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**CONTRADICTIONS:
THE NEW CONSULTATIVE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE FEDERAL
GOVERNMENT AND NATIONAL WOMEN'S ADVOCACY ORGANIZATIONS
OPERATING IN ENGLISH-CANADA**

by

Susannah Bush

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

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**The undersigned recommend to the Faculty
of Graduate Studies and Research acceptance of the thesis**

**“Contradictions: The New Consultative Relationship between
the Federal Government and National Women’s Advocacy
Organizations Operating in English-Canada”**

submitted by Susannah Bush , Hons. B.A.

**in partial fulfillment of the requirements for
the degree of Master of Arts**

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ABSTRACT

In this thesis, I analyse how the relationship between the Canadian state and national women's advocacy organizations, operating in English Canada, has altered in the past decade. This study is placed within the context of the neo-liberal state's effort to develop stronger ties with Canada's voluntary sector. While government rhetoric proclaims the importance of engaging civil society in policy development, the working relationship between the federal government and national women's advocacy organizations has deteriorated. Through an examination of Status of Women Canada's new policy on consultations, I argue that national women's advocacy organizations, operating in English Canada, have been displaced as sources of knowledge on policy issues.

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INTRODUCTION

Contradictions

The days in Canada when the voluntary sector is overlooked and underrated are over for good.... Our desire [is] to build a new and lasting partnership ... A real alliance.

- Prime Minister Jean Chretien¹

On Sunday, October 15th 2000, thousands of women converged on Parliament Hill to participate in a mass protest. In a letter to the editor of the *Globe and Mail*, Judy Rebick, former president of National Action Committee on the Status of Women (NAC) declared: "I have been to a lot of rallies in my day, and this was the largest demonstration of women I have ever attended. I believe it was the largest women's demonstration in Canadian history" (2000: A16). Singing, chanting and yelling the slogan of the rally, "It's time for change," the multitude of protesters, many of whom represented women's community groups, women's shelters, advocacy organizations, unions, development and social justice organizations, assembled in front of the Parliament Buildings to pressure the federal government to implement their demands for ending poverty and violence against women in Canada.²

¹These words were spoken in August 1998 to the International Association of Volunteer Effort and were re-iterated by Mel Cappe, Clerk of the Privy Council, in a speech to the Third Canadian Leaders' Forum on the Voluntary Sector in May 1999 (Cappe, 1999).

² The protest was part of a global mobilization of people working for the advancement of women. Originally initiated through the efforts of the Fédération des femmes du Québec (FFQ), protesters in one hundred and fifty- seven countries around the world took part in activities to bring attention to poverty and violence against women. Mobilizations culminated in a mass march and rally at the United Nations' headquarters in New York. The Canadian national rally, which took place in Ottawa, was the final in a series of organized mass protests that swept across the country during that week. Mobilizations were coordinated by the Canadian Women's March Committee, a coalition of representatives from twenty-four national women's organizations.

Emerging from a meeting with Prime Minister Jean Chrétien later the same afternoon, an angry Terri Brown, current President of NAC, declared to the waiting crowd on Parliament Hill: "...as far as I'm concerned, I should have stayed at home." (Schmidt, 2000: C03). Brown, along with six other delegates of the Canadian Women's March Committee (CWMC), had presented the Prime Minister with the CWMC's "13 immediate demands" to help end poverty and violence against women. The interim report of the Canadian Women's March Committee summarized the "very disappointing" meeting with Prime Minister Chrétien in the following way: "[The Prime Minister] provided no response to the 13 immediate demands and was not eager to discuss the longer document ... He failed to demonstrate an understanding of why the fulfilment of these demands was necessary for the well-being of women in Canada" (Peckford, 2000).

In a well-organized campaign, the 13 immediate demands of the Canadian Women's March Committee were also presented to federal party leaders, federal Cabinet Ministers and Members of Parliament. None of the Cabinet Ministers would discuss the 13 demands of the March Committee. Similarly, only one of the five party leaders, Bloc Québécois leader Gilles Duceppe, was willing to take seriously any of the demands of the women's coalition (Peckford, 2000).

