food and clothing

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One exception (other than the RCSW Report) was Ian Adam's radical book The Poverty Wall (1970), although his focus was on single mothers only.

from welfare cheque to welfare cheque is in itself destructive of human dignity. It's a wonder how well women have been able to manage with so little, for the burden in the home usually falls on them (Canada, Parliament, Special Senate Committee, 1971: 86).¹⁹

Welfare mothers were a concern. "Welfare mothers" had a statistical significance in the poverty data. They were among the small group of "minorities" that typically had high poverty rates. Welfare mothers also made up a significant proportion of the welfare recipients in this period (having become the responsibility of the federal government under the CAP), and therefore from the standpoint of cost, they represented a problem group. They were often found in sympathy-arousing case studies of the poor (Canada, Parliament, Special Senate Committee, 1971; Schlesinger, 1972). They were not yet thought of as a gender issue, however. Welfare mothers were for the most part treated as a poverty concern and a welfare issue. They were simply one category of the poor. Their poverty was treated as natural and normal in view of the absence of a male breadwinner.²⁰ Absence of husband was understood to be the explanation for this type of poverty - indeed, single mothers were sometimes classified in the statistics as "absence of husband" (eg. Report of the Federal-Provincial Study Group on Alienation (1971).

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The strong identification of women as mothers in poverty discourse is evidenced in a heading in one of the tables in the Croll Report: "combined incomes of mother and husband" (Canada, Parliament, Special Senate Committee, 1971: 158).

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Podoluk displayed as much interest and concern about female single parents as she did for families with aged heads (1968).

The Emergence of a Mainstream Progressive Social Policy Community

The discourse of poverty also defined the parameters of the "mainstream" social policy community - sorting the insiders from the outsiders. During the 1960s and early 1970s the state was open to the claims of organized interest groups and movements, but not all groups had an equal ability to be heard as advocates on social policy. Some on the political left fell into the category of 'heard, but not influential,' including, for example, the authors of The Real Poverty Report (1971), the renegade report of the Special Senate Committee on Poverty. While the Senate Report defined poverty as a form of income deficiency, the authors of the Real Report defined it more broadly to include inequality of power and privilege, and indicted the institutions that legitimate power relations such as the media, educational system, large corporations and unions (McCormack, 1972; Adams, et. al, 1971). Further to the margins, the neo-marxists were critical of the official discourse on poverty and cynical about the attention given it by the ruling elite:

Any group working within the confines of corporate capitalism must accept that political reality - that there will be no serious effort to eliminate the root condition that generates poverty - for that root condition is capitalism itself. Within these confines anti-poverty programs will continue to involve the treatment of symptoms. . . . To alleviate individual hardships and to dissipate social protests. . . . we should not be blinded by the royal commissions, task forces, new government departments and the new moral outrage against poverty that has now become so fashionable. Poverty in Canada is a product of capitalism ; capitalism creates and recreates poverty (Gonick, 1970: 8).

Included in this category were the militant poor people's groups such as The Just Society Movement of Toronto, and others that presented to the Croll Committee (Buchbinder, 1970; Ford and Langdon, 1970, Canada, Senate, Proceedings of the Special Senate

Committee on Poverty, 1970: (Just Society) 28:17; the Unemployed Citizens' Welfare Improvement Council, 1970).

The labour movement was relatively strong and in a period of growth in the mid-1960s (Brodie and Jenson, 1980). Its general stance towards government in the 1960s until the mid-1970s was adversarial and occasionally militant, and its broad views of economic policy held little credibility with government (Smith, 1992). The labour movement was, however, on the periphery of poverty debate through this period. While it expressed sympathy for the needs of the poor, it remained ambivalent towards social assistance targeted to the poor (Haddow, 1993: 76). According to Haddow, the CLC "was willing to concede to the CWC [Canadian Welfare Council] a leading role in poverty issues generally . . . (1993: 77)," and its stand on poverty issues was accorded little attention by government (1993: 78).

Women's organizations were similarly on the margins of the social policy community in the 1960s and early 1970s, as the next section describes.

Constituencies and organizations that hewed to the social liberal reform model and were willing to engage in the discourse on poverty tended to be recognized by, and given access to, state actors. Certain progressive organizations were favoured by government officials and acquired a voice in the debates of the 1970s and 1980s as the 'mainstream' progressive social policy community.²¹ Key organizations in this

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Many on the Left in this period were critical of CCSD and similar institutions which they viewed as co-opted and "serv[ing] to sustain the illusion of meaningful debate and to reinforce the very narrow ideological space within which that debate occurs" (Loney, 1977: 458).

community included the National Anti-Poverty Organizations (NAPO), the National Council of Welfare (NCW), and the Canadian Council on Social Development (CCSD), formerly the Canadian Welfare Council (CWC). All were financed largely by the federal government. The National Anti-Poverty Organization represented a response by the federal state to the emergence of a grassroots poverty movement. It emerged out of a Poor People's Conference held in Toronto in January 1971, organized by the NCW and funded by various federal departments. NAPO's initial function was to organize the many grassroots welfare rights groups that existed at this time.²² While it had more limited resources and expertise than the other mainstream progressive organizations, it had legitimacy as representing the poor.

The National Council of Welfare, an advisory body to the Minister of Health and Welfare, was also reorganized in 1971 as the voice of "the poor," still under the auspices of the federal government. Poor people were brought into its membership (although, as Haddow has pointed out, only 40% of its members were poor) (Ibid.).

The Canadian Welfare Council had a long history as a respected voice on social policy in Canada. In the late 1950s and 1960s, it was a meeting place for federal and provincial welfare bureaucrats (Haddow, 1993). Its 1958 policy statement, Social Security for Canada, stood as an important reference point for Health and Welfare bureaucrats and politicians (Splane, 1996: 42). In the light of the new agenda and

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The 1971 conference was attended by 500 delegates, including 350 poor people's (or welfare rights) organizations (Walker, 1971).

interest in poverty and social reform, the Council modernized its structure in 1970 increasing its flexibility and research capacity to provide better direction and leadership. It changed its name at this time to the Canadian Council on Social Development (CCSD) (Haddow, 1993). CCSD continued as a key organization in this mainstream, progressive, anti-poverty grouping of social policy organizations.

The possibility of achieving a GAI program inspired and motivated this group of social policy organizations through the 1970s. These organizations largely shared the social liberal orientation of governmental reformers; they were committed to fighting poverty and achieving a more redistributive social welfare system. They favoured the GAI approach from the beginning, including the need for work incentives, but they advocated a gentler, more generous system, one that set benefits at least at the poverty level, provided a more gradual system of recovery on earned income, maintained insurance-based and some universal programs, and provided employment and support services (CCSD, 1973; NCW, 1973). CCSD and NCW in the main endorsed the Croll Committee's proposed GAI plan, but had a few key criticisms: the benefit levels were set too low (at 70% of the poverty line), the recovery rate was too high (at 70% on earned income) and not graduated enough, and single people under age 45 were excluded from the plan (Canadian Welfare). Similarly their comments on the orange paper proposals indicated a concern to ensure that the minimum income was sufficient to bring people out of poverty, and that there would be meaningful and adequate employment opportunities and social and employment services (NCW, 1973).

While these organizations played no formal policy-making role and were

excluded from the federal-provincial social security review process, state officials valued them for their expertise in social policy design. The CCSD, and especially the NCW, published comprehensive documents on social security reform, the GAI and income supplementation, promoted conferences on these topics, and provided regular critique and commentary on federal proposals and the reform process (CWC, 1969; 1972; 1974; NCW, 1971; 1973; 1976).²³ The federal Minister responsible for the social security review process, Marc Lalonde, often participated at conferences organized by these groups and was cognizant of their views.²⁴ The NCW especially came into its own in the mid-70s as a respected voice on social security design (eg. Lalonde described its Guide to the Guaranteed Income (1975) as "an invaluable short reference on the subject") (CCSD, 1976c: 31,32).

These organizations became the voice of redistributive justice, playing an important role in furnishing the moral themes that helped keep poverty and social security reform viable public issues. They articulated a moral or ethical rationale for redistribution, in the tradition of Socialist Fabianism. In the 1960s and early 1970s they

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CCSD specifically recommended an integrated social security system (CCSD, 1973). In 1972 the Council convened the Nuffield Seminar and widely distributed its papers and proceedings (CCSD, 1972). In 1974 CCSD sponsored a conference on income supplementation at which Lalonde participated (CCSD, 1974).

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Lalonde commended the CCSD for its constructive advice concerning policy directions and expressed the wish to continue "the happy and productive relationship" (CCSD, 1975b: 39). A few years later, when the failure of the review loomed, Lalonde openly criticized the Council, comparing it unfavourably to the NCW, which had been more supportive of federal proposals: "Is anybody really listening to the CCSD today? And if they are listening is the message they are getting really clear?" (CCSD, 1976a: 31).

spoke mainly in the language of human and social rights. They strongly promoted the universalistic themes encapsulated in the 1948 United Nations Declaration of Universal Human Rights, a discourse that again reflected a male world view. For example, the CWC's 1969 document, Social Policies for Canada, was grounded in article 22 and 25 of this declaration: "everyone . . . has the right to social security, and is entitled to realization . . . of the economic, social and cultural rights indispensable for his dignity and the free development of his personality;" and, "[e]veryone has the right to a standard of living adequate for the health and well-being of himself and of his family. . . (1969)." The NCW's response to the 1970 federal white paper contained similar appeals to justice, equality, human rights and dignity (1971).²⁵

The Emergence of a Feminist Voice on Federal Social Welfare Policy

In the 1960s and early 1970s shifts in women's socio-economic status and the social liberal milieu paved the way for the emergence of women's voices in public discourse. In the late 1960s, however, no single voice spoke for women about poverty and social security. Poor women were active in community-based welfare rights groups - in fact, they made up much of their membership (Carota, 1970). Many of these groups,

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This document read as follows: "the cornerstone of public policy in Canada today must be the recognition that the essence of a civilized society is the individual human being . . . (1); . . . [t]he real hope for a better Canada in the post-industrial era . . . lies in the social goals of an equitable society . . . (2); [t]he essence of this affirmation [the UN Declaration of Universal Human Rights] is commitment to the dignity and worth of human beings and their right to an equal opportunity to develop to the fullest their individual capacities. . . (3); [p]overty . . . is an insufficiency of income to enable full participation in the life of that society (4).

which also included social workers and social agency workers, presented the concerns and issues of welfare mothers to the Croll Committee.²⁶ They shared the welfare experience - very often they were single mothers with children. They identified themselves as "the poor" and as mothers:

We suggest that government must come to grips very shortly with the problems of the welfare recipient. Governments must provide us with the wherewithal to give our children a normal life . . . As mothers we cannot sit idly by . . . We want to do as good a job as possible and this requires a lot of outside help (Canada, Senate, 1970: 35);

It is of the utmost importance that we are given every consideration and help in order that we are able to fulfill our role as mothers . . . we are tired of being the forgotten women at the bottom of the economic pyramid (Mothers on Social Allowance of Metro Winnipeg, 1969: 4).

These groups did not perceive themselves as representing women, or engage with the emerging feminism - none of these groups appeared before the Royal Commission on the Status of Women (RCSW).²⁷ They pleaded for attention to the situation of women on welfare, being cut off benefits for sharing living quarters with a man, getting husbands to pay child support, and paying for a divorce. They generally articulated a social liberal vision of reform, demanding a fairer and more generous welfare system (or GAI), the

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Such groups included Seekers of Security Welfare Rights Group Organization, Winnipeg Welfare Rights Movement, Mothers on Social Allowance of Metro Winnipeg, The Unemployed Citizens' Welfare Improvement Council, Single Parents' Association of Ottawa.

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One group that did bridge the gap between the issue of poverty and women's rights was the radical left poverty group, The Just Society of Toronto. Doris Power, a spokesperson for this group, spoke out on the issue of abortion as a woman and as a poor person during the feminist Abortion Caravan campaign, May 1970 in Toronto: "Many people feel that feminists are man-haters and have a lot of other equally silly notions about the Abortion Caravan. The Just Society Movement of Toronto recognizes that the liberation of women means the liberation of men - the liberation of our society (Power, 1972: 124).

ability to earn supplementary income while on welfare, subsidized day care, and training. They argued for legal aid or welfare to pay for divorce, for mothers to receive maintenance awards rather than being forced to pursue estranged husbands, and for more public housing (Canada, Senate, 1969; 1970). A continuity existed between some of these groups and those that were formed by sole-support mothers and concerned social workers in the mid-1970s to early 1980s to fight for more generous welfare benefits and support services. In Ontario, these included the Family Benefits Work Group (formed Fall 1978)(1982), the Sole Support Parents Coalition of Metro Toronto (formed Fall 1981)(1982), the Mother's Action Group (1982) and the Mother Led Union (probably formed in the early 1980s) (n.d.).²⁸ Their political focus was in provincial and municipal rather than federal policy and programs.²⁹

The emerging second-wave women's movement was composed of disparate

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A key issue that mobilized these groups in the late 1970s was the Ontario government's policy to transfer single parents from provincial family benefits to municipally-run general welfare assistance where they were defined as "employable" and pressured to get a job, without availability of adequate childcare and support services (Sole Support Parents Coalition, 1982; Mother's Action Group, 1982).

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The politics of these groups was grounded in a belief in the naturalness and sanctity of the family, especially motherhood and the natural instincts of women to protect their own: "All children need and have a right to remain with their natural mother, where they would experience a natural home environment, with brothers and sisters around them and a mother at the helm, loving them and doing it in a way that only a natural mother can (Mother-Led Union, n.d.: 2)". They especially emphasized the plight of children of sole support mothers on social assistance: "[w]hen these mothers become frustrated with seeking and not finding employment, and not being able to raise their families the way they truly believe they should be raised, the government risks the very real possibility of an increase in emotional and physical child abuse (Mothers Action Group, 1982: 15)".

sectors, representing radical, socialist, and liberal ideologies and interests. "Women's liberationists" shared with the Canadian left a structural analysis of capitalism. They defined the problem as women's oppression by men under capitalism - women were exploited as a cheap army of labour and given no value as mothers and homemakers. Poverty was merely a symptom of life under the capitalist, patriarchal system, and could not be addressed within the confines of that system:

The only viable solutions to poverty will involve questions and answers about our taxation system, foreign investment, reclamation of Canadian resources, redistribution of wealth, control of industry, responsive government, and citizen participation . . . Then one might delve into social values, the educational system, environmental control, global policy, civil rights and equal rights for women . . . (Spark, 1971: 5).³⁰

The women's liberation movement of the late 1960s and early 1970s defined the problem as the male chauvinist, capitalist system that exploited women as a cheap source of labour and kept them tied to the family where they were undervalued. It viewed the welfare system as a structure that reinforced women's subservience and kept them in their roles in the family - as controlling a provider as a man:

The punitive nature of the welfare system, the isolation of mothers on welfare, the dependency-reinforcement of the welfare policies, the personal degradation recipients feel, push women on welfare into a traditional role. They become agents of control and stabilizers of the social, political and economic system (Lang, 1972: 157).³¹

While women's liberationists believed it was necessary for welfare mothers to organize to

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Similar views on poverty are expressed in The Pedestal, 1971; James, 1968; and Leueen, 1971.

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For similar views see, Goldfield, et. al., 1972; and Morton, n.d.

become conscious of their oppression, their own focus was mostly on working class women, and campaigns such as abortion, equal pay, childcare, unions, sexism in the media, and education (Maroney, 1987).³²

Middle class women's associations established during the first wave of feminism operated primarily within an equal rights/ social liberal framework. They did not initially identify poverty as a problem. According to Florence Bird, Chair of the RCSW, poverty was one aspect of the status of women that "all the women's groups who pushed for a Commission hadn't spent much time thinking about" (Adams, 1970: 73). They tended to share the orientation of social work and the sociology of the family in defining the problem as the single parent family, seeing it as a problem of family breakdown.³³ They were very concerned with the plight of welfare mothers, however, and several of

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One brief exception was the short-lived but intense effort in the mid to late-1970s of the radical left (Trotskyist) Wages for Housework Group to align with and influence groups of welfare mothers towards achieving pay for housework. For more on this campaign, see McKeen, 1994. Part of the argument of this article is that Wages for Housework campaigners were instrumental in pushing liberal feminist organizations into becoming more attentive to social welfare issues like the family allowance.

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Their material highlighted the financial problems of the single parent family, but also the psychological issues affecting it, particularly the problems created by the "breakup of a normal family unit" (Provincial Council of Women, 1970: 26): "A woman without a husband, the lone head of a household, suffers poverty in many more ways than lacking money for everyday living expenses. She suffers from the weight of responsibility on her shoulders; from loneliness; sometimes from guilt; from being "different" in a world geared to the family unit - a husband, wife and children . . . (Catholic Women's League of Canada, n.d.: 4)." They were concerned with the effects on children of growing up without a male role model: " . . . children from the fatherless welfare family face a 90% chance of becoming delinquent than [sic] children who grow up in either middle class or two parent families (6); A weekly outing, with a man or senior student who would act as a substitute father, is vital to the child on welfare whose male image is negative. We therefore recommend that whatever assistance is necessary be given to . . . the Big Brother Movement to provide this essential service "(10).

these groups presented their views to the Croll Committee on Poverty on this topic (Provincial Council of Women, 1970; and the Catholic Women's League of Canada, n.d.). They raised issues and sought (social liberal) reforms similar to those of groups representing welfare mothers. However, they did so primarily as concerned, public-minded citizens, not as political "women" or feminists.

It was not until the Report of the Royal Commission on the Status of Women and the emergence of the institutionalized women's movement that followed in its wake, that an on-going representation of women and "feminism" in the sphere of federal social welfare policy began (Canada, RCSW). The government appointed the Royal Commission on the Status of Women in 1967 in response to pressure by mainly white, middle-class, educated women of the established women's associations. The Commission became a focal point for feminist mobilizing, with a large cross-section of Canadian women participating in the hearings and identifying with the final Report.

The Report is generally held to be the official "birth announcement" of the second-wave women's movement in Canada, catalyzing the organization of an important sector of the women's movement - the institutionalized women's movement - dedicated to ensuring the implementation of the Commission's recommendations. This sector included status of women groups which emerged in several provinces, the National Action Committee on the Status of Women (NAC), a national umbrella organizations formed by mainly liberal feminists in 1972, and a "state feminist" sector of government appointed bodies and offices within the federal public service. The latter included the Co-ordinator of the Status of Women (appointed in 1970), the Minister Responsible for

the Status of Women (designated in 1971), the Canadian Advisory Council on the Status of Women (CACSW) (a quasi-governmental body whose members are appointed by government, established in 1973), and a network of women's advisors and programs within the federal bureaucracy, including the Women's Program, housed in the Department of Secretary of State's Citizenship Branch (Findlay, 1987; 1988).

The RCSW process and final Report established the demure tone and narrow agenda for this sector of the women's movement well into the 1970s and 1980s. These organizations were primarily contained within a liberal, status-of-women, equal opportunity framework, with a belief in government reform, and an orientation (for groups outside of government) towards lobbying and consultation. They also largely adopted a universal notion of women and women's liberation that had a white, middle-class bias - although, as Jane Arscott has argued, sub-groups of women (aboriginal, poor, older, single, rural, immigrant, women with disabilities, and lesbians) are discernible on close examination of the Commission's Report (1997).

The RCSW Report: An Initial Blueprint for Feminist Social Welfare Concerns

The Royal Commission Report was the central document initially setting the agenda for the institutionalized women's organizations in the area of social welfare policy. Its views on social security were contained within the social liberal framework of Canadian reformism in this period. Although social security was not one of the topics specifically addressed by the Commission, the Report reflected three distinct analytic approaches to social programs. The first arose from a concern with women's autonomy

or independence. The concept of autonomy/independence was interpreted by the RCSW as a concern about women's individual personhood. This assertion lay at the core of the feminism advanced by the Commission, and was integral to the discussion of the "status of women." To deny women recognition as individuals in their own right was part of what was understood as "discrimination:"

A woman suffers when she is not recognized as having an individual identity as a person with her own aspirations, strengths, weaknesses, tastes and ideas (Canada, RCSW, 1970: 3);

Each female should be encouraged to discover her own particular gifts, talents, drives and to cultivate them for self-expression and for contribution to society (1970: 4).

The concern about autonomy did not imply a rejection of the family. The authors of the Report distanced themselves from the view of Women's Liberationists that the family was the site of women's oppression (1970: 226-228). The Commissioners viewed the family as an important unit, especially for women, and viewed the attempt to enhance women's status and independence within marriage and the family as an important strategy in the struggle for women's autonomy. Financial dependency was viewed as destructive for women (1970: 52). Compensating women for their unpaid work as housewives and mothers, and ensuring women were fully free to enter the labour market were strong themes of the Report, guiding nearly all the Commission's recommendations, including those on social programs. Concern about the financial dependency of housewives lay behind the recommendation that spouses who remain at home be entitled to a pension in their own right under C/QPP (1970: 40). This theme underlay the recommendations that assumptions about women's dependency be

eliminated from pension plans and Unemployment Insurance (1970: 82, 84). It lay behind the Commission's recommendation to reduce and ultimately eliminate the spousal exemption and other features of the tax system that discouraged married women from entering the work force. The recommendation of allowances for children was intended to provide women with the ability to pay for childcare to enable them to seek paid work, or to compensate women who stayed home for lost earnings (1970: chapter five).

Two other analytic stands flowed from the Commission's social liberal orientation. The first reflected the liberal orientation towards holding governments responsible for addressing the failures of the system by providing for "the poor." For example, the Commission adopted the politically prominent language and discourse of poverty and the goal of redistribution. It recommended the GAI for single parent families - as a first step towards the GAI for all Canadians; it supported the conversion of tax exemptions to tax credits to produce a more progressive tax system (1970: 324, 302). The second stand relected the socialist orientation towards holding governments responsible for providing measures to achieve a more level playing field for all. Thus, the Report called for a national day care system and a system of homemaker services.

The Report's concern with poverty was primarily tied to its concern for single mothers and other groups of vulnerable women. The Report featured a separate chapter on poverty focusing mainly on particular groups of women with high rates of poverty, including single mothers, elderly women, and "Indian," "Metis" and "Eskimo" women.³⁴

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The Royal Commission used presentations by poor women to the Croll Committee to document this chapter as very few of these groups presented briefs to the RCSW. The Croll Committee and

Lone mothers, a distinct minority within the poor population, were singled out for special concern. The majority of single mothers were on welfare in this period; being both poor and on welfare were highly stigmatized conditions. The social stigma and overt discrimination suffered by single mothers were highlighted by the groups representing welfare mothers which presented to the Croll Committee.³⁵

The focus on single-parent mothers also reflected the emerging politicization of single motherhood. A new and in many ways radically different approach to single parenthood had emerged from the growing constituency of middle-class women who, through divorce, had become single mothers. This approach was evident in the presentations to the RCSW by such community-based women's groups as The Minus Ones and YWCA Women Alone of Winnipeg, as well as by some recently formed status of women organizations (eg. The Manitoba Volunteer Committee on the Status of Women, the New Brunswick Section of the Canadian Federation of University Women). These groups made demands on behalf of the single parent family as a legitimate family type irrespective of marital status. Their view represented a major shift away from the moral and psychological perspectives on single parenthood, towards framing it as a problem of discrimination against women, politicizing it as an issue of women's equality:

Society has insisted on the sole-support mother fulfilling her social and economic

RCSW did have one in camera session on Feb. 19, 1970 (of which nothing was recorded), and several briefs to the RCSW were found in the archival file of the Croll Committee.

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One example of overt discrimination was that public housing only allowed 2% of their clientele to be single mothers (Adams, 1970).

potentially at odds with the view reflected in the rest of the Report that women were autonomous beings in their own right. The concept of poverty was imbued with familialist/breadwinnerist assumptions. It represented a conceptual space in which gender had no relevance; it was essentially a story of class or income inequality. The Report attempted to add a gender dimension to the problem of poverty, something quite novel given the relative silence on women's poverty within the mainstream poverty documents at the time. This was also a difficult task in view of the familial terms of the poverty concept. Aside from its account of the poverty of single mothers and elderly women (i.e. primarily women without husbands or male partners), the Report mainly focused on the experience of women in poor families; "[p]overty affects all members of a family, but often it is the wife and mother who is subject to greatest stress" (1970: 313). Nevertheless, the principle of treating women as autonomous beings held the kernel of a challenge to the concept of poverty with its embedded familialism and gender-blindness.

Institutional feminism in Canada thus incorporated from the outset two competing visions of equity underpinning social security: vertical equity, a liberal concern with divisions between rich and poor and with the treatment of poverty on the one hand; and gender equity, a concern with the social division between men and women and with the achievement of women's autonomy on the other. The critical historical question, therefore, is how feminist politics in this field were to be shaped around these two alternative visions of equity in relation to social security. How far would the institutionalized feminism be willing to pursue its vision of women's autonomy and independence in view of its other primary concern for alleviating the poverty of single

mothers? There are two further questions entailed in this inquiry - first, to what extent would the institutionalized women's movement continue to support a "liberal" focus on poverty (versus a more socialistic approach); and second, would the politics of gender equity/women's autonomy flourish in the field of federal income security policy and in a way that posed a real challenge to the poverty concept?

Conclusion

In the late 1960s/early 1970s the basic contours of politics in the social security field in Canada were established. Within a context of a shift to social liberalism a new notion of poverty emerged and became the focal point for social security debate. The new discourse on poverty was largely a construction of state players, supported by the voices of social policy commentators and academics. It extended the social liberal cast of the times with its themes of democracy, humanity, and sympathy for the poor. At the same time, it contained a vision of the emerging reform models within the confines of a targeting-the-poor agenda. While there was a certain openness towards the views of organized interests, only those groups that accepted the poverty/targeting model of social policy reform became respectable social policy actors, most notably the CCSD, NCW and NAPO. These players established their legitimacy as the "progressive" voice on the social policy terrain; as the voice of redistributive justice.

What relevance did women have in the new poverty model? Poverty discourse was fundamentally gendered - it was based on the image of the male breadwinner family model in which women and children were considered dependents of the male

breadwinner. Women were largely invisible in this discussion.

Women held various perspectives on themselves, poverty, and social welfare programs in the late 1960s/early 1970s. The treatment of women under the welfare system was a key concern for most groups representing women. The institutionalized women's movement that formed in the wake of the RCSW, however, became the most recognized women's voice within the sphere of federal social security policy. The Report provided a blueprint for feminist interest in social welfare, articulating three primary orientations: the concern that social programs treat women as autonomous beings rather than as dependents in the family; a socialist orientation that favoured measures that equalize society; and a liberal orientation reflecting concern over "poverty" and the need to achieve more vertical equity.

These divergent orientations contained a certain contradiction. The poverty concept, with its embedded notion of women's dependence on male breadwinners, was theoretically at odds with the principle of women's autonomy. This autonomy posed theoretical challenge to the familialist paradigm of dependence. Whether the institutionalized women's movement would continue to focus on the liberal issue of poverty, and whether the principle of women's autonomy would pose an actual challenge to the poverty concept are historical questions about how women's interests in this field continued to be shaped. These questions provide a key analytic focus for the discussion of the shaping of feminist interests in the remaining chapters.

CHAPTER FOUR

Writing Women In: Feminist Politics in the Federal Social Welfare Debate of the the Mid and Late-1970s

Introduction

Chapter Four begins the story of the **shaping** of feminist politics. The premise of the analysis is that feminists made choices within an ideological and discursive context largely determined by more dominant political actors in the social policy community. State actors established the broad parameters of social policy debate, specifying the policy focus and reform options to be considered. It was the discursive constructions of feminism's potential allies, however, that were especially critical in establishing the parameters for feminist politics in this policy terrain.

This chapter focuses initially on the socioeconomic and political milieu and the prevailing universe of political discourse. In the context of the economic crisis of the mid-1970s the federal state turned abruptly away from its social liberal trajectory. This was marked by a rejection of the Keynesian approach to economic management, a decline in interest in addressing the demands of social movements for inclusion and equality, and a new interest in reducing social spending.

It turns next to the critical features of the discourse and agendas of social policy community actors. The state largely abandoned plans for comprehensive reform of the social security system and established a new objective of increasing the targeting of social programs. National social policy organizations maintained their status as the

"progressive" voice in social policy debate. Many in this community were prone to accept the new targeting orientation.

In the light of the state's declining interest in social reform and social spending one of the main activities of this progressive sector was to renew the discourse on poverty - giving poverty a human face as a way of maintaining it as an important public issue. It was in this context and within the confines of this community, that the theme of "women and poverty" emerged. This construction reflected the growing legitimacy of women's issues and was grounded in the data showing the growth in the numbers of single-parent families headed by women. It was a critical point for establishing the deserving status of single mothers as regards social benefits, and in prioritizing family-based, poverty-oriented social security as an important solution for women.

The final focus of this chapter is feminist politics, and the shifting priorities of feminism within the social welfare field with respect to vertical and gender equity. Two events emerge as critical. First, poverty was constructed as a woman's issue. This turn in the poverty discourse, and the specific conceptualization of women's poverty that emerged, reinforced within institutional feminism the liberal concern with poverty and underwrote the increased involvement of the institutionalized women's movement in poverty politics. Second, the feminist politics of autonomy or individualization underwent a narrowing or partial foreclosure as a consequence of policy choices made by the institutional women's movement itself, albeit, under conditions they did not choose. The women's movement, both inside and outside formal organizations, recognized the importance of individual entitlement of benefits to women. It was supported as a general

principle for all social programs (primarily by socialist-feminists) and as essential (by all strains of feminists) with respect to universal and insurance-based programs such as the family allowance, unemployment insurance, and taxation.

In a critical moment of policy choice, however, the most powerful organizations of the institutionalized women's movement failed to identify individual entitlement as an important strategy for family-oriented income security programs. Institutionalized feminism consolidated at this time around the liberal and familialist understanding of women's problems and policy solutions, promoted by the social policy community. It opted for a two-pronged strategy for pursuing women's autonomy in the federal social welfare field: to accept family-based entitlement for family-oriented income security programs for the purposes of achieving more generous benefits for the most vulnerable group of women (i.e. single parents); and to continue to push for individual-based benefits for women with respect to the other federal social programs.

Social, Economic and Political Backdrop

Shifting trade patterns and a massive increase in the price of oil in the early 1970s contributed to an economic crisis for all advanced industrial countries; in Canada the result was upward spiralling of inflation and unemployment, a declining rate of growth, declining tax revenue and rising public debt (Canada, Royal Commission on Economic Union, 1985; Rice, 1985; Social Planning Council of Metropolitan Toronto, 1985). There was a slight decline in poverty, but the likelihood of poverty increased for certain groups - those in urban areas, young families and renters. The increasing participation of

business sector through the 1970s. With the election of the separatist Parti Québécois in 1976, federal attention was also diverted to questions of national unity.

The new focus was on improving relations with the business community (Rice, 1985: 241). Faced with an attack on their collective bargaining rights (wage and price controls), the labour movement struggled to have an influence on the political agenda but remained predominantly on the outside of the policy-making community (Smith, 1992). The federal state also abandoned much of its thrust in supporting interest groups. By the mid-1970s themes such as "citizen participation" and funding possibilities for radical social movements and interest groups came to an end (Pal, 1993).

The universe of political discourse had been profoundly altered, however, by the new social movements and interests of the 1960s and early 1970s and so the issues of equality and social justice could not simply be abandoned. By the mid-1970s women and feminism had acquired some legitimacy and were being integrated into government agendas and discourses. International Women's Year (1975) gave a boost to the women's movement, making new funding available to women-related projects and new women's organizations.³⁶ The "women's state" was rounded out with the establishment of Status of

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International Women's Year and the funding provided by the Women's Program of the Department of Secretary of State were important to the formation and operation of several new national groups, including the Canadian Research Institute for the Advancement of Women, MATCH (an agency to promote women and international development), the Canadian Congress for Learning Opportunities for Women, and the Canadian Association for the Advancement of Women and Sport. Native women also founded the Native Women's Association of Canada in 1973 (Phillips, 1991: 763, 764).

Women Canada in 1976 (joining the Women's Program and CACSW).³⁷

The approach of the federal state to equality was on the whole, however, distinctly passive. Its main energies went towards containing and modifying the demands of social movements (eg. women, Native people, multicultural groups) rather than addressing their equality with actual policy changes, as Suzanne Findlay has documented in the case of the women's movement (1987; 1988). The state met the demands of the women's movement with a formal response (establishing advisory bodies) rather than a substantial one (enacting actual policy change). Social movement organizations had difficulty getting their issues placed on the political agenda and encountered substantial resistance to their demands within the federal state.

By the late 1970s the stirrings of a counter political movement were first felt. There were the beginnings of interrelations between organizations which were increasingly disappointed with the monetarist economic policy of the Trudeau Liberal government. Common front bargaining emerged within the labour movement, coalitions were formed by labour and community groups around specific issues as well as broader based issues and campaigns, such as peace (Bleyer, 1992: 105). These initial steps towards the formation of a popular sector network, which were to concretize in the early and mid-1980s, was largely in reaction to the growing collective organization of capital, of which the formation of the Business Council on National Issues in 1976 was a key

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The Office of the Co-ordinator was given departmental status in 1976, with a mandate to report to the Minister Responsible for the Status of Women. By 1979 it was being called Status of Women Canada (Findlay, 1988).

moment (1992: 108).

Discourses and Agendas Within the Social Policy Community

State Actors:

Social welfare expenditures were accused by business and governments of sapping the economic strength of the economy, siphoning off resources needed for investment, and weakening the work ethic (Rice, 1985). The federal government (led by Finance) introduced a new orientation on social policy reform which made the reduction of social spending the priority. Cost and affordability were claimed to be key issues; and greater targeting to the poor was promoted as the most cost effective approach to poverty relief.

Social security discourse continued in this period to largely reflect breadwinner ideology and reserve a special place for the family. The family was personified within the language of social security reform - "families" "earn incomes . . . have insufficient incomes . . . have differences due to disabilities and age . . . (eg. Lalonde's speech quoted in NCW, 1976: 14,15)." These documents, however, also increasingly reflected the influence of feminism, evident in their adoption of a gender-neutral language (eg. the first signs of this are in the 1973 orange paper), and in their view of single parenthood. Single parents were cast as a deserving category - as deserving of a choice about whether to enter the paid labour market or not. For instance, the 1973 orange paper first recommended that mothers on welfare be allowed to earn income in addition to welfare, and that income supplementation and day care be provided to encourage single mothers

manpower [sic] policies, and regional development (Haddow, 1994: 171). The second defense was universal and insurance-based measures (UI, CPP, OAS, family allowances, sickness and maternity benefits). The GAI was a third and final tier.

The women's movement was also a marginal actor in the terrain of social security debate in the mid to late 1970s, as will be discussed in the next section.

It was the mainstream national social policy organizations (the NAPO, NCW, and CCSD) that continued to represent the "progressive" view on social policy issues to government. This sector played a role on the sidelines of the social security review process in supporting social security reform. The issues of poverty and income disparity between the rich and poor provided the main *raison d'être* of the progressive sector through the late 1970s and early 1980s (eg. CCSD, 1979; 1979a; 1981). These organizations responded to the shifting attitude towards social spending by strengthening their call for the elimination of the income gap between the rich and poor (CCSD, 1973; NCW, 1973). While this sector articulated the advantages of "universality" over "selectivity," some organizations and spokespeople within this sector became more willing to support greater targeting (i.e. selectivity) of the system (eg. CCSD, 1979; Shifrin, 1978a). By the late 1970s, the NCW's platform had been narrowed down to a call for the elimination of all tax exemptions (which gave greater benefits to the rich and high-income earners), and for a system of refundable tax credits for poor and low-income families with children (NCW, 1978; Shifrin, 1978b). The selective Child Tax Credit, introduced in 1978, was seen by these players as an important advance in social program design, potentially prefiguring a full "income support and supplementation" plan

delivered through the tax system (Shifrin, 1978b: 12).³⁸

Designed to reinforce public interest in reform of the social security system, one of the key strategies of this community in the mid-1970s was a renewal of the discourse on poverty. Over the 1970s this community built up and distributed a substantial body of material on poverty, and gained a reputation in this period as the experts on the subject. The CCSD began to publish "fact books" on poverty. The fact books, mainly written by economist David Ross (the CCSD's leading analyst for many years and its current executive director), became a definitive reference on the current state of poverty. The CCSD selected and interpreted data compiled by Statistics Canada (which also produced regular publications on low income in Canada, in the tradition of the official voice on poverty). CCSD published three fact books between 1975 and 1983, and has continued to do so into the 1990s (CCSD, 1975a; 1979a; 1983; 1989; 1994). The NCW began to publish a series of statistical reports and reports on the technicalities of poverty lines beginning in the early 1980s.

In order for poverty to remain a viable public policy issue however, statistics were not enough. It had to have a human face; it had to attract sympathy for the poor. The CCSD and NCW (especially) began to produce reports that highlighted the plight of particularly vulnerable groups, such as single parents, children, women, and poor

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The NAPO was initially opposed to the introduction of the CTC because it was to be paid for by reducing the family allowance by \$5 a month. It later decided to support the credit, however, "[o]nce they understood that low income people and women would be further ahead . . . (Ken Battle, personal interview)."

writing projects - Louise Dulude (of NAC and CACSW) wrote the NCW's Women and Poverty on a consulting basis; Suzanne Findlay (of the CACSW) participated as a member of the advisory committee for CCSD's Women in Need publication; and various feminist researchers prepared the CCSD's Women in Need, and Women and Housing publications.

The NCW's report, Women and Poverty, written by Louise Dulude, was a highpoint of this feminist "turn" in the poverty literature (it was revised by Dulude in 1990).⁴¹ This was a critical document in drawing the connection between poverty and gender and in publicizing this message. According to Dulude, poverty research and analysis had had a strong male-bias up to this point: poverty was largely explained in terms of unemployment and the "culture of poverty." She argued that much of the poverty in Canada was due to the fact that women were raised with the expectation that they would be financially supported for life by men, adding that this explanation ". . . might have been arrived at long ago if poverty experts had not ignored the fact that so many of the poor are female" (NCW, 1979: 2).⁴²

Women's poverty flowed from their inequality in education, employment, marriage (having greater responsibility for raising children) and from marriage

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According to Dulude, her consciousness was raised about poverty while she was employed for an organization working on behalf of poor people in Montreal (personal interview).

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According to Ken Battle, Louise Dulude had to fight for the wording of this document which was considered by Health and Welfare bureaucrats to be too "anti-male" (Ken Battle, personal interview).

breakdown. In this report and others on the single-parent family and poverty women's poverty was primarily conceived as the poverty of the single-parent mother. These documents, especially Women and Poverty, presented the single-parent mother as the public face of women's poverty; as both an exemplar of women's poverty and poverty in general. This construction was grounded in shifts in family structure, notably, the increasing rate of growth of single-parent families and the fact that many of them were headed by women and lived below the poverty line. The implicit "other" in this discourse was the affluent two-earner family which had become the norm by the late 1970s. It also drew upon the discourse of liberal feminism, which through the mid-1970s had advanced a politicized view of the condition of single motherhood. In this discourse, single motherhood was painted as a "woman's issue" and single mothers were cast as central figures in the story of women's inequality and oppression.⁴³ According to this new view of the single-parent family (a view that was first evident in a strand of presentations to the RCSW), discrimination against women was the cause of the crisis; single parenthood, and the problems of the single-parent family were problems all women faced: lack of recognition for their unpaid work and inequalities in marriage and in the labour market. This discourse presented a view of single parenthood as a

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The CACSW prepared a number of reports on the one-parent family: in April 1974 the CACSW established a working group to examine the position of the one-parent family and pressed the federal government for a public policy paper on the one-parent family; in May 1976 the CACSW issued a position paper; and in January 1977 it issued a document outlining principles and recommendations on the one-parent family. Articles on the female single parent also appeared regularly in the liberal feminist newsletters, such as Kinesis (published by the Vancouver Status of Women).

deserving entity, and of single parents as people worth caring about. It broke with the previous dominant view that had framed the problem of welfare mothers as one of family breakdown and had emphasized negative psychological and moral aspects of the situation.

The new discourse on "women and poverty" thus emerged as a collaboration, of sorts, between anti-poverty activists and liberal feminism - one that foregrounded single parenthood and constructed single mothers as a deserving category. Single mothers were presented as victims of the discrimination and injustice that all women faced, victims of structural forces beyond their control (eg. the increasing divorce rate), and of traditional socialization patterns:

The reality is that most didn't plan to be single parents; circumstances along the way caused them to be widowed, divorced, deserted, whatever (NCW, 1976a: 12).

This view cast single mothers as responsible parents - even heroes - raising their families despite the odds against them, and deserving of society's respect and support.

This discursive event established gender as an important variable in formulating policy as regards poverty. Poverty was no longer simply a class issue. It was a narrow, liberal, reading of women's poverty, however, and one that kept within the familialist paradigm. It defined women's poverty as a sub-type of family poverty. It did not incorporate an understanding that poverty was a problem for women in general, independent of their family relationships, as a consequence of their predominance in low-wage labour and lack of access to an independent income. Also eclipsed from this construction were radical and socialist perspectives which viewed poverty as the

outcome of capitalist and patriarchal systems. Thus it tended to strengthen the view that women's interests and family interests were one and the same - and, therefore, that family-based, poverty-oriented policy was an important remedy for women.

The Shaping of Feminist Social Welfare Politics

By the mid-1970s the women's movement was struggling to place women's issues on the political agenda, and to achieve real policy changes. Organizations such as the NAC and CACSW were striving to formulate positions on the wide range of issues affecting women's equality, and to formulate new policy demands that moved feminism beyond the recommendations of the Royal Commission (Findlay, 1988). As Findlay has commented, "... while our commitment to equality was strong, our expertise did not yet match our enthusiasm" (1988: 6). The NAC was also having difficulty organizing itself to advance a truly national perspective. Its membership suffered at this time from an under-representation of working class women, Native and immigrant women; lesbian women were also invisible (Ibid.). The CACSW had little credibility with the wider women's movement. It did, however, have an independent research capacity and a good working relationship with the NAC, and was thus almost able to serve as the NAC's research arm (Vickers et. al., 1993: 83). The NAC took advantage of the CACSW's greater access to inside information on government initiatives (Monica Townson, personal interview).⁴⁴

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The relationship between the CACSW and the broader women's movement in this period was very different from the one of the 1980s (Burt, 1998).

Following International Women's Year (1975) the women's movement emerged with a stronger and broader base of support and more clearly defined issues (Findlay, 1987: 44). There was continuing faith in government reform, more focus on extending expertise on particular issues and developing lobbying skills, and on establishing a more collaborative and consultative footing with government (Findlay, 1988: 7). Findlay has argued that liberal feminism became the "public face" of the women's movement in this period. Socialist and radical feminists also, however, participated in the central organizations of the institutionalized women's movement.⁴⁵

The voices of feminists were on the whole, however, marginal with respect to social security programs and poverty issues. These were not the central issues for the women's movement in this period; more important were the issues of equal pay for work of equal value, rape, wife battering, divorce reform, affirmative action, child care, birth-control services, pensions (Findlay, 1988: 7; Vickers et. al., 1993: 83). There were, in fact, only a handful of feminist researchers and policy analysts with sufficient interest and expertise in the areas of taxation and social security to formulate positions on social security issues. These individuals were mainly located within the NAC and CACSW (eg. Louise Dulude, lawyer and tax expert with the CACSW and NAC; and Monica Townson, an economist with CACSW).

It was, nevertheless, the institutionalized women's movement that presented the

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Vickers et. al. have argued that the NAC's umbrella structure, as an organization representing a wide array of women's groups allowed for the participation of socialist and radical feminists. The NAC's new executive in April 1977 reflected both socialist-feminists (eg. Marjorie Cohen, Laurel Ritchie, Lynn Kaye) and radical feminists (eg. Lorene Clark) (1993: 85).

women's viewpoint with respect to the social security issues emerging in the federal context. They recognized from the outset that women made up a good proportion of the "working poor" and those on social assistance, and on these grounds had expressed concern and made recommendations to address poverty. They called, for instance, for a fairer tax system and the establishment of an adequate allowance for families with children. A 1976 report on women and taxation written by Dulude for the CACSW reiterated the importance for women and the poor of eliminating tax exemptions (especially the children's exemption) and replacing them with tax credits (CACSW: 1976a). In the mid-1970s, the CACSW and NAC issued almost identical recommendations calling for the replacement of tax exemptions with credits on the grounds of equitability between the rich and poor (CACSW, 1978a: 4; NAC, 1976: 6; 1977: 10).⁴⁶

Through the 1970s institutional feminism was increasingly drawn into a position of supporting redistribution with the goal of easing family poverty. This increasing commitment to and involvement in the redistribution/poverty cause was informed by the newly emerged conceptualization of women's poverty. The rising dominance of the notion that poverty was a "woman's issue" and that single mothers were a central component of the poor, and the emergence of supporting data, reinforced the stake women had in the anti-poverty cause, and the liberal definition of the problem within the

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The NAC's 1976 resolution was formulated by the "women and money" workshop, for which Townson and Dulude served as resource people.

women's movement. Vertical redistribution and targeting to the poor emerged as the preferred approach to addressing women's situation. The publication of the NCW's Women and Poverty was important in giving women's groups political leverage to make demands on behalf of women and drawing them into policy discussions in the area of social security and redistribution.⁴⁷ In the late 1970s women's organizations were participating in the call by anti-poverty organizations for an "income support and supplementation" plan to ensure an adequate guaranteed income for all Canadians (Status of Women News, 1978a).

The issue of poverty also provided feminists with an important new framing strategy. Feminists began to publicize their issues as a feature of the poverty crisis. This was particularly apparent with respect to the campaign for "better pensions for women." In the late 1970s poverty became the central argument used by feminists for the inclusion of homemakers in the CPP:

. . . the poverty facing old and retired women. . . is a crisis, a national shame. We recommend radical solutions to solve radical problems. We ask for whatever measures are necessary to increase the current income of elderly women so that those living below the poverty line will be able to end their years in dignity (NAC, 1981: 7).⁴⁸

The CACSW published a fact sheet which put the issue of women and poverty in the

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According to Dulude, the issue of women and poverty was especially picked up and promoted by provincial status of women councils (personal interview).

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A similar focus on the poverty of elderly women is found, for example, in NAC, 1982; 1983; and CACSW, n.d., Women and Aging.

foreground - the first attempt to do so by a feminist organization since the RCSW (CACSW, n.d., Women and Poverty).

The Politics of Autonomy/Individualization

What of the alternative feminist concern with respect to individual entitlement?

The feminist politics of "individualization" gained momentum from the mid-1970s to mid-1980s. There was growing awareness within feminism generally, and within institutional women's organizations specifically, of the importance of individualized entitlement for women. This issue fit most easily and found expression in the work of more socialist- and radical-oriented feminists. In Canada in the late 1970s and early 1980s, Margrit Eichler and Brigitte Kitchen were outspoken on this issue in taking a theoretical position in favour of individual-based social policy (Eichler, 1980; 1983a; 1983b; and Kitchen, 1980; 1984). Eichler, in particular, was a strong critic of family-based social programs. She criticized the concept of family income as a measure of economic well-being, arguing that not all members of the family have equal access to the family's resources and therefore family income is "too crude an indicator to tell us much about the disposable income of individuals who make up so-called 'economic families'" (1980: 20). She felt that "always and under all circumstances" the individual should be the administrative unit for social programs (1983a: 126).

The concern to eliminate notions of women's dependency and the solution of individualization was also evident in the politics of the institutionalized movement in the mid to late-1970s, perhaps owing to the participation and influence of socialist-feminists

within the movement. These issues provided the basis for its critique of a range of individual social programs. Organizations such as the NAC and CACSW criticized various programs for assuming women's dependent status - whether it was an assumption that women's work was of lesser value, or did not count, or that women's access to paid labour was less important. One of the more radical articulations of these issues in the mid-1970s was that women should be treated as deserving the protection of social security and pension benefits in their own right, and not just indirectly or as derivative of their husbands' rights, based on his paid work (CACSW, 1976c: 13). This perspective sought the recognition of "women as individuals with economic responsibilities towards themselves and towards their dependents" (1974: 3). It called for a realignment of social security such that the focus would be the individual and not the family unit (1976c: 13).

It implied a rejection of the traditional family model, which

disguises the position of the woman in the family and attributes to her a degree of security she does not have. It disguises the fact that the major part of the work women do makes no contribution to their economic security, rather actually inhibits it. Too many women, after a lifetime of work on behalf of their families and society, find themselves alone and practically or actually destitute. Their protection is dependent on good will and good luck, not on good law or good social policy, or on their own economic contribution over the years (1976c: 11; also, 1976a: 34).

A commonly voiced criticism of the CPP through the mid-1970s was its assumption of women's dependency (CACSW, 1974). The spousal allowance was also criticized for giving "credence to the idea that the proper place for a woman was to be dependent upon a man (1979:2). Feminists also criticized survivor benefits for not treating male and female contributors equally and for stipulating that widows lose benefits if they

remarried (CACSW, 1979; Status of Women News, 1977). The "pensions for homemakers" discussion that took place in the early 1980s was in some sense a reflection of this individualization concern as well. The demand for pensions for homemakers was motivated by the belief that women had a right to a pension in their own right, based on the recognition of their own labour. Despite differences of opinion within the women's movement about whether this should take the form of a pension for homemakers or not, feminists were of one mind concerning the ultimate goal of providing women with individualized benefits.⁴⁹

The institutionalized women's movement (especially the NAC and CACSW) also became increasingly attuned to the issue of women's entitlement to social benefits in the context of proposals put forward by the federal government in the mid and late-1970s that threatened women's right to independent benefits. The Finance Department indicated renewed interest in "joint" taxation, which the Carter Commission (1966) and indeed the RCSW had recommended. Institutional feminists responded by denouncing joint taxation for its potential to discourage married women from returning to work and for its false assumption that families always share their incomes (CACSW, 1976a: 31;

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In the provincial context the sexist assumptions of the "spouse in the house" rule under provincial social assistance had also been noted in the early 1970s (Zuker and Callwood, 1971) and was the basis of a campaign by feminists in the mid-1980s. By the same token feminists criticized the assumption and practice of defining single-parent mothers with children as "unemployable" for the purposes of social assistance and therefore not eligible for services, including child care, and training that would assist them in finding paid work (Daly, 1975).

1977; 1978).⁵⁰ The position that tended to gain credibility within the institutionalized movement had a particularly "liberal feminist" flavour, reflecting the preoccupation of liberal feminists with achieving equity within marriage and the family (i.e. "[u]ntil Canadian women enjoy full economic equality within marriage, no measures should be introduced to erode the independent financial status now provided" (NAC, 1978: 7)).⁵¹

The federal government also made proposals in the late 1970s to take family income into account when calculating unemployment insurance benefits. Feminists of all persuasions treated this as a threat to women's independent eligibility to benefits:

[this] would in effect . . . deny married women the right to participate in the labour force on the same terms and conditions as everyone else. We have a Human Rights Act which forbids discrimination in employment on the grounds of sex and marital status (NAC, 1978a: 17).⁵²

In summer 1979 the Conservative government also proposed that higher benefits go to recipients with dependents. Feminists in and around formal women's organizations - both socialist- and liberal-minded - reacted strongly, taking the position that such a move would discriminate against married women. As most married women earned well below their husbands, a two-tier system would disproportionately deny benefits to married

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On the subject of joint taxation see CACSW, 1976c; 1977a; NAC, 1978; Dulude, 1979; and Blain, 1979.

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This formulation originated with the Manitoba Volunteer Committee on the Status of Women in its 1968 brief to the RCSW.

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In 1979 the Liberal government tightened eligibility to UI benefits (especially affecting part-time workers, re-entrants, new entrants, and repeaters) which impacted heavily on women workers.

women (Townson, 1980; Eichler, 1980; Kitchen, 1980). The CACSW and NAC issued resolutions that UI continue to be based on individual rather than family attachment to the labour force (Status of Women News, 1980; CACSW, 1980a).

The federal government also attacked the Family Allowance Program; it was reduced in the late 1970s, and then threatened with elimination, first by the Conservatives (December 1979) and then by the Liberals (Fall 1982). Feminists used the same argument that they had used to oppose joint taxation to defend the family allowance: until there was equitable sharing of family resources it would be wrong to take away the allowance from women on the basis of their husbands's income (eg. NCW, 1979).⁵³

This was also the vantage point from which feminists (of all ideological bents) viewed the "universality versus selectivity" question which emerged in a somewhat abstract form in the late 1970s.⁵⁴ Feminists entered into this debate with a gender-specific argument - that universality was particularly good for women because it gave them benefits in their own right, while selectivity increased women's dependency on the family (CACSW, 1980; 1982; Townson, 1980). By the early 1980s even some

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The argument was framed in a way that reflected the liberal feminist concern about women's inequality within the institution of marriage (i.e. that it was wrong to take the family allowance away from women until marriage laws were changed to ensure women an equal share of the family income during marriage) which was indeed a major focus of organizations such as the CACSW and NAC (eg. NCW, 1979; 1983).

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The universality versus selectivity debate would emerge in a more specific form in the mid-1980s with the coming to power of the Mulroney Tory government.

dictate that what was good for the poor (i.e. poor families) was good for women (i.e. single parent families). This construction was critical in bolstering the orientation of the women's movement towards poverty measures generally and towards the plight of the single-parent family in particular. Within the terms of this construction, family-based poverty policy offered an important solution for women. Indeed, this point was underlined by the federal Minister of Health and Welfare, Monique Bégin, when she introduced the legislation. Bégin (who had also been privy to debates within the RCSW) consistently stressed that single-parent mothers would benefit in particular.⁵⁵ She made much of the fact that the credit would be paid to women.⁵⁶

This was a moment of reckoning **within** the institutional feminist movement as regards the strategy of individualization and the goals of women's autonomy versus vertical equity. Institutionalized feminism affirmed its support for **family**-based income security for programs geared to the poor. The reasoning behind this decision is interesting. The issue of individual entitlement was in fact never broadly debated within the women's movement on this piece of legislation.⁵⁷ The views of the primarily liberal

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According to Bégin, "87 per cent of all single parent families will receive some credit benefits. . ." (Canada, House of Commons, 1978: 883); and \$30 million more would be going to single parent families (1978: 1686).

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It was generally reported that the child tax credit would go to women (eg. NCW, 1979). This was actually a misnomer. It was first and foremost a tax offset (reducing the taxes owed) for the higher earning spouse - generally husbands. Wives would only receive a credit if family income was below the threshold level and the credit was higher than taxes owed by the husband. The full amount of the credit was \$200 per child under age 18.

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There was one exception to the relative silence on this issue. Flora MacDonald, a "Red Tory" and

feminist individuals within the NAC and CACSW who were the experts on income security were critical in shaping the responses of their organizations. They were not convinced that all social programs should be based on individual entitlement. They saw this option as unreasonable and impractical under the circumstances, and as not consistent with the immediate interests of the most vulnerable women (Dulude, 1979: 10; Canada, House of Commons Debates, 1978: 1629).⁵⁸ Both Dulude and Bégin shared the view, for instance, that the principle of women's financial autonomy was not relevant with respect to social security programs geared to the poor because in poor households all income was spent on necessities (all income was shared in this sense), therefore making irrelevant the question of who had the power in the family:

[w]hen a family spends its entire income on basic necessities, it does not make sense to say that the husband or the wife has decision-making power over spending and saving choices, because there are in fact no such choices to be made. Social security programs aimed at ensuring that people's basic needs are met are therefore accurate in their assumption that their client-families share everything they own (Dulude, 1979: 10).

According to Bégin,

In lower middle class and poor families women and husbands work together.

Conservative critic of the new CTC legislation, used the feminist concern about family-based entitlement as the focus for her attack on the program in the House of Commons debate and in the media (Canada, House of Commons, 1978: 756-759; The Globe and Mail, 1978). MacDonald argued that the credit really amounted to "joint taxation" and would therefore act in the same way to deter women from labour force participation, and that in the long-term it would be detrimental to their economic independence (Canada, House of Commons, 1978: 1684-1687).

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Dulude recognized that her position differed from that of "radical feminists" who believed "... that all tax and social programs should take account only of individual income" (Dulude, 1979: 10).

Each knows what the other earns. Their money is put together. There never is enough money. The economic autonomy which is the symbol of some women's movements happens only in rich social classes. In those classes wives do not work outside, and husbands do not give their wives enough of their salaries. That is not what happens in poor families and in the lower middle classes (Canada, House of Commons Debates, 1978: 1986).

Individualization of benefits also competed with other goals of liberal feminism.

Family-based entitlement to social programs designed to support children was consistent with the liberal feminist principle that both parents, and not just women, be held as responsible for their children:

. . . If we accept that children are the joint responsibility of both their parents, it does not seem out of place to expect the income of both parents to be considered in determining eligibility. If only the mother's income were considered, as is the case in mother-led one-parent families, the implicit policy implications would be that children are primarily the responsibility of their mothers, and not of both their parents (Kitchen, 1979: 49, 50).

Begin argued as follows:

. . for years women have been fighting to get fathers to assume parenthood with them jointly. They do not want to be left alone to solve problems, to provide care and to take responsibility for their children . . . **When it comes to children we cannot speak of autonomy of women as opposed to men. This is not the forum for that.** We want two parents to be responsible for their children and to exercise their responsibility jointly. . . (Canada, House of Commons Debates, 1978: Nov. 30, 1686) (my emphasis).

With this thinking, and policy choice, mainstream feminism effectively relegated **individual**-based entitlement to particular programs that it deemed as having "symbolic significance" for women - such "long-standing" programs as the family allowance and old age security - that recognized the work of childraising that women performed and provided benefits for women in their own name (Dulude, 1979). The movement thus embarked on a dual-pronged strategy for achieving greater autonomy for women through

social security. On the one hand, achieving more generous benefits for single mothers through family-based income security programs, and on the other, leaving the door open to continue to pressure for individualized benefits for women through other programs, especially the Family Allowance. Even in relation to the Family Allowance, however - a benefit that women had always received without question of their husband's income - the position advanced by the institutionalized women's movement - that both personal and family income would be taken into account - fell far short of a pure individualist approach that was preferred by radical and socialist feminists (Dulude, 1980). As we shall see in the next chapter, the family allowance nevertheless provided the primary window of opportunity for feminists to continue to advance the theme of individualization and women's autonomy in the 1980s in the context of federal income security policy.

Conclusion

The mid to late-1970s was a critical period in the shaping of women's interests in the field of federal social security policy as between the goals of women's autonomy and vertical equity. A powerful moment in this shaping occurred as women were written into the poverty story. The progressive social policy community was particularly instrumental in constructing the story of women's poverty and legitimizing the view that poverty was a women's problem. This construction was grounded in real shifts that had been taking place in family formation, the most significant feature of which was the expanding growth rate of female-headed single parent families. It also drew on and reinforced the

liberal feminist discourse on the single-parent family which was establishing a politicized view of single parenthood, defining it as an equality issue for women. Thus was created a hegemonic view of women's poverty in which it was defined as the poverty of single-parent families. While this construction underscored the deserving status of single-parent mothers, it also reinforced a politics oriented towards achieving benefits for women through family-based, poverty-oriented, income security measures. While feminists had always supported a more redistributive and progressive tax system, the "women and poverty" turn in the poverty story gave women and feminists a greater stake in the family-based redistribution cause and the institutionalized women's movement was drawn further into a poverty-oriented politics.

What became of feminism's alternative interest in asserting the recognition of women as individuals and the particular strategy of individual entitlement? How successful were feminists in asserting women's individual entitlement as a viable policy option for federal social security policy? The politics of autonomy and individualization had momentum within the institutionalized women's movement and more broadly within Canadian feminism in the 1970s. The notion of women's autonomy provided the basis for the critique by institutional women's organizations of individual social programs. These organizations, as well as the women's movement more broadly, were also solidly supportive of individual entitlement for the purposes of taxation and universal and insurance-based programs and defended women's rights to these benefits through the late 1970s and early 1980s.

There was a moment of policy choice in the late 1970s, however, that was

significant for constraining feminist politics as regards the strategy of individualization (and in strengthening the hand of liberal feminism) in the area of social security programs. Institutionalized feminism made a decision that the concern about women's independent rights would be set aside in the case of family-oriented income security programs. This partly reflected the fact that individual-based benefits as applied to income security programs competed with the liberal feminist goal of achieving a greater sharing between mothers and fathers of the burdens and responsibilities of parenthood. It was also the case, however, that the perception of women's best interests was fundamentally conditioned by the dominant ideological construction of women's poverty. Feminists were captured by the notion promoted by the poverty experts that what was good for the poor was good for women; and that the priority therefore was to address the poverty of single mothers. The Child Tax Credit was thus viewed as good for women.

While institutional feminism recognized the issue of women's autonomy and the strategy of individualized benefits as relevant, useful and important in relation to universal, insurance-based programs, and taxation (i.e. non-poverty-oriented) programs, they were not willing to apply it with a broad brush to all social programs. It would not be the priority for family-based, poverty-oriented programs. This thinking and policy choice established a precedent that ensured the feminist politics of autonomy with respect to income security policy would be largely limited to preserving the family allowance program, as the next chapter documents.

CHAPTER FIVE

Money in Their Own Name? Feminist Politics in the Federal Social Welfare Debate of the Early and Mid-1980s

Introduction

This chapter continues the story of the shaping of feminist politics in the terrain of federal social security programs with respect to the goals of vertical equity and gender equity. Women's politics was shaped as women's organizations sought to extend and defend women's interests within a particular set of ideological and discursive parameters.

Focusing on the social policy debate in the early and mid-1980s, and extending through the first term of the Mulroney Tory government, this chapter turns first to describe the broad social, economic, and political milieu. The first term of the Mulroney government marked a more explicit turn to a neo-conservative agenda of controlling the deficit and encouraging the private market, and a greater distancing of the state from organized interest groups. The focus then turns to the ideological and discursive patterns established by the dominant actors in the social policy community. It was a period of intense "debate" on social policy although the debate was largely contained within the state agenda of retrenchment and eliminating universality – giving benefits "to those most in need" became the order of the day. While a progressive oppositional movement began

to emerge on the broader terrain to oppose the Tory agenda, national social policy organizations continued to dominate the mainstream social policy debate, and to appear as the voice of "progressives" in this terrain. This sector adopted largely moderate, liberal social policy politics built primarily around a goal of achieving a more "redistributive" social security system (predominantly, the child benefits system). Principles such as universality and horizontal equity tended to become secondary.

The final focus of this chapter is the shaping of the politics of the institutionalized women's movement in the federal terrain of social security policy. While important changes were beginning to take place within this movement, and most obviously, within the NAC, the theme of the "feminization of poverty" continued to inform the relevance of a politics oriented to influencing the direction of social security reform. The central question to address is whether the women's movement was able to engage in a politics to preserve women's individual entitlement to social security benefits. I argue that while feminists waged a battle to defend women's individual entitlement to benefits - most notably, in fighting to protect family allowance benefits - this politics underwent a further closure. This occurred as the institutionalized women's movement made policy choices within the context of the politics of the mainstream "progressive" social policy community.

Social, Economic, and Political Backdrop

Canada entered a severe recession in 1981-82 followed by slow and hesitant growth that reflected structural changes: low productivity growth, technological change

transforming the occupational structure, and increasing competition in international trade (Banting, 1987). The economic problems continued to create a "fiscal crisis" of the state, contributing to a substantial level of government debt. Unemployment peaked in 1983 at about 12% (up from 7.5% in 1980) with a gradual increase until the recession of the late 1980s. Average family incomes declined steadily from 1980 to 1985, and inequality increased. That is, upper-income families increased their share of Canada's total income at the expense of middle and lower-income families, to a value of \$2.1 billion (CCSD, 1989: 72). There was a rapid increase in the numbers of people who became dependent on income security, primarily UI and social assistance, and food banks and soup kitchens proliferated (Banting, 1987a).

Increasing globalization of production, and neo-conservative policies (eg. free trade with the U.S.) led to a restructuring of employment. An increasing proportion of the new jobs were low paid, part-time, and concentrated in the service sector. Part-time work increased in importance, and a growing proportion were filled by people who preferred to work full-time. While women's participation in the labour force continued to increase, and many secured jobs in management and other professions, most new jobs for women were in low-wage, non-standard (especially part-time) work - mostly in sales and services (Armstrong, 1996; Bakker, 1996; Jenson, 1996).

While many features of neo-conservative economic policy were initiated by the Trudeau Liberals in the late 1970s and early 1980s (eg. monetarism, tight money supply [including the introduction of the "6 and 5" anti-inflation policy], public spending cuts), the Mulroney government, elected in 1984, was more than any previous government

explicitly committed to controlling the deficit, reducing government expenditures, and in general encouraging market forces and the private sector through such strategies as tax restructuring, privatization, and de-regulation (Rice and Prince, 1993: 411). The centrepiece of its economic agenda was negotiating a free trade agreement with the United States. This economic agenda was, moreover, accompanied by a wave of neo-conservative ideology that advocated a return to patriarchal family values and practices - the Mulroney government's "Family Caucus," for example, was committed to upholding and enhancing the single male breadwinner family.⁵⁹

This explicit adoption of a neo-conservative economic agenda gave rise to an oppositional movement in civil society that would have a marked influence on the universe of political discourse throughout the period of the Mulroney government. The election of the Mulroney government and the process and final report of the Macdonald Commission (which was in step with the Mulroney economic agenda), created a clear demarcation between the neo-conservative corporate vision of Canada and a popular sector perspective (Bleyer, 1992: 105). Through the early and mid-1980s dozens of popular sector groups, including labour, women, the church, and farmers, formed relationships and joined in coalitions to oppose the free trade deal. The most significant of these were the Council of Canadians, formed in 1985, and the Pro-Canada Network, started in April 1987, which included dozens of national organizations such as the CLC, NAC, National Farmers' Union, and Gatt-Fly, as well as provincial coalitions against free

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The Family Caucus was a group of thirty-five social conservative MPs who held seats in the federal Tory government (Bashevkin, 1998; Luxton, 1997).

trade. With the concretization of the free trade deal in the fall of 1987, and the emergence of a powerful lobby for business, the Network became more active in advancing an alternative economic agenda and in broadening its mandate to oppose the neo-conservative agenda. It was especially active in opposing free trade and the Mulroney government in the 1988 election, and continued into the 1990s to oppose neo-liberalism and promote an alternative economic vision.

The relationship that had been established between the federal government and outside interest groups began to fray beginning in the mid-1980s as the Mulroney government (abetted by the Reform party and the right wing) began to question federal funding of organized interest groups. The Tories began to cut grants and contributions to groups selectively beginning in 1986-87, with cuts made to women's and Aboriginal organizations (Jenson and Phillips, 1996: 123). The funding practices of the Women's Program came under scrutiny at this time, primarily instigated by REAL Women, a right-wing, anti-feminist group that was particularly interested in challenging the funding base of the largest national feminist organization - the NAC. The question of funding women's organizations came under review beginning in January 1987, and REAL Women were given funding by the Secretary of State at the end of 1988. The Women's Program budget was finally frozen in February 1989, and substantial cuts to its budget would follow through the 1990s, including significant cuts to NAC's funding (Pal, 1993: 143-148; Vickers et. al., 1993: 146-148).

Discourses and Agendas Within the Social Policy Community

State Actors:

With respect to the terrain of social policy, the election of the Mulroney government did not cause a sharp break with the Liberal government's approach during its 1980 to 1984 tenure. The emphasis of the Liberals was on spending reductions and helping those most in need (eg. reducing the indexation of Old Age Security Pensions and Family Allowances). They opened up "for debate" the ending of the universality of the family allowance (remarks by Finance Minister Marc Lalonde in November 1982), and they failed to expand the pension system as social policy, women's, and labour groups had advocated during the great pension debate of the early 1980s.⁶⁰ What was new with the Mulroney government, however, was the level of attention the Tories promised to give to reform of social policy. The Mulroney government announced from the outset the possibility of major changes to social programs, and indeed, over the 1980s it put a large number of social programs (and taxation) on the table for possible reform. These included transfer payments to the provinces for health and post-secondary education, Unemployment Insurance, elderly benefits (Old Age Security, the Canada Pension Plan, the Guaranteed Income Supplement), family and child benefits (Child Tax Credit, Family Allowance, Child Tax Exemption Programs), and taxation.

The momentum for social policy debate was also fueled by the many substantial proposals for social program reform put forward by various federal and provincial commissions and task forces reporting in the mid-1980s. Federally, the Royal

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Liberal proposals to improve public pensions were modest - increases to the GIS, but no increases to CPP benefits, and no introduction of homemakers pensions (Prince, 1984).

Commission on the Economic Union and Development Prospects for Canada (the Macdonald Commission, originally established by the Trudeau government) proposed a comprehensive GAI-type program to replace the existing range of programs, the Commission of Inquiry on Unemployment Insurance (the Forget Commission) proposed a major restructuring and downsizing of the UI program, and the Task Force on Child Care recommended massive restructuring and expansion of day care services (Canada, Royal Commission on the Economic Union and Development Prospects for Canada, 1985; Canada, Commission of Inquiry on Unemployment Insurance, 1986; Status of Women Canada, 1986). Provincially, the Newfoundland Report of the Royal Commission on Employment and Unemployment proposed a GAI for its province, and the Ontario Report of the Social Assistance Review Committee proposed a major overhaul of Ontario's social assistance system (Newfoundland Royal Commission on Employment and Unemployment, 1986; Ontario Social Assistance Review Committee, 1988). The main priority of the federal Tories with regard social policy was achieving reductions in social spending, primarily through targeting spending to the truly needy.

One of the distinguishing features of the social policy community of the Mulroney period was that policy-making power was entirely in the hands of the Department of Finance, with little pretense of involving other key departments such as Health and Welfare. Haddow reports that by the late 1980s, Finance's Social Policy Division had become an active policy-maker in its own right, "concentrating on the potential use of the tax system as a mechanism for meeting social policy objectives " (Haddow, 1990: 231). The Tories briefly resurrected the idea of extensive and open

consultation, especially in the area of social policy.⁶¹ The government invited the public and a wide variety of interest groups to participate in a "frank and open" discussion about the role of social programs (Rice, 1987: 216). It issued "consultation" papers (eg. Child and Elderly Benefits, 1985) which outlined "options;" it established numerous sets of House of Commons and Senate Committee hearings, providing a venue for debate; it regularly conducted pre-budget consultations with various interest groups.⁶² However, the Department of Finance ultimately carefully orchestrated the terms of the consultation and debate including the program areas to be reviewed, the fiscal parameters of reform, and the pace and venues for debate through the hearings process. The broad agenda for social policy was presented to the public in September 1984 by the Finance Department in its first agenda paper (Canada, Minister of Finance, 1984). It reinforced the language of targeting to the "truly needy," with the claim that this would achieve more socially and fiscally "responsible" social programs:

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Political analysts have noted the initial openness and consensus-building orientation of the first term of the Tory government (eg. Bashevkin, 1996: 216). As Phillips has commented, however, "... reality fell far short of the rhetoric" (1991: 190).

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For example, the debate on child benefits took place in the following committees: the House Standing Committee on Health, Welfare and Social Affairs (hearings held in March 1985, and reported in April 1985); the Senate Committee on Social Affairs, Science and Technology (hearings in May and June 1985; reported in December 1985 and June 1987); the House of Commons Committee on Bill C-70, an act that de-indexed Family Allowances (hearings held September 1985); the Senate Committee on Social Affairs, Science and Technology (hearings on Bill C-70 held November 1984 to March 1985). Debate on child benefits also spread into hearings on taxation - eg. the House Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs (hearings held December 1986 and Fall 1987; reported November 1987); on child poverty - eg. the House of Commons Standing Committee on National Health and Welfare (hearings held December 1987); and on the GST - eg. Finance Committee, (hearings held late 1989).

wherever possible, and to a greater extent than is the case today, scarce resources should be diverted first to those in greatest need (1984: 71); and

government expenditures must be allocated to provide immediate employment opportunities and better ensure sustained income growth (Ibid.).

It was a return to a "residual" philosophy of individual and private responsibility for social and economic well-being, and a turn towards greater acceptance of private charity, such as food banks. It went hand in hand with a harsher ethos regarding the poor.

Emphasis was placed on distinguishing the "deserving" from the "undeserving" poor, as reflected in Mulroney's question: "[a]re we making proper use of the taxpayers' money by giving bank presidents who make \$500,000 a year a baby bonus? Could that money not be more properly used to assist someone who desperately needs help?" (Status of Women News, 1985: 2). Individual initiative and responsibility were stressed. The Macdonald Commission, for example, reflected this approach in its proposals for social security. It advocated "providing incentives to encourage people to take advantage of their opportunities (Canada, Royal Commission on the Economic Union, 1985: 15)," "improve their own situation (1985: 16)," and "take responsibility for their own lives and livelihood when they are able to do so (1985: 15)". According to this Commission, income security programmes

impair incentives for individuals to improve their own situation and . . . must provide incentives that will encourage 'employable' beneficiaries to try to find employment, participate in job-training and skills upgrading programs, make appropriate use of occupational and geographic mobility, and form stable work attachments (1985: 16).

Its proposals were also based on distinctions between the deserving and undeserving, defined according to length of attachment to the labour market (less stable, shorter-

attachment workers were defined as less deserving than longer-attachment workers).

The Commission continued to extoll the family as the basic unit of society:

"[p]articular care must . . . be taken not to build into income-security programs incentives which may diminish family formation or lead to breakdowns in family structure (Canada, Royal Commission on the Economic Union, 1985: 17)." The model was that of the dual-breadwinner family, nevertheless, assuming that women/wives were secondary workers/earners and homemakers who could fall back on the wages of their male partners/husbands who were the primary workers/earners. The Macdonald Commission's plan, for instance, provided that first class benefits would be available to primary family earners, and second-class (lower) benefits to secondary earners.⁶³

While having to retreat on its initial attempt to de-index old age security pensions due to public pressure, the government subsequently put forward a number of proposals and introduced significant changes in the area of child benefits and taxation.⁶⁴ The strategy ultimately adopted by the Tories was one of reform by "stealth," restructuring social security programs via technical changes (such as partial de-indexation and tax rule

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The proposed scheme assumed that secondary workers ("unstable," "short-attachment" workers - a category where women predominate) could, when in need, fall back into dependency on the earnings of primary workers ("stable, long-attachment" workers - a category where men would predominate). For those with poor husbands there was a subsistence-level, stigmatizing-type of benefit (McKeen, 1989).

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Changes in child benefits were announced in the 1985 and 1986 federal budgets, the June 1987 White Paper on Tax Reform, the December 1987 National Strategy on Child Care, and the 1988 and 1989 budgets.

changes) announced in budgets.⁶⁵ The impact of these changes was little understood by the public and undermined the struggle by social policy advocates to engender public interest and protest (Battle, 1993: 425). The changes effectively eroded the universality principle and substantially reduced the rate of increase of federal social expenditures (i.e. put income security benefits on an escalator going down) (Gray, 1990; Battle, 1993; Rice and Prince, 1993; Moscovitch, 1990; McBride and Shields, 1993: 66-77).

Progressive Actors:

Some groups within the progressive community, responsive to the Tory invitation to consult on social policy, acquired a voice in the debates. Others, however, not willing to engage in debate within the terms defined by the Tory government, remained marginal to the debate on social security reform in the mid-1980s.

The views of labour were not given a sympathetic ear by the Mulroney government. The CLC was forced to adopt a defensive position and took steps to build alliances with other popular sector groups opposed to the Tory government, becoming involved in the Pro-Canada Network (Smith, 1992). The CLC disagreed from the outset with the parameters of the Tory review of social programs and presented its views at

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The 1985 budget limited the indexing of personal exemptions and tax brackets as well as child benefit programs (i.e. the family allowance, children's tax exemption, refundable child tax credit and equivalent-to-married exemption). It also partially de-indexed federal transfers to the provinces for health and education under the Established Programs Financing (EPF) mechanism. The 1986 budget imposed a general surtax of 3% on all personal incomes and corporations, reduced tax rates for businesses, and increased the federal sales tax. The 1988 budget introduced massive changes in the personal income tax structure that entailed reducing the number of tax brackets and reducing the tax rate for top income earners (Gray, 1990).

any chance of getting this reform adopted (Bob Baldwin, personal interview).⁶⁶

On the question of strategy the CLC tended to object to the approach adopted by the SPRG. Its objections, which were most applicable to the CCSD and less so to other organizations, were in three areas: social policy organizations shied away from attributing difficulties in the labour market to government policy; they did not challenge the federal government on the need for spending restraint in the social policy area; and ultimately, the logic of their position supported the reconstruction of social programs as more targeted (Bob Baldwin, personal interview). Indeed, not long after the SPRG was formed the Canadian Conference on Catholic Bishops convened a meeting in Ottawa, attended by a number of labour groups and other groups active on social policy issues to discuss social policy issues. This gathering was, in significant measure, a reaction against the approach that had been adopted by the SPRG. The SPRG was perceived by the organizers as having high profile progressive spokespeople but many in this group felt the SPRG had conceded far too much to the Tories and the drift to the Right (Bob Baldwin, personal interview). Following this meeting a group came together to produce a declaration - "A Time to Stand Together . . . A Time for Social Solidarity" which set forth an alternative political agenda (Bleyer, 1992). Many involved in this activity subsequently became involved in the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives, the Pro-Canada Network, and the Council of Canadians, for which the issues of free trade and employment took centre stage.

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Ken Battle was also strongly opposed to homemaker pensions, but his participation was not negotiable since he was one of the founding members.

The CLC participated in the key debates in this period independently of the SPRG. Its exclusion from the SPRG, however, only reinforced its marginal status as a player in social policy. Moreover, relations between the CLC and CCSD in particular were considerably strained when the CLC objected strongly to the CCSD's proposal for a core guaranteed income program which assumed high unemployment and a labour market divided into peripheral and core workers. The CLC's own proposal for a GAI (presented at the 1988 CLC convention) advocated full employment as the first line of defence against poverty, with a second line provided by social insurance programs, social services and child benefits to provide for horizontal equity for families, and a progressive tax system. A GAI would be only a final element in the system. The CLC was unable to build an alliance around its position however and ultimately dropped the project (Haddow, 1994).

New anti-poverty organizations began to form in the mid-80s around the issue of child poverty. The Child Poverty Action Group (CPAG), for example, formed in 1985-86.⁶⁷ It was a Toronto-based group composed of social agencies and individuals with backgrounds in family and child welfare (eg. social planning councils) which took its cue from U.S. and European groups of the same name.⁶⁸ Its main concern was not poverty

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CPAG was funded by the Laidlaw Foundation, the Children's Aid Society of Metro Toronto, and other associations, and through private donations.

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Key individuals in CPAG were Brigitte Kitchen, with a background in the children's aid societies and knowledge of the European model of social welfare policy; Marvyn Novick, a program manager of the Social Planning Council of Metro Toronto; and Christa Freiler, program director of the CPAG.

per se but rather the decline of support for families with children, of which child poverty was merely a symptom. The CPAG was committed to stemming the tide towards targeting, and wanted a public revisiting of the issue of "universality versus selectivity." While the CPAG and other child poverty groups would attain a higher profile within the mainstream debate on reform of child benefits, their voices were, in the mid-80s, drowned out by those of the more powerful national social policy and anti-poverty organizations.

The dominant "progressive" voice in the debate on the reform of social programs continued to be that of the nationally-focused social policy organizations - primarily the CCSD, NCW, and NAPO. These organizations continued to be mainly funded by the federal government, and to operate within a liberal frame of reference. The CCSD was the largest organization in terms of financial and professional resources, and included expert social policy analysts. The NCW was small (a research staff of only two), but had access to government research. It played a key role in providing poverty research to the other organizations (Haddow, 1990: 27). Its reputation was based on the excellence of the work of its director, Ken Battle. The NAPO also became a more effective body through the 1980s, having had two competent and high profile directors.⁶⁹ It was dependent, however, on the expertise and research capacity of the other organizations. The core of this community was actually only a handful of analysts within these organizations who had the essential "number-crunching" abilities and the in-depth

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knowledge of social security and certain tax and transfer programs.⁷⁰

This community continued to define itself and see its role as "poverty expert" - an activity that served to legitimize and sustain the moral foundations of the poverty concept and its viability as a focal point for public policy. Social policy organizations continued to generate a poverty literature through fact books on poverty and publications on poverty "lines," "estimates," and "profiles" (eg. CCSD, 1983, 1984, 1989; NCW, 1981, 1982, 1983, 1985, 1988).⁷¹ One of the new emphases in the depiction of poverty was disparity in income distribution - CCSD employed the concept of income "fifths" (i.e. the top and bottom quintiles representing the poorest and richest sectors of society) to convey a message about the unfair distribution of income between the rich and poor.

Women's poverty continued as a central feature of the poverty story (CCSD 1983; 1984). The discovery of the connection between women and poverty gave way in the early 1980s to the full blown "feminization of poverty" theme. This theme ostensibly referred to the rapid increase in the numbers of female single parents and the fact that they formed an increasing proportion of the poor (NCW, 1986a: 7).⁷² While the term

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They included the CCSD's director, Terrence Hunsley (previously with the Department of Health and Welfare); the CCSD's economist and author of the Fact Books on Poverty, David Ross; mathematician and statistician on contract with the CCSD, Richard Shillington; and the NCW's director, Ken Battle.

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Some of the NCW publications on poverty data include: Measuring Poverty, 1981; Revised . . . poverty lines, 1982; Poverty Lines, 1983, Poverty in Canada: 1980 final revised statistics, 1985 Poverty Lines, estimates, Poverty Profile, 1988.

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According to the NCW, in 1961 only 13.2% of poor families were headed by women, while their share climbed to 36.5% in 1985 (1986a: 7). Patricia Evans has countered this "feminization of

"feminization of poverty" had emerged earlier within U.S. feminism (a term attributed to Diana Pearce), it became popularized in Canada because of media focus on the reports produced by CCSD and when, in the early 1980s, Statistics Canada began to produce a breakout on single parents in its poverty publication (a publication on which social policy organizations relied for data). Thus the view that poverty "has the face of a woman" became popular.

The central and defining political activity of the progressive sector in this period, however, was to provide an "opposition" (although within the terms of social liberalism) to the Tory government. While Mulroney was calling universality "a sacred trust," there was great trepidation within the social policy community about what the Tory presence would mean for social programs. The perception was that the intent of the new, majority, right-wing government was to destroy social programs. Talk of deficit reduction by Finance Minister Wilson in the first mini-budget in November 1984 was something new, and struck fear into the hearts of the anti-poverty sector. The directors of the three core national social policy organizations - CCSD, NCW, and NAPO - reacted with a strategy of forming a small coalition group - the Social Policy Reform Group (SPRG) - in order to present a unified front and "to continue to have a voice" on social

poverty" account of women's poverty, arguing that women's poverty has been characterized by more stability than change (i.e. they represented 56.9% of the poor in 1971 and 60.4% of the poor in 1988); that women have always been poor in greater numbers than men; and that the growing visibility of women's poverty is not due to a change in the objective circumstances of women "... [r]ather its emergence is, in part, socially constructed ... [t]heir poverty is rendered more "visible" in the absence of a husband, particularly when it leads to the receipt of social assistance benefits" (1991: 174, 175).

policy.⁷³ Women's groups were perceived as obvious and useful allies and there was a conscious decision to involve them in this project. The NAC and CACSW were invited to join, as were the Canadian Association of Social Workers and, later in the 1980s, the National Pensioners and Senior Citizens Federation. While the organizations in this alliance continued to pursue their own projects and mandates and to participate in the debates as autonomous organizations - for instance, the CCSD's Work and Income in the Nineties (WIN) campaign was an important contribution to the GAI discussion (CCSD, 1986; 1987) - they also became heavily involved in SPRG's activities and agenda. For instance, CCSD researchers, David Ross and Richard Shillington, generated data for the SPRG.

The SPRG represented a defensive response to the Tories, however, born out of fear of what might happen rather than any strong positive philosophy or goal. These organizations saw their role as being able perhaps to slow down, but not substantially alter the Tory beast's course. They had low expectations of what could be achieved under the right-wing government, especially in the context of economic recession. Consider, for example, the following responses by SPRG members to NDP MP Margaret Mitchell's questioning during hearings on child benefits:

Certainly one could hope for an increase in child benefits. There is nothing that we have said would preclude that. It is just that, given the economic climate we are in now, we see the symmetry of redirecting resources from a regressive benefit to a progressive benefit as a feasible approach. I guess it is just a matter of judgement. I mean, it has taken so long to get this far, we would not want to

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These directors were all male and had a history of working together - eg. the 1970s social security review, and the great pension debate had provided prior instances of this.

see, frankly, the government say, we are not getting enough support for this, so we will not bother trying it (Canada, House of Commons Standing Committee on Health, Welfare and Social Affairs, 1985: (NCW) 9:32);

I would like to say very specifically the way in which we see the situation now. It is not that we are content with half a loaf. The situation is that we are given a choice between a half-loaf and no loaf at all. And in that situation, given the parameters that exist right now, we will take the half-loaf (1985: (SPRG) 9:42);

It is the broad direction about which we have a sense where we are moving. It is the first time in years that we have had any sense of even moving in that direction, which is why I think we are trying to encourage and support continuing to move. It is not the end (1985: (NAPO) 9:43).

SPRG member groups were committed to formulating a "minimum program" -

something they could all agree to:

The positions that are presented . . . are the positions that we all agree on. It does not mean we do not agree on the other points, but they are the positions that we consider to be minimum, a minimum program, which is the priority of all the participating groups (1985: (SPRG) 9:39).

The primary focus of debate between this community and the government through the mid-1980s was the area of "child and family benefits." Child benefits had been viewed by some social policy analysts since the 1970s as a precursor to a more comprehensive GAI program. The debate was initiated with the issuing by the Minister of Health and Welfare in January 1985 of a consultation paper on child and elderly benefits. The SPRG chose officially to endorse the direction and fiscal parameters of the Tory proposals, specifically the child benefit proposals, seeing them as a major step towards a more progressive system and judging them to be the best they could expect under a regime that prioritized deficit reduction and private sector growth (1985: (NCW) 21/3/85, 9:31; SPRG, 1985; NCW, 1985; NAPO, 1985).

The SPRG was very successful in capturing the "spotlight" on social policy issues from the mid to the late 1980s.⁷⁴ Through press releases and at Parliamentary hearings it remained an outspoken critic on the numerous substantive proposals on social policy put forward by the government and federal commissions. The SPRG was represented by the media as the voice of the progressive community on social policy matters and as leading the opposition in this policy area (there were few opposition MPs at this time). As one SPRG member observed "we were perceived to be much more powerful than we really were . . . we were a bit of a paper tiger." Nevertheless, with this credibility the SPRG was regularly invited to meet (as part of the pre-budget consultation process) with the Minister of Finance, Michael Wilson, and other cabinet ministers.

The SPRG also had a major influence on the broader (Ottawa-based) volunteer sector including such organizations as the Vanier Institute, the Canadian Institute of Child Health, the Child Daycare Advocacy Association, and teachers associations. The SPRG was effective in building solidarity around its positions and at the same time created a space for these organizations to become informed and participate in the debates. The SPRG's high profile helped increase the credibility of the social policy community generally. A key forum for this activity was the "last Wednesday of the month club," which existed for a couple of years and was organized and attended by SPRG members. This forum provided an opportunity for organizations interested and concerned with social policy to share their concerns and develop an understanding of

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SPRG was disbanded in 1989.

current issues.⁷⁵ It allowed certain SPRG member organizations - those having the ability to produce articulate analysis and recommendations - to tutor the attending groups on the complex intricacies of the system and the key concepts of the progressive argument (Robert Glossop, personal interview).

SPRG politics constituted a moment of narrowing, however, for the politics of the mainstream national social policy organizations. While progressive organizations had always sought a more redistributive system, there was a specific understanding of that goal under the SPRG's leadership: to ensure that "targeting" would mean eliminating tax benefits for the rich and that there would be no further spending cuts to the income support system. SPRG organizations, particularly the CCSD, NCW and NAPO, became focused on the goal of convincing the government to address the problem of tax exemptions (that disproportionately benefited the rich) by eliminating them or converting them to credits (eg. child tax exemption, spousal exemption). This, and the overall issue of maintaining the level of funding for social programs, were the main focuses of discussions with the Minister of Finance (eg. NCW, 1985; Canada, House of Commons Legislative Committee on Bill C-70, 1985: (NCW) 4:18; (CCSD) 4:3; (NAPO) 3:14; Canada, House of Commons Standing Committee on Health, Welfare and Social Affairs, 1985: (NCW) 9:27; (NAPO) 9:17; (CCSD) 10:4).

The logic of this politics, however, served to downplay the larger ideals and

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This monthly meeting was regularly attended by 20 to 25 groups (Splane, 1996: 74).

values that had traditionally had purchase in this community, notably, universality and horizontal equity. According to the SPRG the key criteria for judging any policy or program became its ability to contribute to vertical equity. What mattered most was the bottom-line who wins and who loses with respect to disposable income, and increasingly, this became the orientation and trademark of SPRG (i.e. the "progressive") analysis and commentary (eg. SPRG, 1985a; 1985b; 1986; NCW, 1986). The SPRG's call for the elimination of the child tax exemption, for example, was based solely on its regressivity as regards vertical equity, disregarding its contribution to horizontal equity, which it did by equalizing the disposable incomes of those with and those without children.⁷⁶ The only real area of dispute between these groups and the Department of Finance in this period was over where to draw the line between the winners and the losers - that is, whether to include the middle class among the winners - and the level at which benefits should be set.⁷⁷ This debate was less about principles than about technicalities - threshold levels, tax-back rates, and turning points. Progressive analysts became engaged in the technical side of policy-making - i.e. trying to out-model the Finance Department in building a more targeted and acceptable Child Tax Credit system - the object for SPRG

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The CLC viewed the child tax exemption as a valuable mechanism for achieving horizontal equity, in contrast to the position taken by social policy organizations (Canadian Labour Congress, 1985; Canada, Standing Committee on Health, Welfare and Social Affairs, 1985: (CLC) 9:55).

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Social policy groups argued for including "moderate" income people into social benefits; the federal government tended to target lower down the income scale. This was the essence of the criticism for instance, that CCSD had of the Macdonald Commission's recommended universal income security program - that it was not generous enough, leaving people only marginally better off in most cases and still below the poverty line (eg. Ross, 1986; 1986a).

members being to assign more money below the low income threshold level, but within the existing budget.⁷⁸

Moreover, while several SPRG members may still have privately supported the concept of universality, it was viewed by some analysts as having become a "red flag" issue that diverted the discussion away from the substantive issue of redistribution. According to David Ross of the CCSD, the issue of universality versus selectivity had become cast in somewhat black and white terms in the media: those who favoured universality tended to be labeled and dismissed as bleeding-heart leftists or communists, while those who favoured selectivity were cast as the new modern business-minded breed of the future. Thus, there was an attempt by some to avoid the language of universality. The CCSD published a special issue of Overview on the issue of universality, for instance, in which it was presented as somewhat of a "red herring" that diverted attention away from the more urgent issue of ensuring an adequate income for the poor, and addressing the problem of the income gap between the rich and the poor (1985a). According to the view presented, the distinction between universal and selective instruments was a false one since they could be designed to have the same net effect with respect to distribution (eg. Ross, 1985; CCSD, 1986). The emphasis was put on the goal of achieving "universal access" to an adequate standard of living (CCSD,

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One of the outcomes of the SPRG tradition of analysis was the dominance of the view that the Tory approach to social policy was one of policy "by stealth" (Battle, 1993; Gray, 1990; Rice and Prince, 1993). This analysis, while correct, tends to reinforce the view that what counts most is the bottom-line distribution of benefits, not principles like universality.

1985a: 1).

The Shaping of Feminist Social Welfare Politics

By the early 1980s institutionalized feminism had increased its credibility. The movement had achieved a major success in the entrenchment of the women's equality sections in the Charter of Rights and Freedoms in 1981. Women's issues were being addressed within the federal state by the various bodies that had been established within the bureaucracy. Funding to women's groups via the Women's Program was increased in the early and mid-80s, reaching a peak in 1987 (Burt, 1994: 216).

Important changes were beginning to take place in the women's movement broadly, and in NAC in particular, in the mid-1980s, however, which were to fully crystallize and transform feminism in the late 1980s and early 1990s. One such change was the emergence of new groups of minority women, especially immigrant and visible minority women, and the increasing pressure on the women's movement to address questions of racism and recognize the interrelations of racism, sexism and classism.⁷⁹ Disabled women also organized and demanded increased attention within the mainstream women's movement.⁸⁰ Beginning in 1986 the NAC incorporated the need to

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Organizations of minority women emerged in the early and mid-1980s. They included for example, the Congress of Black Women, established in 1980, Inuit Women's Association or Pauktuutit, in 1984, the National Organization of Immigrant and Visible Minority Women, in 1986 (Phillips, 1991: 764).

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The DisAbled Women's Network was formed in 1985 (Phillips, 1991: 764).

challenge sexist, racist and classist assumptions, and the demands of visible minority and immigrant women and women with disabilities was a factor in prompting an organization review of the NAC and major debate in 1988 (Burt, 1994: 220; Vickers, et. al: 148).

Moreover, with the implementation of the equality clause of the Charter in 1985, there was a greater focus on legal equality and legal issues, thus increasing the activities and profile of legal-oriented women's groups such as the Legal Education and Action Fund (LEAF) (formed in 1985) and the National Association of Women and the Law (NAWL) (formed in 1976).

The mid-1980s also marked the beginnings of the ascendancy of socialist-feminism (and to some extent radical feminism) within the structures of the NAC, although it was not until the late 1980s that this fully transformed the policy orientation and strategies of the NAC as a whole. The socialist-feminist voice within the NAC emerged as stronger in the course of the mobilization against free trade and, increasingly, against the broader restructuring agenda of the Conservative government. Between 1985 and 1988 the NAC played a key role in mounting this opposition, involving the NAC in coalition work with other popular sector groups, for example, the Pro-Canada Network. Underlying this coalition activity was the recognition that the orientation towards less government, and the restructuring of employment (eg. loss of jobs under free trade) was having a detrimental impact on women and undermining women's equality rights and future progress. The areas of child care, health care and equal pay legislation were seen as threatened by the unregulated, privatized economy that would prevail under free trade (Bashevkin, 1989: 367). The socialist-feminist and labour-oriented women within and

around the NAC who formulated the NAC's response to free trade, including in particular the members of the NAC's subcommittee on employment, such as Marjorie Cohen and Madelaine Parent, urged a shifting of the NAC's focus (and the women's movement's generally). The focus changed from "equality"/"status of women"/"equal opportunity" issues (i.e. those which focused on "women's issues" such as daycare, abortion, affirmative action, pay equity, etc.) to broad economic and labour issues, such as free trade, privatization, deregulation, trade policy, etc. (Bashevkin, 1989; Vickers, 1993: 274; Cohen, 1992). It was not until 1988, with cuts made to the funding of women's organizations and the growing challenge to feminism instigated by REAL Women and right-wing politicians, that NAC adopted a fully oppositional stance towards the Tory government.

While these shifts were beginning to take place, the NAC was also in the early and mid-1980s still engaged in a politics that was oriented to making gains within the system as it existed. This was particularly the case in the area of social programs.⁸¹ The NAC's pension and family benefits subcommittee concerned with income security policy, chaired by Louise Dulude, was in the early 1980s active in the areas of pensions and children's benefits.⁸² Pensions took up most of its energies in the early period with

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Sylvia Bashevkin makes a distinction between socialist-feminists within NAC who had a more protest-oriented and oppositional approach to the Tory government, and the moderate, liberal, lobby-oriented feminists who were willing to engage with the Tories to achieve reform, but stresses that NAC's tradition of compromise and consensus moderated these strains within NAC in the mid-1980s (1996: 222).

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Louise Dulude held the position of vice-president of NAC in 1984/85 and president from 1986 to

"pensions for homemakers" being a major focus in the early 1980s. Feminists were vocal participants in the 1981 Pensions Conference, with several of them achieving credibility within the broader social policy community as expert policy analysts (Bob Baldwin, personal interview).⁸³ The review of social programs announced by the newly elected Mulroney government appeared to hold some promise for feminists to be able to influence the direction of reform, or at the very least, preserve the gains that women had made.

The themes of "women and poverty" and "feminization of poverty" continued to establish redistribution and the goal of vertical equity through targeted programs as a "women's agenda" and to give women a recognized stake in income security debates and policy outcomes. These were the grounds on which feminist participation in the social policy community was sought. The NAC, represented by Louise Dulude, and the CACSW, represented by various staff members, became the official representatives of the women's movement in the SPRG. The SPRG was the prime location from which the institutionalized women's movement engaged in debate with the Tory government over reform of the income security system.

1988.

The Politics of Autonomy/Individualization

To what extent were feminists in this period able to pursue a politics of women's autonomy or strategy of individualization? As suggested in the previous chapter, the issue of women's independent entitlement continued to be central to feminist positions on social programs through the late 1970s and early 1980s. Socialist-minded feminists argued against family-based social policy as a matter of principle, as illustrated, for example, in Margrit Eichler's early 1980s work. Attacks by the federal government in the early 1980s on women's independent rights to UI benefits and to the universal family allowance also kept the issue in the fore of women's movement politics. Thus in the early 1980s the Trudeau government had suggested that UI be based on family-entitlement (based on a proposal developed by the Economic Council of Canada) and in 1982 it limited the indexing of child benefits to "six and five" percent. The value of universality was also questioned at this time, and the possibility of eliminating the family allowance program was aired by Finance Minister Lalonde (Prince, 1984: 99).

National women's organizations, notably the NAC and CACSW, adamantly defended women's right to these benefits. With respect to income security, feminists took stands on the family allowance and universality. Women's organizations continued to express concern that the gradual transformation of the income security system from a universal emphasis to a selective one would "... force adults to become increasingly dependent on each other within the family. . ." (CACSW, 1982: 3). There was a recognition that the shift in emphasis to the family-based child tax credit penalized women with well-off spouses (Ibid.). The family allowance was cast by women's groups

in these debates as women's money, and to reduce it was an attack on women:

We have before us three programs for children. There are two going to women and you want to decrease one of those. There is one that goes to the men and there is no rationale behind it. . . . The only possible reason that can motivate that kind of thing is that women are not considered as being a political force that is worth thinking about. You can take money away from women whenever you want while if you try even to touch the exemption in any kind of substantial way, the men are going to be screaming and they have far more political clout (Canada, House of Commons Standing Committee on Health, Welfare and Social Affairs, 1982: (NAC) 51:33).⁸⁴

They argued that the family allowance was a token recognition of women's work as mothers and an important source of independent income for many women, including women living in well-off households:

The fact is that hundreds, if not thousands, of Canadian women are in that situation So I think this argument. . . must be taken seriously (1982: (NAC) 51:9).

there is a minority of mothers who do not really need these family allowances. But we are talking about a few fortunate women, as opposed to the average Canadian woman (1982: (CACSW) 52:54).

The struggle over the question of family versus individual entitlement intensified with the election of the Mulroney government in 1984. The family was promoted generally in this period as the basic unit of social policy. The right-wing element within

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Feminists emphasized the family allowance as belonging to women but there was always some ambivalence about making claims on their own behalf rather than as mothers on behalf of their children, as revealed in the following exchange between an MP and the President of the CACSW:

Mr. Marceau: "You seem to consider this family allowance system as a salary for women and not for children;"

Mme. Pepin: "In 1982 . . . I am absolutely astounded to hear you say such a thing;

Mr. Marceau: " No, no! What I meant was . . . ;"

Mme. Pepin: "It is pay to mothers to be given to the children, for heaven sake!" (Canada, House of Commons Standing Committee on Health, Welfare and Social Affairs, 1982: (CACSW) 52: 54, 55).

the Mulroney government was concerned to uphold the breadwinner family model. The emphasis on targeting adopted by the Mulroney government, in which the poor and the truly needy were defined in terms of the family unit, also reaffirmed the family as the basic unit of analysis, need and support. Proposals to increase targeting and shift to a family-based entitlement were made with respect to several social program areas, including UI and taxation.⁸⁵ The Forget Commission recommended that the UI program be family-income tested, or that a two-tiered structure be introduced whereby benefits would be based on the number of dependents. Recommendations were also made by the Finance and Economic Affairs Standing Committee in 1986 to introduce joint taxation (Canada, Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs, 1987).

The major women's organizations responded to these proposals with a defence of women's independent entitlement - with respect to UI, for example:

We addressed this issue repeatedly in the 1970s as did other organizations concerned with justice and equality These concepts were thoroughly discredited as a thinly-veiled attack upon women's income and independence (NAC, 1986: 32);

The CACSW regards the proposal to base benefits on family income as totally unacceptable. Indeed, we would question whether it would even be legal, given sections 15 and 28 of the Charter (CACSW, 1986: 23).

Women's organizations also defended an individual-based tax system:

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The ethic of individual responsibility and the model of familialism was also reflected in new provincial policy for single mothers. For example, in the early 1980s the Ontario government began to declare sole-support mothers eligible for family benefits only if they sought employment, and in 1982 established an employment support program for them (Haddad, 1985). This approach was also reflected in the federal government's 1987 proposal for CPP survivor benefits which denied benefits to women with children over age seven on the assumption that women in this situation should be self-supporting.

Too often the focus has been on possible inequities between families, at the expense of equity within the family (CACSW, 1987: 5);

NAC supports the individual as the unit of taxation and rejects any system of joint taxation of the spouses because it would greatly jeopardize the financial security of women (NAC, 1987: 13);

A joint taxation system would have the effect of reducing the individual financial security of married women and we are opposed to its introduction (CACSW, 1987a: 9).⁸⁶

While the feminist critiques of the Macdonald and Forget Commission proposals were primarily concerned with the implications for women's jobs, they also voiced strong concerns about the family basis of the GAI plans that were advocated by these commissions. Their proposals for a GAI recommended replacing a number of social welfare programs, including the family allowance, with a single, family-income tested, GAI program. Feminists identified the family basis of the plan as a major issue:

The major problem that I see with all of the proposals for a guaranteed annual income is that all of them are based on family income . . . what it does is put them [women] back into a situation of dependency with the family (Monica Townson, quoted in Dundas, 1987: 7);

When family income is the gauge by which social benefits are distributed (and it always is in GAI schemes) the particular needs of women are lost. Women's poverty, except when they are living alone, is hard to see. We talk about poor families, poor kids, poor old people, but the particular poverty of women is invisible when they are in families (Cohen, 1987: 21).⁸⁷

The debate on the GAI died out in the late 1980s when it became clear that no

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Similar views are expressed, for example, in Kitchen, 1986, and NAC, n.d.

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The same observations were also made, for example, in Rose, 1986, and Eichler, 1988.

such program would be enacted by the government. (The point has been made, however, that the 1992 change to child benefits in many ways mirrored what the Macdonald Report had recommended (Brigitte Kitchen, personal interview).

These views carried over to some extent into the broader social policy community, influencing a few of the more socialist-oriented analysts within the progressive social policy organizations who were engaged with the question of a GAI. For example, David Ross raised the issue within the CCSD with the result that the CCSD's proposal for a core income security plan (the central proposal of its "Work and Income in the Nineties" project) recommended that the individual become the income accounting unit, and that it be phased in gradually as the basic unit for social security programs, starting with the refundable sales tax credit.⁸⁸ A major consideration, according to this report, was the "protection of the enhanced economic status and growing economic independence of women" (Ross, 1986: 11). Use of the individual, as opposed to the family as the basic unit for the GAI also appealed to these analysts for reasons of technical "neatness".

Increasing pressure from the right to preserve the family, especially the male breadwinner family, however, influenced progressive analysts to reframe the issue in a way that eclipsed gender and the issue of women's independence. They framed it primarily as a design consideration pertaining to family neutrality - i.e. wanting to ensure that the system did not discourage people from marrying, or provide an incentive to form

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David Ross indicated that this measure was narrowly passed by the CCSD board, and that a number of members of the board resigned from the board over this decision (personal interview).

artificial single parent family units, to divorce, or encourage youth to leave home (Van Loon, 1986: 11; Ross, 1986: 14; Wolfson, 1986).

But the key battle waged by the women's movement in this period on the principle of women's independent entitlement to income security was the fight to preserve the family allowance. In 1985 the Mulroney government introduced legislation to partially de-index the family allowance (Bill C-70). The Mulroney government used the argument against individual entitlement as part of its attack on this program, stressing the inequality that resulted when "the wives of bank managers" received the family allowance. Women's groups (of all ideological bents) were a major constituency in opposing this measure and the attack on the rights of "wives" to receive the benefit. With respect to the de-indexing of the family allowance (Bill C-70), NAC asked women to write and send petitions to the prime minister and minister of finance in support of the NAC's position opposing it, to which 50,000 responded. Quebec groups organized a protest on Parliament Hill attended by a couple of hundred women, and lobbied federal MPs and local politicians. Women's groups from across the country appeared before the Legislative Committee on Bill C-70 and the Standing Committee on Health, Welfare and Social Affairs to oppose this legislation, including the NAC, CACSW, Fédération des femmes du Québec (FFQ), Coalition pour les allocations familiales (which represented 80 Quebec women's groups), Fédération des association des familles monoparentales du Québec, Quebec Voice of Women, Réseau d'action et d'information pour les femmes (RAIF), Saskatchewan Action Committee on the Status of Women, and Vancouver Status of Women.

At the core of their response was the principle of women's financial independence. One of the central conditions put forward by the NAC for reform of the child benefits system was that

the independent financial security of women must not be eroded . . . we are . . . categorically opposed to a reduction in the present benefits of wives on the grounds their husbands have high incomes (Canada, House of Commons Standing Committee on Health, Welfare and Social Affairs, 1985: (NAC) 9:9; Canada, House of Commons Finance Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs, 1987: (NAC) 86:21).

Women's groups also argued that the family allowance should not be tampered with until there is an equitable sharing of resources within the family (Canada, House of Commons Legislative Committee on Bill C-70, 1985: (NAC) 4:30; (Coalition for Family Allowances) 8:40; (Quebec Voice of Women) 8:5; (Saskatchewan Action Committee on the Status of Women) 5:8). Again, they emphasized that the family allowance was an important source of independent income, not just for some women, but for all women:

In case you say this is an unusual situation [i.e. women not having access to husband's income; women using the family allowance to get out of an abusive relationship], I will remind the committee that for people who are getting married today, the anticipated divorce rate is 40% and rising (1985: (NAC) 4: 32).

The political space available for pursuing individualization in the field of federal income security policy underwent a further closure, however, in the mid-1980s. Several macro-political and social factors operating at this time worked against the possibility of advancing a strong position on individual entitlement or a strong defense of the family allowance on the grounds of women's autonomy. Shifts in the social and economic situation of women tended to undermine the argument for women's autonomy and the gendered perspective on the family allowance. The increasing participation of women in

the labour force reduced the significance of the family allowance as a source of independent income for women and made it more difficult to mobilize women on these grounds. The rhetoric against universality by the Mulroney government and right wing ideologues may have contributed to a declining support for the family allowance. The NAC's representative on social policy, Louise Dulude, was profoundly influenced by her perception of the declining support for the universality of the family allowances, even among women.⁸⁹ The implication of this rhetoric was that a woman's interests were synonymous with those of her family. Quite possibly the women of English Canada were losing conviction in their right to the family allowance.⁹⁰

There was nevertheless a critical event in the closure of the politics of individualization and of the family allowance - one that occurred as a policy choice by feminists themselves. This choice was made in the context of central debate of the period - the reform of "child and family benefits." The NAC and CACSW - the representatives of feminism within the SPRG - chose to advance a policy position in this debate in which the family allowance had a marginal place. They endorsed the family-based child tax credit as the primary approach to income security. Their specific proposal was to eliminate the child tax exemption, increase the child tax credit and

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Dulude commented that in 1979 it was politically possible to call for increases to both the family allowance and the credit but that by the early 1980s this was no longer the case (Canada, Standing Committee on Health, Welfare and Social Affairs, 1982: 51:16).

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Some analysts of the fight to save the family allowance have argued that the English Canadian women's movement and NAC, in particular, did not sufficiently mobilize women to fight for the family allowance (Ruth Rose-Lizee, personal interview).

maintain the family allowance. While they acknowledged that this was not the ideal from the standpoint of women's groups - who wanted the family allowance increased - they had come to accept the view that such a demand was unrealistic given the fiscal concerns of the federal government:

The feelings of some of the members of the group [SPRG] are that we would, as mentioned earlier, like an increase in the family allowance but that, given the very restrictive framework of keeping the same amount of money - we are not getting any new money in - and the situation, which is that very low income families right now are in a very bad position . . . it seemed to all of us in this group that the priority should be, when this money is taken out of the exemption, to give it to poor people, because at this point their need is so obvious and crying, they are the ones who should have first call on it (Canada, House of Commons Standing Committee on Health, Welfare, and Social Affairs, 1985: (SPRG) 9:46).

The policy agenda of feminism's more powerful allies within the social policy community imposed powerful constraints on this choice. Mainstream progressive politics, as defined by the three "big" (largely male) organizations of the CCSD, NCW, and NAPO, was dominated by an agenda that prioritized vertical equity at the expense of the goals of universality and horizontal equity. Their focus was not on "principles" but on the bottom-line question of the level of benefits for the poor. Within the terms of this agenda the family allowance had become just one of several child benefit programs - part of the child benefits system of which the goal was redistribution. This left little space for any actor to pursue a politics oriented uniquely to the family allowance.

The problem was also partly that feminists were forced to compromise in a negotiating situation in which they were relatively disadvantaged. Notwithstanding the personal power of individual personalities such as Louise Dulude, women's groups were on the whole peripheral actors vis-à-vis the core group of social policy organizations.

Poverty and the design of social security programs were more peripheral concerns for women's groups than for social policy groups. Income security issues were fading in importance within the institutional women's movement given the new attention, especially for left feminists, focused on the issues of free trade and women's employment. Women's groups had fewer resources to dedicate to social policy analysis and thus were outside of the inner group of social program analysts that generated the hard analysis around which SPRG positions were formed. The CACSW, in particular, viewed involvement with the SPRG as a low-priority. By the mid-1980s it had become well populated with Tory partisans who lacked interest in social policy (Burt, 1998). Certainly, the mid-1980s president of the CACSW, Sylvia Gold, did not particularly view social policy and poverty issues as "women's issues."⁹¹

SPRG practice was guided by the "lowest common denominator" ethic, with the onus on achieving a minimum program on which all members could agree. Feminists also encountered resistance within SPRG itself to the specific issue of family versus individual entitlement. The NCW's director, Ken Battle, was resistant to feminist arguments about women's autonomy (Louise Dulude, personal interview). Feminists were willing under these conditions to forego their stake in the family allowance which pertained to the principle of autonomy and women's independent benefits. They agreed to a proposal grounded entirely in the objective of vertical equity. The policy position adopted by institutional feminism withdrew from a strategy of individualization and

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This view is based on my own experience as a researcher on social policy issues for the Council in this period.

failed to adequately represent the strength of feeling many women's groups had concerning the family allowance (i.e. many, if not most women's groups - including the CACSW - had called for increases to the family allowance). It was, once again, a moment in which feminist politics was brought into conformity with that of its more powerful policy community allies, and in which the goal of women's autonomy was subordinated to that of vertical equity.

Conclusion

This chapter has described a second moment in the shaping of the political interests of the institutionalized women's movement in federal social security policy vis-à-vis the goals of women's autonomy versus vertical equity. Despite the increasing preoccupation of feminists within the movement with the broader issues entailed in the shift towards neo-conservatism, the themes of "women and poverty" and the "feminization of poverty" continued to inform feminist belief in vertical equity and redistribution and to provide grounds for the continued, and even increased, participation of institutionalized women's organizations in the mainstream income security debate. Feminists became drawn into coalition politics with the dominant progressive social policy/anti-poverty organizations.

The critical question taken up in this chapter is to what extent the institutionalized women's movement continued to pursue the politics of autonomy in the terrain of income security programs, and with what success. The mid-1980s was a period of intense struggle over the principle of autonomous treatment for women. The key

battles took place in debates over the principle of universality, and the future of the family allowance program. Feminists of all backgrounds rose to defend universality and to conduct a politics around the family allowance that foregrounded women's right to benefits of their own.

This alternative politics of autonomy was ultimately deflected, however. The Tory and right-wing attack on universality and the family allowance eroded the ideals of autonomy and individual entitlement, and the family allowance program itself. There was a particular moment of closure, however, that occurred largely as a consequence of the policy choices made by institutionalized women's organizations themselves in the terrain of family income security. National women's organizations chose to support the family-based Child Tax Credit as an instrument for income redistribution and to assign the family allowance a token status. This choice was powerfully constrained by the political strategies and goals of feminism's allies in this terrain - the more powerful progressive social policy/anti-poverty organizations (the CCSD, NCW and NAPO). These organizations had consolidated around a defensive politics, a minimum program that prioritized measures to improve vertical equity (eg. converting tax exemptions to credits) at the expense of focusing on the principles of universality and horizontal equity. The family allowance became defined in this context as a mere component of the child benefits system whose main purpose was defined as vertical redistribution. This framework marginalized the feminist politics oriented to the family allowance as a unique program with a unique impact that had particular implications for women. It contributed to closing off the political space for women to make claims as autonomous

beings in the field of income security policy.

Strategically joining the Social Policy Reform Group was a pragmatic move by the institutionalized women's movement in the face of the regressive outlook of the Tories. Yet this negotiating situation filtered out the issues and concerns that were peripheral to the vertical equity/redistribution cause. In a context in which women's groups lacked power relative to the other actors and in which there was overt resistance to the individualization strategy, women's groups were willing to sacrifice their focus on women's autonomy. It was a moment of collaboration between primarily liberal feminism and liberal social policy organizations that confined mainstream progressive politics to a narrow, familialist redistribution framework. It was one of compromise for feminists with respect to their alternative goal of women's autonomy and strategy of individualization.

The events described in this chapter were the final straw for institutional feminism with respect to participating in the moderate politics oriented to adjusting the existing social security system. The increasing neo-liberal orientation of federal policy and the rise of socialist-feminism within the NAC led the institutionalized women's movement to adopt an approach to social policy that was more oppositional and radical, as the next chapter describes.

CHAPTER SIX

Writing Women Out: The Disappearance of a Feminist Politics of Autonomy in Federal Social Welfare Debate of the Early and Mid-1990s

Introduction

This chapter describes a third moment in the shaping of the politics of the women's movement in the field of income security. It begins with an overview of the broad social, economic, and political milieu of the period, and then turns to examine the discourses and agendas of the dominant actors in the social policy community, both state actors and the progressive sector. The period corresponds to the second mandate of the Conservative government and the early years of the Chrétien Liberal government. While there were important differences in the broad approaches of these two governments the policies of both were ultimately oriented towards the same goals: reducing the federal deficit and offloading federal responsibility for social programs. As neo-liberal thrust radicalized the broader political sphere, both governments conducted attacks on the credibility of advocacy and interest groups.

The late 1980s and early 1990s were marked by huge reductions in, and significant restructuring of, social programs. This was accompanied by a dramatic shift in official conceptions of social welfare and poverty. By the mid-1990s, social welfare programs were being portrayed as limited complements to the market rather than as parts of a safety net needed to address market failures; and the poor were cast as failures. By the mid-1990s the goal of addressing "child poverty" was central to the official discourse

on poverty and to the agenda on income security reform.

The focus of the final section of this chapter is the shaping of feminist politics in the federal sphere of social welfare policy with particular reference to the ability of the women's movement to pursue the theme of women's autonomy in this field. In the late 1980s and early 1990s the institutionalized women's movement almost completely withdrew from the mainstream political debate over social security and child benefits reform. The reasons for this were complex, and involved fundamental changes in the movement itself. An important part of the explanation, however, lay in the discursive conditions shaping mainstream debate. I argue that child poverty discourse altered the discursive terrain of social policy debate in such a way that women were no longer authorized to make claims on the basis of their poverty. This helped to undermine the women's movement as an actor in the poverty/income security sphere of policy, and to eliminate the identity "women" from mainstream social policy debate.

Economic, Social and Political Backdrop

In a context of the new global economy (i.e. increased mobility of capital, a global system of production, interdependence among nations) the Canadian economy continued to decline, falling into recession beginning in the late 1980s, which peaked in 1990-91, and was followed by a period of "jobless growth." The level of government debt and deficit had tripled between the early 1980s and early 1990s (Liberal Party of Canada, 1993: 19). The unemployment rate settled at a new average high: 10.3% in 1993, 18% for youth (Canada, Human Resources Development, 1994: 17). Family

incomes suffered their steepest and longest slide in forty years, pushing record numbers of families into poverty and leaving the average family worse off than it was in 1980 (Brodie, 1995: 74). Increasing numbers of people turned to social assistance - 3 million in March 1993 (Canada, Human Resources Development, 1994: 19).

Employment continued to be restructured towards a two-tier pattern with some "good" jobs created - i.e. full-time, skilled, well paid, unionized - and a large expansion of "bad" jobs - minimum wage, low skill, and non-standard (eg. term contracts, part-time and home-based). Women continued to mostly find jobs in the bad job sector and in part-time employment. Many feared the loss of employment (changes to UI hit women particularly hard), and many gave up looking for work altogether.

The social welfare debate of the early and mid-1990s began during the second mandate of the Mulroney Conservative government and extended through the early years of the Chrétien Liberal regime. The reelection of the Conservatives in 1988 marked a more open turn to neo-liberalism. The Tories seized on the theme of competitiveness, which provided a rationale for deficit reduction, controlling inflation rates, cuts to social programs, plans for expansion of training and labour force programs, downsizing, and enhancing productivity within the public sector (Phillips, 1994). In their 1992 Budget, the Conservatives announced their priority would be to promote greater reliance on the private sector and market forces; below this was ranked deficit reduction, inflation control, free trade, and developing a new consensus about the role of government (Brodie, 1994: 17,18).

The Liberals, elected in 1993, promised to balance a concern to reduce the deficit

with a focus on creating economic growth and employment, and promotion of human welfare (Liberal Party of Canada, 1993).⁹² Ultimately, however, the Liberals adopted much the same neo-liberal strategies and governing practices as the Tories. They ratified the North American Free Trade Agreement (without negotiating the side agreements as promised), and in their first two budgets, prioritized deficit reduction over employment and infrastructure development, and attacked social welfare programs and the system of federal-provincial cost sharing for social programs (Brodie, 1995).⁹³

The radicalization of the broader political sphere which began in the mid-1980s continued into the 1990s with popular sector groups mobilizing under the Pro-Canada Network (refounded as Action Canada Network in 1991) and playing a major and visible role in opposing Tory proposals. The GST, the 1988 election, the implementation of the free trade agreement, and the Meech Lake and Charlottetown constitutional debates provided focal points for this opposition. Women's groups, and the NAC in particular,

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The Liberal Red Book promoted a market-led transition towards the new global economic order, but also favoured state intervention to guide development (eg. an active labour market policy to reskill the labour force). It thus reflected a mix of neo-liberal and neo-statist strategies, as defined by Jessop (1993: 28-33).

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The Liberal's 1994 Budget announced a tightening of the UI program, reduced benefits, and the shift to a two-tier system. With respect to social transfers to the provinces, the Liberals froze funds to the Canada Assistance Plan and Established Programs Financing (EPF) through which federal funding is provided to the provinces for social assistance/services, health and post-secondary education. Their 1995 Budget dismantled CAP and EPF and instituted a block funding arrangement (the Canada Health and Social Transfer) that reduced the amount of federal funding for provincial social assistance, health and post-secondary education, and gave more responsibility and flexibility to the provinces for these programs. It also announced a significant change to old age pensions with the replacement of the universal Old Age Security and income-tested Guaranteed Income Supplement with a single, income-tested Seniors Benefit (see Battle and Torjman, 1995; Rice, 1995).

were especially forceful in opposing the Conservative government during the Constitutional debate - opposing both the agreement and the exclusionary, elite-driven process of negotiation adopted (Burt, 1994: 221; Bashevkin, 1996). The failure of the Charlottetown Accord went some way to discrediting the Tory method of governing by elites, and represented a major success for the popular sector and the women's movement.

The 1990s was also a period of further distancing between the federal state and the voices of the broader political system. The Conservatives embarked on a full-scale attack on the legitimacy and credibility of advocacy groups. Public interest groups were labeled "special interests": they were therefore, not representative of "real" or "ordinary" Canadians (Jenson and Phillips, 1996: 124; Brodie, 1995: 69). The 1989, 1990, and 1991 budgets announced substantial cuts in interest groups funding.⁹⁴ Jenson and Phillips have argued that there were two other aspects to the backlash against advocacy groups. Beginning in 1990 there was a shift in approach to public consultations whereby greater weight was given to the voices of individuals and less to advocacy groups (1996: 126). Also undertaken was the elimination of centres within the state bureaucracy which represented certain categories of citizens; the Tories closed down the Department of Secretary of State in 1993, cancelling and dispersing its programs (Jenson and Phillips, 1996: 120).

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The 1989 budget cut \$10 million in grants to advocacy groups (primarily women's, native, and visible minority); the 1990 budget cut \$16 million from grants to advocacy groups, including the Secretary of State Women's Program and first nations groups; the 1991 budget announced a \$75 million cut to popular sector groups for 1991, and \$125 million in 1992 (Cohen, 1997.).

While the Action Canada Network and other oppositional coalitions continue in the current period to fight the neo-liberal proposals of the Liberal government, the economic recession and repeated funding reductions and attacks on the credibility of many groups have severely weakened their influence within the universe of political discourse.

Agendas and Discourses Within the Social Policy Community

State Actors:

In their second mandate the Tories adopted a more decisive approach to reducing and dismantling social programs. At the ideological level, the Tories waged a war against the very concept of poverty. They attempted to delegitimize the accepted definition of poverty in order to eliminate the problem. In the early 1990s right-wing ideologues challenged the commonly accepted definition of poverty as a relative phenomenon and attempted to assert an absolute definition. This was the central argument of a report on poverty published by the Fraser Institute (Sarlo, 1992). The absolute model was taken up by the Senate Sub-committee on Poverty, chaired by Barbara Greene, which attempted to redefine poverty to put it in absolute terms and thereby make the case that poverty is not a serious a problem in Canada (Senate, Standing Committee on Health and Welfare, Social Affairs, Seniors and the Status of Women, Sub-committee on Poverty, 1993).⁹⁸

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This Committee was boycotted by opposition MPs and several key social policy groups.

In the late 1980s, as a result of pressures from both Canadian interest groups and the international community, the Tory government began to adopt the rhetoric of "child poverty." Internationally both the participation of Canada in the World Summit for Children in September 1990 (at which time Canada became committed to preparing an Action Plan for Children), and the December 1991 ratification of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, created a momentum within Canada for focusing on children. Internally, efforts by child poverty organizations culminated in the passing in the House of Commons of an all-party resolution to eliminate child poverty by the year 2000. In the early 1990s, child poverty became the focus of two parliamentary committees - the 1990 Senate Committee on Social Affairs, Science and Technology, and the Sub-Committee on Poverty of the House of Commons Standing Committee on Health, Welfare, Social Affairs, Seniors, and the Status of Women (which reported in 1991 and 1993 respectively). In February 1992 the Tory government announced "Brighter Futures" (in lieu of a national child care strategy), an initiative to fund and develop programs for "children at risk" (Canada, Health and Welfare Canada, 1992). The May 1992 reform of "child" benefit programs (Bill C-80) was designated part of this initiative.

The Tory approach to child poverty was for the most part contained, however, within an individualizing discourse, in which parents were blamed and the connection between the poverty of children and the unemployment or underemployment of their parents was denied. In a larger sense the child poverty theme served as a packaging strategy for helping to put a human face on the Tory agenda of reducing social spending,

dismantling universal rights and shifting responsibility for social programs to the provinces (eg. via the failed Meech Lake Accord). In a series of budget measures between 1986 and 1991, the Conservatives withdrew massive amounts of funding, cutting from federal transfers to the provinces for social assistance and services, health and post-secondary education, under EPF and CAP; making significant cuts to UI (eg. withdrawing the federal contribution to the program) and reducing the scope of the program with measures that reduced eligibility and benefit levels.⁹⁹ They eliminated universality from Old Age Security (i.e. the 1989 "clawback"), and the child benefits system (i.e. introducing a clawback on the family allowance, and then eliminating the program). They ensured the gradual erosion of the child benefit system through de-indexation. Changes were also made by the Tories to the tax system which reduced its progressivity (Battle and Torjman, 1995; Rice and Prince, 1993).

The Liberals had a more complex approach in the field of social welfare policy. They established a Social Security Review process that entailed extensive consultation with the public. A Task Force was established which held hearings across the country. A Discussion Paper (including several background documents) was prepared by Lloyd Axworthy, Minister of the newly established Department of Human Resources Development (formerly the Departments of Employment and Immigration, and Health and Welfare). These established the specific parameters for the second round of hearings

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In 1990 the Tories increased the number of weeks worked to qualify, reduced the duration of benefits and imposed heavier penalties on workers who quit their jobs without just cause; in 1993, they reduced UI benefits from 60 to 57 per cent of insurable earnings.

held by the Standing Committee on Human Resources Development (Canada, Human Resources Development Canada, 1994).¹⁰⁰ Funding was provided to groups to allow them to make presentations at the hearings, although as Jenson and Phillips point out, the Review was careful about giving undue attention to groups as opposed to individuals.¹⁰¹

The announcement of the Social Security Review and the issuing of the Axworthy Discussion Paper suggested a greater focus on social policy and a turn back towards social liberal doctrine. The Review engaged with notions of equal opportunity, a safety net that did not stigmatize, and redistribution (the GAI was one of the options advanced). It identified "tackling child poverty" as one of its two main goals, and acknowledged that child poverty could only be solved by solving parental unemployment. It was social liberalism with a difference, however. The Liberals favoured a strong targeting orientation, and viewed the role of the social welfare system as providing a safety net for those who fail to find their niche in the market economy, rather than protecting against the failure of the market. Following on the approach adopted by the Macdonald Commission, the Tories (with respect to training and unemployment insurance), and by the OECD and the ECC (1992), the Axworthy Discussion Paper advocated active rather than passive measures, preferring the metaphor of the trampoline or springboard that

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The Standing Committee on Human Resources Development held hearings on the "social security review" in February and March 1994. A second round of these hearings were held in Fall 1994 and the Committee's final report was published in January 1995 (Canada, Standing Committee on Human Resources Development, 1995).

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HRD distributed \$4.2 million of funding to 165 national, regional and local non-profit groups to enable them to participate in the process (Banting, 1994: 133).

bounces people back into the labour market, rather than the safety-net:

The traditional approach to social security has centred on providing income support and basic services to those in need. This "safety net" approach is incomplete. . . (Canada, HRDC, 1994: 25).¹⁰²

A fundamental altering of the social welfare system was recommended to place the emphasis on employability, adaptability, and self-reliance, and removing disincentives to work through "active measures" such as counselling, training, relocation:

Our aspiration is to build a social security system that enables all Canadians. . . to exploit their talents, lead fulfilling lives, and experience the dignity of work. . . (Ibid.).

Government support would be targeted only to those who ". . . demonstrate a willingness and commitment to self-help" (Ibid.).

The approach was antithetical to the concept of universal citizenship rights, and had an implicit sub-text that distinguished the deserving from the undeserving. It took the focus off poverty and put it on a distinction between the competent or "good" citizens who achieve self-reliance (by getting and keeping a job, or being adaptable enough to acquire skills and move into new jobs as the demand changes), and the incompetent or "bad" citizens who "have difficulty" and are "dependent" on social benefits (Brodie, 1994: 57; 1995: 61). This distinction underlay the proposals for changes to the UI system, for instance, according to which lower benefits would be provided to "frequent"

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The Mulroney government had previously adopted this language in its training initiative announced in April 1989 ("Adjusting to Win"). The approach advocated took the emphasis off "passive" ("inefficient") measures such as unemployment insurance and placed it on "active" measures, such as training. This approach ultimately justified their move to withdraw the federal contribution to UI funding (Mahon, 1990).

as opposed to "occasional" claimants. Moreover, the flip side of the emphasis on individual responsibility and self-reliance, was that individuals were to blame for their own poverty. The discourse individualized and pathologized social problems. The view extolled was that individuals could reduce the risk of poverty by making better personal decisions, such as "staying in school," "delaying child bearing," or "avoiding marriage breakdown." It was a view that was first clearly articulated in the Macdonald Commission Report, and had been explicitly expressed in a report by the Economic Council of Canada in the early 1990s:

Society as a whole should . . . put more effort into encouraging the kinds of individual decisions that will lead to personal success (1992: 55).

People should also save for "a rainy day" so that, when they "experience earnings difficulties," they can "utilize those savings" (1992: 57). The implication was that the poor were a problem group and a burden on the public purse and society. They were represented as a distinct sub-set of society; distinguishable from the average or ordinary person:

[o]nly a small proportion of the population is truly destitute and has no opportunity for achieving some level of self-sufficiency (1992: 18);

[u]nemployment and the associated poverty are not equally distributed. . . Two out of three Canadians will never be poor in their working lives. For the other third, however, spells of joblessness and poverty are a reality. Within this group, there is a growing segment that is poor and/or unemployed for prolonged periods (1992: 54).

This discourse also had a particular gender inflection. It substantially broke with the breadwinner ideology of previous eras. Women were "commodified," like men, as workers. This was evident in the Axworthy Discussion Paper's treatment of "the

problem" of single mothers. This was framed as the problem of how to get them off welfare and into the labour market. Single mothers were expected to achieve "self-reliance," and to "leap successfully from social assistance to the independence of a job - even a low-paying one . . ." (Canada, Human Resources Development, 1994: 47, 70).¹⁰³ Apart from references to single mothers, however, women had little visibility in this discourse (Evans, 1997). The discussion focused on the gender-neutral categories of families, parents, children, workers, citizens, etc. The only exception to this gender neutrality was the tendency to single out lone mothers, who were recognized as a welfare problem, and as implicated in the child poverty concern (eg. if "young single mothers" did not leap to the independence of a job they risked passing on to their children "a cycle of low achievement and joblessness" (Ibid.). For the most part, however, the new construction did not recognize the extra barriers that single mothers faced and, therefore, tended to individualize their failures and blame them for their poverty. The new tendency was one of pathologizing single mothers and defining them as undeserving (Brodie, 1996; Evans, 1996).

The Liberal policy agenda with respect to social programs was ultimately dictated by the Department of Finance. The Social Security Review process was pre-empted by the Finance Minister's 1995 budget. The budget directed Liberal social policy back onto the neo-liberal track adopted by the Tories, with the emphasis on cutting social programs

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There was also less tolerance in society generally for the idea of single mothers staying home to care for their young children. This reflected the socioeconomic reality that most mothers, even in two-earner households, had to be employed in order to maintain their standard of living.

to solve the deficit problem and limiting the federal government's responsibility for social welfare provision. Guided by this fiscal agenda, the Liberal government pursued a course of restructuring and reprivatization; the agenda included reducing the costs of social welfare ("limit its fiscal exposure") by targeting benefits to only the most needy, cutting or eliminating them for middle-income people, and shifting the burden of paying for social benefits to the provinces, municipalities, and families. The Finance Minister announced substantial changes including: major cuts to transfer payments to the provinces for health, education and social assistance; the establishment of a new funding mechanism (the Canada Health and Social Transfer) which gave less money and more responsibility to the provinces for the delivery of these services and benefits; and huge cuts in public sector jobs, and to the UI program (Battle and Torjman, 1995; Cohen, 1997).

The one area that the Liberals left open for discussion was reform of the child benefits program. "Taking children off of welfare" was touted as one of the attractive features of a new national child benefit proposed by the Axworthy Review - a reform motivated by the desire to reduce social assistance costs. This became the focus of discussions between federal ministers and the provincial ministers and premiers in 1996/97 (Freiler, 1996).

Progressive Actors:

While advocacy groups generally were being viewed with hostility by government by the early 1990s, some groups did manage to retain credibility as spokespersons on

governmental clients.¹⁰⁴ The NCW continued to function, but with the resignation of its director, Ken Battle, it no longer had the profile of a core advocacy group. In early 1992 Battle received funding through a private foundation (Maytree Foundation) to head up a small non-partisan social policy "think-tank," the Caledon Institute of Social Policy. This organization became a high profile player in the federal social welfare debates mainly due to the credibility of its director and because of its willingness to work with and for the federal Liberals (i.e. it was mainly responsible for designing Liberal proposals for a new Seniors Benefits and the Child Tax Credit). The NAPO, led by Lynn Toupin, was one of the few social policy organizations in the mid-1990s that managed to retain its federal funding.¹⁰⁵

There had been a reconfiguration of this sector beginning in the late 1980s as the SPRG was disbanded and new players came to occupy prominent positions as anti-poverty actors.¹⁰⁶ The incorporation of the concern about child poverty" into the federal

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The CCSD enhanced its statistical research capabilities with the establishment of the in-house "Centre for International Statistics on Economic and Social Welfare for Families and Children" which now generates contract money that accounts for 80% of its funding. Its contracts are mainly with the federal and provincial government (especially HRDC), and other non-governmental organizations, such as Campaign 2000, the Vanier Institute, the Caledon Institute, United Way, SPCMT, Canadian Child Care Federation, One Voice Seniors Network (Splane, 1996: 122). There has been a continuity from the mid-1980s in the leadership of the CCSD: Patrick Johnston, active in the SPRG as director of the NAPO became director of the CCSD in the early 1990s, followed by David Ross, the CCSD's key researcher during the 1980s.

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The NAPO's director, Lynn Toupin was held in high esteem by the Minister of Finance, Paul Martin (personal communication, Katherine Scott, Policy Associate, CCSD, March 1997).

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The SPRG was disbanded in 1989 as the fear that the Tories would dismantle social programs had dissipated and the structure was viewed by its members as no longer serving a useful purpose

agenda in the early and mid-1990s placed the CPAG and other child poverty organizations in the forefront of the social policy community. By the mid-1990s the CPAG was a self-confident spokesgroup on poverty with a fully articulated vision and agenda for reform of social security.¹⁰⁷ Its main concern was that the poverty rate of families was increasing (due, they argued, to government economic policies) and that children were the prime victims. They estimated that between 1980 and 1984 the number of children living in poverty had increased by one-third (CPAG, 1986: 1). It sought a program of prevention of poverty through provision of appropriate employment and an income support program for parents and their children, and other changes to taxation, education, daycare, etc. Its agenda emphasized the values of universality, horizontal equity, and the principle of social responsibility for children. It was among the few social policy organizations in the mid-1990s that had credibility within federal circles, and was among the organizations that received funding from HRDC to develop options for a reformed child benefits system.

To the extent that the progressive anti-poverty community can be said to have had a cohesive political strategy in the early and mid-1990s it was to advance a progressive agenda of income security and employment opportunities under the theme of the need to address child poverty. The focus on child poverty was viewed by these groups to some extent as a pragmatic public relations strategy - a way of giving poverty a "human face"

(Louise Dulude, Terrence Hunsley, personal interviews).

¹⁰⁷

The CPAG became very active publishing position papers (eg. CPAG, 1991; CPAG, 1994, 1994a).

in order to win public support and keep pressure on the federal government to preserve and protect - even expand - social security. The child poverty theme was used to advance a particular social politics. Child poverty campaigners were dedicated to the values of universality, horizontal equity, and the principle of social responsibility for children. They were committed to stemming the tide towards targeting. With the other mainstream social policy organizations consumed with the technicalities of social policy, the emergence of child poverty activists represented a return to a discussion of fundamental principles - a revisiting of the issue of "universality versus selectivity."

Child poverty groups held up the family allowance program as the program of choice - the one universal program that until 1989 was designed to address the issue of horizontal equity. They viewed the reductions to (and clawback of) this program as a withdrawal of federal support for mainstream, middle and modest-income families (eg. Canada, Senate, Standing Committee on Social Affairs, Science and Technology, 1989-90: (CPAG) 21:40; (Group of Seven) 20:21). They attacked the child tax benefit program introduced in Bill C-80, seeing it as a nail in the coffin of universality, a serious abrogation of the principle of horizontal equity, and a withdrawal of federal commitment to children and parents and from the principle of social responsibility for childraising (eg. Canada, House of Commons Legislative Committee on Bill C-80, 1991-92: (CPAG/SPCMT) 5:27; (Vanier Institute), 6:76; Canada, Senate, Standing Committee on Social Affairs, Science and Technology, 1989-90: (Vanier Institute) 21:65).

The discourse of child poverty advocates also reflected a progressive view of the family and women's roles. They rejected the narrow gender role prescriptions of the

earlier period, advancing as a norm the dual-breadwinner family. Within this vision women tended to be positioned as secondary family earners (Canada, Senate, Standing Committee on Social Affairs, Science and Technology, 1989-90: (Group of Seven) 20:25). Yet women and gender had little visibility within this discourse. The main categories of concern were "families" and "children." Its vision and policy solutions rested on a conceptualization of a "life-cycle" consisting only of childhood, prospective parenthood, and parenthood (Canada, House of Commons Standing Committee on Human Resources Development, 1994: (CPAG) 7:128). Within this family-centred and gender-neutral framework even affirmative action and pay equity were viewed as remedies to "family" poverty:

We would . . . like to recommend . . . equity in affirmative action program. . . . If more and more women are entering the workforce, particularly in order to earn a second income for the family and thereby keep the family from poverty, it does not make sense that those women are not earning a sufficient wage to ensure that actually happens. Since this is obviously a family goal, it would be good if society could match that goal by ensuring that the wages that women earn have real value to the family . . . (Canada, Senate, Standing Committee on Social Affairs, Science and Technology, 1989-90: (Group of Seven) 20:25).

Similarly, unpaid work in the home was defined by child poverty advocates as the work of "families" and its recognition important for giving "parents" a choice to stay home to care for their children or to work for pay. Gender was largely ignored as a structural variable which contributed to poverty.¹⁰⁸ To the extent that single parents were still a visible category, child poverty discourse tended to construct them in gender-blind terms as well (eg. the suggestion that "lone parents" be added to the list of designated groups

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See especially Unequal Futures (CPAG, 1991).

for affirmative action (Canada, House of Commons Standing Committee on Human Resources Development, 1994: (Maureen Baker) 14:30)). Single parent poverty was conceptualized as just another type of family poverty (eg. Campaign 2000, 1992; 1994; 1995).

Not all social policy groups were initially willing to participate in the child poverty thrust. Some (eg. the NAPO) believed that the focus on children would place categories of poor in competition with each other. Some groups were not happy with the family-centred orientation of the child poverty focus. Others viewed the emphasis on universality as "pie in the sky" given the orientation of governments (eg. the Caledon Institute held to a view that favoured more targeting to achieve more benefits for the poor and, by 1992, it had abandoned the principle of universality).¹⁰⁹ There was, indeed, some ongoing tension within the child poverty movement itself over whether to push for a strongly universalistic system versus a more targeted one (Christa Freiler, Brigitte Kitchen, personal interviews).

Nevertheless, by the early 1990s a critical mass of social policy and anti-poverty

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Universality was no longer a necessary feature of the reforms being advanced by the Caledon Institute of Social Policy. As Ken Battle told the Legislative Committee on Bill C-80 (which eliminated the family allowance):

If I have to choose between universality and improving benefits for the poor, I'll choose improving benefits for the poor (Canada, House of Commons Legislative Committee on Bill C-80, 1991-92: (Caledon) 2:14);
He affirmed this position again during the 1994 hearings:

I am much more supportive of selective benefits. . . in terms of income security benefits, child benefits, benefits for the elderly, I very much believe in gearing them to need and income (Canada, House of Commons Standing Committee on Human Resources Development, 1994: (Caledon) 3:22).

This was a departure from the position Ken Battle had taken in 1990 as director of the NCW, at which time he had advocated a universal, but targeted child benefits program (NCW, 1990).

groups had become aligned with the child poverty project. Indeed, this was the result of a considerable organizing effort that had begun in the mid and late-1980s. A conscious effort had been made, and considerable funds expended, in organizing a network of groups at the national level willing to focus on the child poverty theme. The CPAG had carried out the first stage in this organizing work in the late 1980s, resulting in a "Group of Seven" social policy organizations with a commitment to undertake public education and to lobby the federal government on the theme of child poverty.¹¹⁰ In 1988 this group had held a press conference and published a series of fact sheets and a position paper on child poverty (Group of Seven, 1988).¹¹¹ The CCSD had subsequently become involved in researching and publishing Campaign 2000's annual publication.¹¹² Child poverty became a regular feature of mainstream poverty reports such as the CCSD's 1989 and 1994 fact books.¹¹³ The child poverty focus was grounded in data on the rapid growth in

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The "Group of Seven" was made up of organizations primarily concerned with families and children, including the CPAG, the Vanier Institute on the Family, the Family Service Canada, the Canadian Child Welfare Association, the Canadian Council on Children and Youth, the Canadian Institute of Child Health. It also included longstanding social policy/anti-poverty organizations, such as CCSD.

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The all-party resolution that was by Ed Broadbent, and passed through the House of Commons, was evidently due to the lobbying efforts of groups like the CPAG, CCSD and CCCY.

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The CCSD's Centre of International Statistics had the contract with the Laidlaw Foundation to produce Campaign 2000's annual Report Card on child poverty (Campaign 2000, 1992, 1994, 1995).

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Richard Shillington, a key researcher with the CCSD, was an author and key spokesperson for Campaign 2000's 1996 child benefit reform proposal.

child poverty in Canada (i.e. from 15.1% of children in 1981 to 18.2% in 1991 (CCSD, 1994: 122)).¹¹⁴

This organizing and mobilizing effort continued into the 1990s through the work of Campaign 2000. Campaign 2000 was established in 1991 by the CPAG with funding from the Laidlaw Foundation for the specific purpose of building a national coalition to keep child poverty in the public eye (ostensibly to keep pressure on government to follow through on their 1989 pledge to end child poverty by year 2000).¹¹⁵ Forty-five social policy and child welfare organizations came together, including several national organizations (the CPAG, CCCY, CCSD, and later, the NAPO), and community organizations (especially social planning councils). Campaign 2000 organizers claimed a membership in 1997 of 49 organizations (including 19 national organizations) (Popham, et. al., 1997).

By the early and mid-1990s there was evidence of the success of the child poverty movement: the federal and provincial governments had been won over to the idea of revising the child benefit system. The main goal of child poverty and other progressive social policy organizations in this period was to influence the direction of reform to the

¹¹⁴

According to Esping-Andersen, Canada's child poverty growth rate was high compared to European and Scandinavian countries, but modest in comparison with other welfare states undertaking a "liberal" strategy (i.e. a rise of 3% in the 1980s for two-parent families, as compared to a rise of 10% in the U.S. and U.K. (1996: 29, footnote 16).

¹¹⁵

A co-ordinator was hired in 1991 to work half time for CPAG and half-time for Campaign 2000. Organizing proceeded via community "soundings" which brought together local people concerned about poverty, particularly child poverty, and then a national level sounding with representatives from each province. CPAG remained a core group behind Campaign 2000, producing most of its analysis.

child benefits system. Key fora of debate were the 1992 hearings on Bill C-80 (legislation that introduced the child tax benefit) and the 1994 social security review hearings. The terms of the debate were narrow, however, especially by 1994. Governments set tight fiscal limitations on the initiative and assumed an orientation of greater targeting. The discussion was thus narrowed down to a debate over the level of funding for the new program and which income groups would be targeted.

In the context of these debates (especially by 1994), child poverty organizations expressed a more modified stand on universality. According to one spokesperson for the CPAG, it was not interested in "moral victories", but a genuine improvement in benefits for the poor. At the 1994 hearings the CPAG steered clear of the term "universality" and expressed a willingness to settle for a targeted system - one that at least provided for middle- to low-income parents:

. . . In 1986, when we came out with our first policy paper, we called for a universal child income credit. . . Eight years later there is a different political climate. . . What we're prepared to go to bat for is making sure that the incomes and living standards of modest and median-income families are protected, which I would think would be something that this government would support (Canada, House of Commons Standing Committee on Human Resources Development, 1994: (CPAG) 33:53).¹¹⁶

What became important to the CPAG, in the context of the discussion of a new national child benefit, were the principles of "public responsibility for children" and "horizontal

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By way of contrast to child poverty and mainstream social policy organizations the CLC continued to support the principle of universality in response to the 1994 Green Paper (Canada, House of Commons Standing Committee on Human Resources Development, 1994: (CLC) 32:22).

equity" between families with and without children (Freiler, 1996: 112).

The Shaping of Feminist Social Welfare Politics

The changes that had begun to take place in the mid-1980s within the women's movement, and in the NAC in particular, were in full evidence by the late 1980s and early 1990s. The NAC was by the 1990s diverse, broadly-focused, and left-wing. Marginalized women had achieved a greater voice within the NAC in the 1990s, which led to a greater sensitivity to and movement towards a politics of diversity and inclusion, especially by the time of the 1992 constitutional debate (Findlay, 1998). By 1991 the NAC had reserved one fifth of its executive positions for women from disabled, Aboriginal or visible minority backgrounds (Bashevkin, 1996: 222). Socialist-feminists and labour/union oriented women had by then become dominant in the NAC's leadership, a turning point for this having been the election of Lynn Kaye as President in 1988 (Studies in Political Economy, 1994: 57). According to Bashevkin, feminist activists generally were divided at this point (especially during the years after 1988) between militants who saw little reason to co-operate with the Conservatives, and pragmatists who were concerned about the consequences of further polarization of the movement from government (1996: 236). The NAC had established a closer connection to union and working class women, and to labour organizations, through its participation in the Action Canada Network and other coalitions opposing free trade and the Meech Lake and Charlottetown Accords (Studies in Political Economy, 1994). The NAC developed a closer relationship with the CLC, which entailed working together on an ad hoc basis.

By 1995 only 27% of the NAC's annual budget came from federal sources, (down from nearly 90% during the early 1980s), and it was operating with the highest deficit since its inception.¹¹⁷ The research capacity of the NAC and other women's organizations and their ability to intervene in policy debates (the NAC had become much more reliant on volunteer efforts) had been severely undermined.

On the terrain of social policy this was a moment in which institutionalized feminism fully disengaged from the "mainstream" progressive social policy community, with its focus on poverty, and the issue of social security reform. This shift can be dated to the withdrawal of the NAC from the SPRG in the late 1980s - an event that occurred at the same time as the composition of the NAC's leadership shifted to include more labour-oriented feminists.¹¹⁸ The NAC's interest and involvement in income security and child benefits reform issues diminished quickly from this point (Louise Dulude, personal interview).¹¹⁹

The full explanation for this withdrawal is, however, complex. The most immediate and practical explanation is that the institutionalized women's movement

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The NAC's deficit for the year ending March 1994 was more than \$60,000 (Bashevkin, 1998: 225).

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The CACSW quit the SPRG earlier.

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Dulude's account of the ending of the NAC's involvement in the SPRG suggests that it was a moment when labour-oriented feminists gained power over more liberal and moderate feminists: "When a meeting of SPRG was called while I was past-president, I called Lynn Kaye to say that I was willing to go, but was told that this would not do, even though the issues to be discussed were not controversial. No one else was sent in my place, and as far as I know that was the end of NAC's association with SPRG . . ." (personal interview).

simply lost interest in social security reform as an important strategy for women. There were a number of macro-political factors that contributed to feminist withdrawal from this policy terrain. The deteriorating situation with respect to women's employment put labour issues in the forefront of the feminist agenda, and the greater influence of union women within the NAC - at the level of its committees and executive - meant there was relatively more interest in employment-oriented strategies (e.g. those that would improve employment opportunities, pay, and childcare, etc.) and less interest in social security as a solution for women. Many "working" and union women had ambivalence towards income security programs: such benefits did not obviously fit into their broader demand for equality in employment and some viewed it as a form of wage supplementation, benefitting only a select group of women (i.e. women at home) (Barbara Cameron, Christa Freiler, personal interviews).¹²⁰ Moreover, by the early 1990s the family allowance program had lost much of its significance as a solution for women. With a growing proportion of women in the labour force, the importance of the family allowance as a source of independent income for women had diminished. The relative value of the family allowance had also declined since the mid-1980s due to changes made to the program by the Tories (i.e. its partial deindexation in 1985 and the introduction of a clawback in 1989).

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The ambivalence of labour-oriented women to family benefits was evident in 1988 when a discussion paper on government programs for parents with young children prepared by Dulude was rejected at the NAC's 1988 AGM. According to Dulude, "The problem was that women who were mostly labour-force oriented could not agree to an expansion of the benefits of women at home. I did not pursue these issues after that . . ." (personal interview).

More fundamentally, however, the women's movement became more interested in a broader strategy of resisting neo-liberal policy and practices. Feminists were concerned with the general detrimental impact of Tory policy on women - and, in the area of social programs, the most immediate concern was the broad issue of the dismantling of social programs through the withdrawal of federal funding and the shifting of responsibility to other levels of government such that national standards would no longer be guaranteed. There was a recognition that the reduction of social services assumed and reinforced a situation in which families (especially women) would take up the slack in the burden of care work, which on a practical level would undermine women's employment participation and their prospects for equality. The federal downloading of responsibility for social policy to the provinces would allow provincial governments, equally obsessed with reducing their deficits, to undermine social assistance, which would particularly affect women, especially single mothers. From the vantage point of this broader focus feminists tended to view the reform of family/child benefits as a narrow and limited concern. This greater breadth of focus also meant that there were many more policy issues to be attended to. The limited ability of women's organizations to address all the issues meant that the movement's resources were spread thin. Some policy struggles necessarily fell off the agenda, and this may have been a factor in the withdrawal of feminism from the terrain of income security debate.

There may also have been some perception or hope by feminists that other progressive organizations were already representing women's interests in any debates about reforming income security programs. Child poverty organizations had a high

profile and were a credible and respected voice in this policy area. Although women's groups objected strongly to the focus of these groups on child poverty - as if children existed separately from their families, and mothers - they nevertheless broadly perceived these organizations as allies in the context of the late 1980s. They were allies in challenging the single-breadwinner brand of familialism that was being promoted in this period by right-wing politicians (the Tory "Family Caucus" and the Reform Party) and by REAL women. They advanced many of the same messages and demands as women's organizations for example: defending universality and the principle of social responsibility for children; and calling for a national child care system, equal pay for work of equal value, job creation, training, a policy of full employment, affirmative action, pay equity, and so on. Moreover, their actual proposals for reform of child benefits would address the poverty of single mothers.

Explanations for the withdrawal of feminism from the mainstream social policy debate can also be found, however, in analyses of the discursive conditions of this period. One such explanation is that the deserving status of single mothers was undermined by the neo-liberal distinction between "good," self-reliant, citizens, and "bad," dependent or needy, citizens (Brodie, 1996: Evans, 1996). Single mothers (and indeed, women generally) fell disproportionately in the latter category. This, then, may have undermined the claims-making basis of women in the terrain of poverty policy.

Another explanation, which I develop here, brings into focus the discourse of the social policy terrain, and specifically, the discursive constructions of feminism's more powerful allies within the terrain of mainstream poverty debate. The women's movement

struggled to defend women's interests in a universe of political discourse that, from the late 1980s onwards, was dominated by the issue and language of child poverty. The establishment of the child poverty issue as the central focus of poverty debate altered the discursive landscape of poverty/social welfare politics in a way that imposed closure on women's ability to make independence claims or, indeed, to make claims on behalf of the identity "women" at all. It did this by introducing a language and vision that wrote women out of the poverty story. With the adoption of child poverty as an official concern of governments, women and gender were purged from the poverty story. The invisibility of women and gender in this discourse eliminated the original grounds for feminist intervention in poverty and social security reform and, thus, undermined the ability of the women's movement to make gender-based claims at all in this policy sphere. Women were effectively disqualified as a voice on poverty and, therefore, in the debate on income security reform.

The hearings on Bill C-80 were a critical turning point in both the entrenchment of child poverty discourse in this policy sphere and in the ability of feminists to make gender-specific claims in the discussion of income security reform. Bill C-80 proposed the elimination of universality from family benefits and the institution of a child benefit targeted to the poor. The proposed legislation and ensuing discussion were framed in terms of addressing child poverty. Women were no longer viewed as a relevant constituency. Thus, one of the arguments repeatedly used by the Finance Department in introducing this legislation was that putting benefits on the basis of family-income would be fairer to children and a fairer way to determine need as regards families. According to

federal officials:

There is no question that family income is a more equitable basis for directing assistance to children (Canada, Parliament, House of Commons, 1992: (John McDermid, for the Minister of Finance) 13217;

We believe family income is a better basis on which to direct assistance to the children most in need (Canada, House of Commons Legislative Committee on Bill C-80, 1991-92: (Donald Frank Mazankowski, Minister of Finance) 1:19;

Family income has been widely regarded as being a better measure of a family's needs for child benefits (Canada, Senate, Standing Committee on Social Affairs, Science and Technology, 1992-93: (Ian Bennett, Senior Assistant Deputy Minister, Tax Policy Branch, Department of Finance) 21:12;

Under the new system, benefits will be based on family income, which is a better measure of a family's resources. This will ensure that benefits are directed on the basis of need (1992-93: John Horton McDermid, Minister of State (Finance and Privatization)) 23:9).¹²¹

Even some progressive social policy analysts supported this move.¹²² There was no consideration of the question of women's autonomy.

While feminists disputed the simplistic focus on children they were willing in this

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This thinking also had its roots in the views of the Tory "family caucus" which had argued that the family allowance was unfair because of its discriminatory effect on single breadwinner families relative to two-earner ones (a situation that the Tories themselves had created in 1989 with the institution of the clawback).

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Some progressives with an interest in design were also troubled by the effect of the clawback and supported the move to family-income testing (eg. "One of the advantages I see of the proposals . . . is that they will put the child benefit system on a fairer and more consistent family income basis. One of the problems with the current system is that you have a mish-mash of income tests operating, an incredibly complicated mish-mash of income tests. . . . From a design point of view, you get a pretty undesirable mix of rules. . . The new system, to the extent that it puts most of the benefits on the same consistent family income basis, I think is a good thing and a step forward . . ." (Canada, House of Commons Legislative Committee on Bill C-80, 1991-92: (Ken Battle, Caledon Institute) 2:7).

debate to align themselves with the child poverty cause in order to participate in the defense of universality and the principle of social responsibility for children, and to argue for a strong federal presence in income security programs. It was a moment, however, in which even feminists at least temporarily abandoned "women" in favour of addressing the needs of "families" and "children." Thus some of the NAC's presentations on Bill C-80 focused on the issue of child poverty (eg. Canada, Senate, Standing Committee on Social Affairs, Science and Technology, 1992-93: (NAC) 22:120; Canada, House of Commons Legislative Committee on Bill C-80, 1991-92: (NAC) 6:35, 37). The concern with respect to the elimination of universality and horizontal equity was expressed as a concern on behalf of families rather than women (eg. "universal recognition of all families' costs of raising children" (Canada, House of Commons Legislative Committee on Bill C-80, 1991-92: (NAC) 6:37). The family allowance was discussed as money for children and families, without reference to its significance for women (1991-92: (NAC) 6:32).

It marked the further abandonment by feminists of the strategy of individualization vis-à-vis income security benefits. The issue of individual entitlement to the family allowance continued to provide a focal point for some grassroots women's groups, who argued that the economic independence provided by this benefit provided a life-saving buoy to women and children susceptible to violence in the home and that its loss would increase the risk of these women and children (eg. 1991-92: (RAIF), 16/7/92, 8:46; York, 1992), but this issue was ignored by national women's organizations such as the NAC, CACSW, and NAWL

The 1994 Social Security Review Report and hearings were a further moment in the eclipsing of women (and indeed, gender) within poverty/social security discourse, and in the diminution of the ability of the women's movement to make gender-specific claims. The incorporation of the child poverty issue into the framework of these discussions (i.e. the HRD Discussion document established "reducing child poverty" as the central goal of reform) substantially erased all traces of the discourse on "women and poverty." Children replaced single mothers as the deserving poor. Where poverty discussion had once been a sphere in which the disadvantages that women experience in the labour market and the added burden of unpaid work had been visible, the child poverty focus obscured such specificities. There was no acknowledgement that single mothers faced more barriers than any other able-bodied adults in the quest for self-reliance. Women's low wages or lack of decent jobs were diagnosed as the result of lack of education, training, and work experience. Thus was facilitated a shift towards gender-neutrality, and indeed, phallocentricity, in which the existence of "difference" per se was denied altogether, and equality was assumed.¹²³ The HRD Discussion paper did not acknowledge the structural barriers that impede non-white-male individuals. Gender-neutral parents were expected to be self-supporting for the sake of the children.¹²⁴

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Brodie has also made this point (1996: 134, 135). According to Brodie a discourse is "phallogentric" when highly gendered social agents or processes are represented as universals and genderless abstractions, such as "worker," "entrepreneur," "efficiency," and "competition" (1994: 48).

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A similar observation has been made by Brodie (1996).

These were the turning points, then, for feminist involvement in the political preoccupations of the mainstream progressive social policy and child poverty community. The issue of poverty no longer afforded a focus on women. Women's groups began to define their stake in income security reform on the grounds of "equality," flagging the threat to women's equality and independence posed by the withdrawal of public provision of social programs and social services and the lack of decent jobs. "Equality" replaced "poverty" as the keyword in the feminist presentations on social security reform beginning in the 1992 hearings on the proposed child tax benefit program and continuing through the 1994 social security review hearings:

I will not limit my comments to the substance of Bill C-80, but shall talk about social programs in a broader context and particularly the impact of the erosion of social programs for women. It is our view that the changes to the system of children's benefits must be seen in the broader context of women's equality. . . (Canada, Senate, Standing Committee on Social Affairs, Science and Technology, 1992-93: (NAC) 22:120);

There has to be a commitment to creating equality in this country. Social programs play a critical role in creating equality, particularly for women. Women's equality needs to be central in considering any review of social policy in this country (Canada, House of Commons Standing Committee on Human Resources Development, 1994: (NAC) 4:15).¹²⁵

The feminist strategy to focus on the issue of equality, however, was not so much a focus on a broader agenda as it was a defensive stance - a desperate attempt to reinsert

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The NAC and NAWL were the main national women's organizations representing women's interests in these fora. The NAC organized a two-day conference on the social security review in Regina in fall of 1994, funded by the Department of Human Resources Development, and attended by women's groups across the country. Some regional groups also mobilized in order to participate in the 1994 social security review hearings (eg. the Manitoba Women's Coalition on Social Policy).

the identity "women" back into the policy discussion. It was a fallback strategy. While feminism was on the defensive generally within the neo-liberal political climate, the women's movement was especially forced to defend first principles - the notion of equality at the very core of feminism - in the sphere of income security policy.

From the standpoint of the mid- to late 1990s, however, the shift to an "equality" frame has been a case of "too little . . . too late" in challenging the gender-blindness of the debate. It has not allowed for the participation of feminists at the level of discussion in which the mainstream social policy community is engaged (i.e. reform of the child benefits system). The women's movement is no longer considered a player in policy discussions oriented to income security reform, particularly, the design of a national child benefit program. It continues to be virtually absent from the central discussion of the mainstream social policy community taking place in the last few years concerning a new national child tax benefit program. The focus on equality constitutes claims-making pitched at a more general level, and is out of step with that of other progressive social policy organizations. Thus the women's movement is not only being perceived by governments as radical, adversarial, and irrelevant (in keeping with the general backlash by governments against the women's movement), it is also being perceived as such by its allies in the progressive social policy community.¹²⁶

It was in this context that the 1996 NAC/CLC initiative, "Women's March Against

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Patrick Johnston (former director of the NAPO) described the NAC as having chosen a radical route, and having questionable tactics. Christa Freiler (of the CPAG) described the NAC as never having evolved from the 1960s, in terms of its tactics (Patrick Johnston, Christa Freiler, personal interviews).

Poverty," took place. The March was an attempt by the women's and labour movement to broaden public discussion on poverty from the narrow focus on children and child benefits. The March protested high unemployment and the neo-liberal off-loading of federal responsibility for social programs onto provincial and municipal governments and individual families. Its demands included: jobs "with a future, for women;" a reinforcement of national social programs and standards, including a Canada Social Security Act, a national child care program, and the restoration of funding to UI; and the funding of services addressing issues of justice, such as male violence. The "Women's March" was largely ignored, however, by the federal government and the media, while other progressive actors viewed the event as "coming out of left field" and having no connection with the politics of the mainstream anti-poverty community (Christa Freiler, personal interview).

Child poverty groups are in the current (late 1990s) period the new authorities on poverty; they have ownership of this issue - even the question of the gender impact of poverty. Recent project funding for gender analysis of social programs was allocated by Status of Women Canada to social policy and child poverty groups such as the CCSD and CPAG (personal communication, K. Scott, March 1997; Christa Freiler, personal interview). The absence of the feminist voice in this area of struggle has in turn reinforced the practice of ignoring gender as a variable - even within the progressive community. Thus for instance a feminist perspective is missing from the responses of

this community to the Axworthy discussion paper (eg. Caledon, 1994; 1995).¹²⁷

Conclusion

This chapter has described a third moment in the shaping of feminist social welfare politics, and a period of further closure of the feminist politics of autonomy in this field. In this period, the institutionalized women's movement largely ceased to identify with the goals and central political project of the mainstream progressive social policy/anti-poverty community. Part of the explanation lies in the re-orientation of women's movements politics towards a more radical, left-leaning and diverse agenda that reflected the dominance of socialist-feminism and union women within the movement (specifically, the NAC) and the greater representation of minority women. The new emphasis was on the broad neo-liberal policies being imposed by federal and provincial governments with their profound impact on women's employment and equality. In a context where the very foundations of national social programs were being dismantled - with enormous implications for women - the debate over reform of the child benefit system appeared narrow and limited. Feminists may have also had some confidence that the progressive platform of child poverty organizations would serve to advance and safeguard women's interests in any discussion of social security reform.

While these may have been important factors underlying the withdrawal of feminism from the terrain of debate concerned with reform of income security programs,

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This was pointed out by Therese Jennissen (Jennissen, 1996).

discursive conditions were also important. Neo-liberal discourse undermined the deserving status of single mothers, and through its targeting focus, pathologized needy women and thus undermined the claims of the women's movement in the terrain of poverty policy.

I have argued, however, that there is still more to this story, which is revealed by focusing at the level of the policy community - specifically, the discourses of feminism's potential allies within the mainstream social policy debate. A critical event in the shaping of feminist interests in this field was the capture of this policy field by the issue of child poverty. Notwithstanding the real increase in poverty of families in this period, "child poverty" was a strategic tool developed by particular actors who were oriented to ensuring that the principles of universality, horizontal equity, and a minimum standard of living, and, at the very least, that redistribution and poverty alleviation, continued to be primary goals of public policy. The theme of child poverty became integral to the approach to income security reform undertaken by the federal government in the early 1990s. For the Tories, the focus on the issue of child poverty primarily served to put a "human face" on its harsh "slash and burn" agenda for social welfare policy. For the Liberals, the issue of child poverty supported an agenda of targeting social programs and shifting the responsibility for income security to the provinces.

Child poverty discourse had a particular gender sub-text, however, one that foregrounded the family and eliminated gender as a meaningful variable. Women were effectively written out of the poverty story. The child poverty issue provided a conduit for the entry of a gender-neutral/blind approach in this policy area which was evident by

the mid-1990s. While women were increasingly falling into poverty, the issue of poverty was eliminated as grounds for making political claims on behalf of women. This was the further closure of space for conducting a politics that promoted the principle of women's individual entitlement to benefits or for making gender-specific claims at all with respect to federal income security programs.

By the early 1990s, the primary claim of the institutionalized women's movement as regards social programs was that of women's "equality." In the context of the gender-blind discourse of social security reform, however, this attempt to bring gender back into the discussion has been insufficient. Women's organizations are no longer recognized as having a valuable or legitimate role to play in social security politics. The politics of equality is being conducted by feminists outside of the mainstream debate. The absence of women's organizations in this policy milieu is, in turn, reinforcing the invisibility of women in this policy arena, and allowing a familialist and phallocentric approach to social policy and public policy to flourish.

CHAPTER SEVEN

Conclusions

Introduction

As a study of politics, this thesis has been conceptually both much broader and narrower than most. It has been narrow in its substantive focus: It has been concerned solely with one strategic goal (autonomy) of one political actor (the women's movement) in one policy terrain (federal social policy, and in particular, income security policy). It has been conceptually broad, however, in its understanding of politics: Politics is as much about the construction of meaning - political interests and identities - as it is about policy outcomes. As such, this thesis can be seen as a case study of how political interests and identities get constructed.

This, the final chapter, will review the theoretical and practical parameters, as well as the substantial and methodological findings of this thesis. It will situate these findings with respect to broader developments in Canadian social policy and politics, focusing on the current predisposition of the Canadian state towards social policy and women, and the current resonance of the discourse of women's autonomy in public debate. Finally, this chapter will underline the empirical contribution of this thesis to the

understanding of women's movement politics in the current period.

Theoretical Premises and Parameters of This Thesis

The theoretical starting point for this thesis was the concept of autonomy. Autonomy is a necessary condition for human freedom and dignity. Historically, women's movements have recognized women's dependency as the basis of their subordination and secondary citizenship. Women's autonomy has therefore been the point of departure for women's movements. Second-wave feminism has tended to adopt a strategy of improving women's access to paid work and establishing services that reduce the burden of caring on individual households (Orloff, 1993: 320). At the core of this strategy is the goal of giving women the capacity to form and maintain an autonomous household - to allow women to support themselves and their children without the compulsion to enter into or stay in marriage. **Social** policy has also been recognized as a critical terrain for the struggle for autonomy. Social policies are deemed "women-friendly" to the extent that they enhance women's leverage within marriage and increase women's capacity to be economically independent (321). Policy which familializes (i.e. defines entitlement according to some family criteria, such as a "spouse in the house" rule or the obligation that women seek child support before being eligible to apply for welfare) reduces women's capacity to be independent, while policy which individualizes women increases their capacity for independence.

Historically, social assistance has been an important and practical area of struggle for women, and has included campaigns to achieve more generous benefits and to

The next step was to theorize about the question of how political interests are constructed. This discussion drew from several areas of political theory. Post-structuralist theory has emphasized the power of discourse - especially state discourse - to shape reality and construct political identities and interests. It views the struggle over meaning as an integral part of politics. Social movement theory has emphasized that the action of actors in naming themselves and framing issues is critical in mobilizing interests and determining strategies for making political claims. This action is constrained, however, by the universe of discourse; "actors make history, but not in circumstances of their own choosing." Prevailing power relations within any society ensure that some actors and their interpretations of reality are more powerful than others. Structural-institutionalist theory in the field of public policy brings the focus onto the mezo-level and the view that political interests are formed in the context of particular policy arenas and particular policy struggles, and involve a specific set of actors or policy communities. The members of the policy community have varying degrees of policy-making power and resources and, therefore, power to define the terms of the debate. I have argued, however, that while one may use the notion of policy community one must situate it within a broader set of constraints - social and economic "facts," the political configuration, and the universe of political discourse. This approach recognizes that policy communities are themselves political outcomes, consisting of those political interest groups willing to engage within the terms defined by more dominant actors. Together these thoughts became the basis of a methodology for this study.

Methodological Claim:

At the broadest level, politics is shaped and constrained by macro-social and macro-economic factors and broad political agendas, and the prevailing universe of political discourse. These variables provide a critical context and determine important aspects of "the political." The next level of constraint - the mezo-institutional level of politics - brings into view the creativity of agents acting (i.e. making choices) within structures. Our understanding here is that the political interests of the women's movement were an accomplishment of its own actions - the unintended consequences of its own policy stands adopted in the context of particular policy debates and within the terms of particular discursive and ideological configurations. Investment in a particular policy strategy tended to condition the next round of political choice. Choices were made within discursive parameters largely defined by the more powerful actors in the policy community.

The **state** plays an important role in the shaping the interests of other policy community actors. Feminist visions and recognition of women's interests are coloured and constrained by the agendas and impositional claims of state actors. State agendas define the focus and broad terms of policy debates (e.g. define which policy options are politically feasible). States are also continually making "statements" which in a general way construct women's identity and interests, or "interpellate" women before the public eye.

Less recognized, but having an even more direct consequence for the shaping of women's interests/feminist politics in the policy field are feminism's potential (and more

powerful) **allies** within the policy community. These actors, although marginal with respect to influencing policy outcomes, are integrally involved in constructing the interpretations - especially the definitions of problems - that provide a framework for making sense of a policy area. These interpretations or problem definitions play a powerful role in defining the claims-making basis for even more marginal actors in the policy community - in our case, the women's movement.

As argued in Chapter two, this methodological-theoretical approach provides an expanded analytic scope to many current analyses of women's movement and poverty politics. The latter often fail to problematize discourse and meaning construction (hence, political interests and identities), or alternatively, privilege discourse and meaning construction at the macro-political level (eg. broad state discourses) and thus ignore the discursive constraints existing at the more immediate level of the policy community.

Substantive Claim:

This thesis has argued that while the impetus existed for a feminist politics of autonomy vis-à-vis federal social security policy, it largely failed to develop into a real challenge to the familialist status quo. The critical issue was the failure of the institutionalized women's movement to identify individualization of benefits as an important strategy or viable policy option with respect to federal income security programs. This failure took place as a series of policy choices by the key women's organizations in moments of debate over family and child benefit programs.

A starting point for the explanation lay in macro-level conditions. Part of the

explanation, for example, lay in the particular ideological predisposition of liberal feminism and the class location of the institutionalized women's movement involved in shaping feminist responses. Through the 1970s and early 1980s the institutionalized women's movement was increasingly drawn to the argument for individual entitlement to benefits and recognized the importance of this principle generally for women.

Nevertheless, liberal feminists within this movement were reticent about applying individualization to programs geared to families with children. Their position reflected their greater acceptance than either socialist or radical feminism of the institutions of marriage and the family - a view that was evident in the RCSW Report. Liberal feminists were not willing to prioritize independence **from** marriage over equity **within** marriage and the family. In the case of family income support programs the goal of individual benefits for women competed with another practical goal of liberal feminism, namely, creating the family as a partnership; ensuring that both parents were held responsible for the care and upbringing of their children. Views of class also had an effect, with key (primarily liberal) feminists who were involved in the debate holding the view that autonomy/independent rights had more relevance for middle-class, than for lower-class, women. Liberal feminists prioritized vertical equity over that of gender equity at this juncture, illustrating Maxine Molyneux's point, and the insights of post-structuralist feminism, that there are no such things as universal "women's" interests - women's unity is always contingent on overcoming divisions of class, race, ethnicity, and so on.

Continuing with a focus on macro variables, the remainder of the explanation for the failure of feminism to take up the strategy of individualization in this policy area lay

in the broad social, economic, and political context, including the prevailing universe of political discourse that conditioned the policy environment within which feminists identified and framed their interests and made policy choices. Beginning in the 1960s the Canadian welfare state and political regime shifted markedly towards a "social liberal" model, entailing a new openness towards the voices of civil society and a willingness to address issues of inequality. It was, nevertheless, a shift that privileged the discourse on poverty, with its embedded ideal of targeting to the disadvantaged, and in doing so established the outside limits of the social liberal thrust in Canada. Macro-economic and macro-social factors such as growing unemployment and poverty, and the increasing existence of poor single mothers, also underwrote a belief in targeting to the poor.

A political agenda of retrenchment on social programs introduced in the mid-1970s, and the explicitly right-wing/neo-conservative orientation of the first term Mulroney government created a social policy climate that was generally hostile to the ideals of progressive social reform and universality. It encouraged public belief in targeted, poverty-oriented measures. At the same time, women's increasing labour force participation tended to undermine the feminist argument for women's independent right to benefits. By the early and mid-1990s public belief in provision of a safety-net had been seriously eroded. An ideological context was established under the second term Conservatives, continuing under the Liberals, in which progressive constituencies were forced to defend the very principle of social provision and federal responsibility. A climate of hostility to "special" interest groups also created a challenge to the very

credibility of institutionalized women's organizations as the voice of women. A context of economic recession and threats to women's employment drew institutionalized feminism away from a social security-oriented politics.

Policy changes achieved by the state from the late 1970s onwards also altered the political landscape of income security in a way that closed off political space for feminists to mobilize around the issue of women's individual entitlement: The introduction of the Child Tax Credit in 1978 created a functional alternative to the family allowance, helped to obscure its purpose of horizontal equity and made it difficult to defend the allowance; the partial de-indexation of the family allowance in the mid-1980s ensured the erosion over time of its value; the clawback of the allowance in 1989 eliminated its universality and created an inconsistency as regards the treatment of one versus two-earner families; and the elimination of the family allowance in 1992 closed this terrain for making claims on behalf of women. The continued dismantlement of social programs in the late 1980s and early 1990s via a "politics of stealth," and the limited, targeted nature of the policy proposals advanced in the mid-90s similarly diminished the possibilities for a feminist politics of autonomy.

I have argued, however, that macro-level explanations cannot stand alone as explanations of politics. We must move beyond this focus to incorporate the discursive and ideological context of the policy community. The main focus of my explanation, then, has been the ideological and discursive environment created by progressive anti-poverty organizations. It was the discursive constructions of this community, which were themselves creative responses to the macro-social, macro-economic, and macro-political

context and the claims of the state, that drew the women's movement further into the poverty concern and income security debate and deterred them from the strategy of individual entitlement.

The institutionalized women's movement had three original orientations towards social programs. It was concerned that policy treat women as independent and autonomous individuals (gender equity); that a more level playing field be achieved; and that vertical equity or poverty be addressed. The gender equity concern led to a general recognition by the institutionalized women's movement that programs that gave benefits to women as individuals were most valuable to women. A critical discursive event occurred in the mid-1970s, however, that tipped the balance within feminism in favour of the poverty and vertical-equity approach. Women were written into the poverty story. Women's poverty was represented as a type or sub-set of family poverty; it was largely equated with the poverty of single parent families. This construction drew on and reinforced the liberal feminist focus on the poverty of single mothers. It was a turning point in constructing a hegemonic ideology concerning "women and poverty" that was the basis for an alliance (albeit an unequal one) between the mainstream anti-poverty movement and the mainstream women's movement. The institutionalized women's movement was captured by the view that women could make important gains via income security measures that addressed family poverty.

It was within the terms of this ideology that feminists responded to the introduction of the family-based Child Tax Credit program in 1978. This movement supported the credit, equating the needs of single mothers (who would benefit from the

program) with those of women in general. Institutionalized feminism reaffirmed its support of family-based programming in the field of federal income security in the mid-1980s, again on the grounds that what was good for the poor (i.e. poor families) was good for women (i.e. single parent families). These were moments in which the institutionalized women's movement was drawn further into the world view and agenda of the mainstream anti-poverty community and the familial strategy underlying the poverty concept.

These were moments of relinquishment and closure for the strategy of individualization and politics of autonomy. In 1978 the institutionalized women's movement made a policy choice that foreclosed (although as we see, not completely) the strategy of individualization with respect to income security policy: Family-based programming was adopted by this movement as the normal rule for child and family-oriented income security policy. The movement continued through the 1980s and 1990s to view individual entitlement as a viable and desirable option for insurance-based and universal programs (eg. unemployment insurance, taxation, and old age security).

In the 1980s the family allowance program, however, became the only real window of opportunity for advancing notions of independent rights to income security (although, even here, the money was for mothers, not women). "Money in women's own name" emerged as a key mobilizing argument in the campaign by women's organizations to preserve the family allowance in the early 1980s. This politics was largely curtailed, however, as an unintended consequence of a mid-1980s policy stand. Institutionalized feminism was by then an integral, but still a marginal, constituency within the dominant

progressive social policy community. It was drawn into a politics defined primarily by, the three major progressive social policy organizations, which narrowly prioritized the goal of vertical equity and redistribution of income to the exclusion of the principles of universality and horizontal equity. Within the terms of this politics the family allowance was designated a marginal policy instrument. The implication of this policy stand was the further closure of a feminist politics oriented to the family allowance and, therefore, autonomy or individualization.

The discursive underpinnings of the social security debate were fundamentally transformed beginning in the late 1980s. The mainstream progressive social policy community responded to the harsh, predominantly neo-liberal outlook on social policy with a new creative strategy for maintaining a focus on poverty; the theme of child poverty. This new master story, which was incorporated into state discourse, did not allow for the visibility of women. Children replaced single mothers as the deserving poor; child poverty discourse replaced "women and poverty" discourse as the core of the poverty problem. This purging of women from the definition of the problem was, like their earlier inclusion, a critical discursive event in the shaping of women's interests and feminist politics in the sphere of federal poverty policy; it dissolved the basis for making claims on behalf of women. It constituted yet another moment of closure for the feminist politics of autonomy in this policy field, demonstrated by the deafening silence of the institutionalized women's movement on the issue of women's independent rights and its absence of comment when the family allowance program was abolished. Women's invisibility in the poverty story underwrote the withdrawal of the institutionalized

women's movement from the mainstream area of social policy debate.

The child poverty theme, moreover, helped facilitate the entry into official social policy discourse of a language and outlook that was family-centred and phallocentric, epitomized in the 1994 federal discussion paper on social security reform. This turn in public discourse contributed further to discrediting feminism and the institutionalized women's movement, eliminating the identity "women" from this policy terrain and from public policy debate in general.

Situating the Thesis Findings in Broader Policy and Political Developments: The Politics of Autonomy and the Refamilialization of Policy

If, as Janine Brodie has commented, the state-society relation is "less directive than coterminous and discursive, embedded in our shared understandings of what is natural, neutral and universal" (1998:27), we must read the findings of this thesis - the relinquishment by the institutionalized women's movement of the politics of autonomy and individual rights in the site of federal income security policy - as an important detail (perhaps both cause and consequence) of the broader developments taking place in Canadian social policy.

Federally, the Canadian state has been moving further away from a woman-friendly model of social policy. It has been pursuing an agenda of withdrawing from, and reprivatizing, social welfare provision in such a way that responsibility for meeting social needs is being shifted onto individuals and families. There is a growing consensus among policy makers that families (whatever their form) should look after their own

(1998: 33, 34). Consistent with this agenda has been the increasing shifting of policy towards family-based entitlement to social benefits. This is occurring even in respect of programs that have had a long tradition of individualized treatment. In July 1996 family-income testing was introduced into the UI program, the first time in the program's history. While it only pertains to the top-up portion of a new family supplement component in the program, analysts view it as representing the "thin edge of the wedge" in terms of shifting to family-based eligibility. This move would disproportionately eliminate women's eligibility to benefits (Pulkingham, 1998).¹²⁸ Similarly, the 1996 federal budget introduced a family-income tested Senior's Benefit (to take effect in 2001) which replaces the individually-based Old Age Security Program and family-based Guaranteed Income Supplement.

Similar shifts have been evident in recent years at the provincial level. In the early 1990s the NDP-appointed Advisory Group on New Social Assistance Legislation attempted to bring closure to the question of family-based criteria under the social assistance program. It recommended that the social assistance system continue to be based on family criteria (following the definitions in the Family Law Act) except where there was "real need" caused by the spouse not providing support. It argued that we should not ignore dependencies where they exist - by definition "need" implies recognizing dependent relationships - and that an individual-based system would unfairly favour women:

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My research has shown that family-based eligibility to UI has been previously proposed by the federal government in the late 1970s, early 1980s, and mid-1980s.

Using a purely individual benefit unit would potentially have the effect of turning social assistance into a guaranteed annual income for every person in Ontario who stays at home and who has no personal income. It would become a homemaker's allowance, which would go mainly to women who stay home (Ontario, 1992: 51).

In the mid-1990s the Conservative Harris government reinstated the "spouse in the house" rule so that there is once again an automatic assumption of mutual dependency when two adults of the opposite sex live together. Similarly, while the NDP-appointed Ontario Fair Tax Commission (under the directorship of Monica Townson) addressed the question of whether tax-delivered benefits (eg. Child Tax Credit) aimed at alleviating poverty should be based on the individual or the family, it concluded that using the individual as the basis of policy would undermine the integrity of programs aimed at vertical equity (Ontario, Fair Tax Commission, 1992: 8, 16).

Similarly, it is reasonable to assume that, not discounting the broad "backlash" against the women's movement, the closure of autonomy politics in the sphere of poverty debate has detracted from the political currency of the principle of autonomy itself. The feminist argument for autonomy does not have the same force it once had. Women's groups expressed outrage at the introduction of a two-tier benefit structure (based on familial dependencies) in the UI Program and to the suggestion in 1994 that UI be based on family income: "We find it deplorable that the government has attempted to portray this reactionary measure as a benefit for single mothers" (Canada, House of Commons Standing Committee on Human Resources Development, 1994: (NAC), 25/2/94).¹²⁹

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On the two-tier structure, also see Canada, House of Commons Standing Committee on HRD, 1994: (NAWL) 11/3/94. On family-income testing of UI, see: 1994: (CACSW) 27/10/94;

Nevertheless, the argument for women's independence made in these presentations appeared diluted and narrowed. It was expressed as pertaining to the issue of violence against women in the home, reminiscent of how the issue changed with respect to the family allowance (eg. 1994: (NAWL) 35:113; 9:191; (CACSW) 28:8). The concern was also expressed as relating to the intrusion into, and the regulation of, women's private lives (eg. 1994: (NAC) 25/2/94; (NAWL) 35:114).

Somewhat surprisingly, feminists have not been in the forefront of the opposition to the family-income testing aspect of the soon-to-be-implemented Senior's Benefit. This absence of debate over eligibility criteria and its effect on women contrasts generally with the situation in many European countries where the question of individualized versus family-based (or "derived") benefits has been a controversial policy issue since the mid-eighties issuing of a European Economic Community directive that encouraged governments to move towards individualized entitlement to social security (McKeen, 1994; Luckhaus, 1994).

A similar argument can be made with respect to a secondary finding of this thesis concerning the shifting politics of social policy organizations and the trajectory of the Canadian welfare state away from universality. I have argued that key liberal social policy and anti-poverty organizations were prone to accept increased targeting as a necessary feature of the social welfare system. This turn was particularly apparent in the politics of the SPRG in the mid-1980s, which set aside the cause of universality in order

(Manitoba Coalition on Social Policy Development) 26/11/94; (NAC) 8/11/94; and (NAWL) 8/11/94.

to advance the cause of targeting with a redistributive impact (by eliminating tax exemptions for the rich). We can view this turn in progressive politics as an important detail (again, possibly cause and consequence) in the politics of restructuring Canadian social policy. It is also a detail that has been overlooked in analyses of social welfare and poverty politics that do not problematize politics at the level of discourse (as per chapter two's discussion of Haddow's work).

Contribution of This Thesis to the Analysis of Women's Movement Politics: Understanding the Marginalization of the Women's Movement

Canadian feminist political analysts have focused extensively on the issue of the invisibility of gender in the current public policy context and the overall diminished credibility of the women's movement. Most explanations rely on macro-political analysis (eg. Bashevkin, 1998; Brodie, 1995; 1996; 1998; Gotell, 1998). Janine Brodie's work has been especially insightful on these questions. Her thesis is that the politics of restructuring and the demise of the welfare state has marginalized the women's movement and undermined its identity (1998: 23). She has argued that the undermining of gender equality and the feminist cause occurred at the level of discourse - specifically, the exclusions built into neo-liberal restructuring discourse (1994; 1995; 1996a; 1996b; 1998).

According to Brodie, the hollowing out of the welfare state under neo-liberalism has nurtured a new shared understanding of citizenship in which the good citizen is one who recognizes the limits of state provision and embraces the obligation to be self-

reliant. Central to this model has been the notion of targeting - the idea that scarce resources are best targeted at those who need them most. Targeting has the effect of making structural differences (i.e. inequalities) invisible. It pathologizes and individualizes difference and designates the targeted as non-citizens: "[i]t disassembles and diffuses the collective claims of the women's movement, recasting it as a 'ghetto of disadvantaged groups'" (Brodie, 1994: 74). Related, but somewhat different, is the distinction between "ordinary" and "special." According to Brodie, the designation of the women's movement as a special interest group, as opposed to an ordinary one, excludes them from the ideal political community of ordinary Canadians and suggests their demands for inclusion and equality are outside of and antagonistic to the general interest (1996a; 1996b; 1998).

Although Brodie sees her analysis as explaining the current minimalization of gender and feminism in public discourse, it pertains most directly to the terrain of social policy - the terrain where the targeting notion is been most forcefully presented. Based on the analysis in this thesis, I would argue that there is still more to this than can be captured by a focus on neo-liberal governing practices and shifting state forms alone. New insights emerge as we examine the local struggle in the terrain of social policy, and especially the discourses of other institutional actors. This thesis has shown that since the late 1980s the theme of child poverty, which was a strategic discourse adopted by feminism's more powerful allies in the anti-poverty cause, played an insidious role in eliminating gender considerations from the debate. As children replaced women as the foremost concern, the specificity of women's poverty was lost. So too was the currency

of feminist politics in this area of policy debate. Indeed, the focus on child poverty has been an important part of the process by which gender and equality issues have been marginalized.

Closing Remarks

This thesis has advanced two main themes: the persistent familialism of Canadian social welfare policy and discourse, and the fact that Canadian women had an alternative. The potential alternative politics of women's autonomy was, however, stifled and diverted in various ways and at various times and ultimately failed to materialize as a full-fledged challenge to the familialist status quo. There was nothing inevitable about this failure. Moreover, the potential for such a politics always exists. Its emergence depends upon the creativity of the actors in specific historical circumstances.

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Montreal, August 28, 1997.

Janet Maher - National Action Committee on the Status of Women
Toronto, June 19, 1997.

Lorraine Michael - National Action Committee on the Status of Women.
Toronto, June 17, 1997

Rosemarie Popham - Campaign 2000.
Toronto, June 17, 1997

David Ross - Canadian Council on Social Development.
Ottawa, June 24, 1997

Lynn Toupin - National Anti-Poverty Organization.
Ottawa, June 25, 1997

Monica Townson - Canadian Advisory Council on the Status of Women
Toronto, June 19, 1997

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