One month later, at the height of the Canadian federal election, women's groups were again disappointed. As has been the case in previous elections, the leaders of the five federal parties were invited to participate in NAC's televised leaders debate on

women's issues. Prime Minister Jean Chrétien along with leader of the Canadian Alliance Party, Stockwell Day, declined the invitation outright. The leaders of the three other parties, one by one, reneged on their earlier commitments to participate. Fielding questions concerning the organization of the debate, NAC's president Terri Brown declared: "So there is a debate tonight - but because women are obviously not a priority for ANY of the leaders of the five major parties, they will not be there" (Brown, 2000, emphasis in the original).

These incidents suggests that, in the eyes of the state, the legitimacy of national, women's advocacy organizations, operating in English-Canada, has come into question. Throughout the last decade, women's organizations have suffered a series of drastic cuts in state funding and the restructuring of government machinery has reduced access for women's groups to state actors and state processes. This has contributed to a decreased capacity of national women's advocacy organizations to articulate their claims to the Canadian state. As a result, the communities represented through these advocacy organizations are left without a voice. The document of the Canadian Women's March, *It's Time For Change*, states: "[i]n recent years, the federal government has decreased women's ability to engage in consultations about legislative reform and public policy. This has meant that a vast array of non-governmental organizations representing constituencies without considerable power or wealth have been marginalized and ignored by our elected officials and legislative institutions" (CWMC, 2000: 43).

Intriguingly, these developments are occurring at a time when the Canadian federal government is increasing its efforts to "build alliances" with voluntary groups in

Canada and to strengthen the “capacity” of civil society in line with international efforts in this field. For example, the United Nations has designated 2001, the “Year of the Volunteer”. Part of the lasting “legacy” of the Year in Canada will be the development of a National Volunteerism Initiative the mandate of which will be to encourage volunteering and increase the numbers of volunteers in Canada. This will be facilitated by a “social marketing campaign” and the enhancement of “the capacity of the voluntary sector to better manage its volunteers and provide beneficial experiences to them” (Voluntary Sector Task Force, 2000: 3).

Indeed, the past several years have witnessed a surge of interest and activity regarding the increasing importance of the voluntary sector to Canadian society. In June 1992, a national consultation of “voluntary sector and social policy groups” was organized by the Steering Group on Prosperity. In recognizing that the voluntary sector has “representation in *all communities* and all parts of the country”, the purpose of the consultation was to develop a national action plan to “secure a prosperous future for Canada” (Steering Group on Prosperity, 1992: 8, my emphasis).

The increasing significance of voluntary organizations to the Canadian federal government became apparent in the later half of the 1990s. Indeed, the 1997 Liberal Party platform, *Securing Our Future Together* states: “[e]nhancing the capacity of the voluntary sector is a key objective of this government” (cited in The Voluntary Sector Task Force, 2000: 2). This objective sparked a flurry of research and policy development aimed at strengthening the links between the sector and the federal government (for example see: Phillips, 2000; Panel on Accountability and Governance in the Voluntary

Sector, 1999; Privy Council Office, 1999).

In 1998, the Voluntary Sector Task Force was established in the Privy Council Office to help support the creation of a Voluntary Sector Initiative. The Voluntary Sector Initiative (VSI), announced in June 2000, will follow a five-year action plan, out of which will come the development of an Accord. The purpose of the Accord is to “state for the first time, a clear and compelling vision for a new, more collaborative relationship in the service of Canadians. It will articulate principles to shape and guide the relationship in the years ahead, and will clearly set out the mutual obligations and benefits of the government and the voluntary sector in all areas of joint endeavour....” (Voluntary Sector Task Force: 3) In an era of fiscal restraint and government cutbacks, the significance of the VSI is evident in its price tag: \$94.6 million (Fletcher, 2000).

Strong ties between the federal government and voluntary sector are intended to endure much longer than the initial five years necessary to carry out the action plan. Mel Cappe, Clerk of the Privy Council, has stated that his vision of the partnership between the voluntary sector and the federal government in fifteen years from now will look like this:

Involving the voluntary sector in policy dialogue will be so deeply embedded that no one will think twice about it. Program managers will involve the voluntary sector in design and implementation as a matter of course. And dialogue will be the accepted way of doing business for all departments (Cappe, 1999).

Ironically, enhancing policy dialogue between voluntary groups and the federal government was one of the primary goals of the Canadian Women’s March Committee.

Demand #6 of the coalition's thirteen demands addresses increasing government support for "women's organizing for equality and democracy." Part of this demand asks the federal government to "fund consultations with a wide range of women's equality-seeking organizations prior to all legislative reform of relevance to women's security and equality rights, beginning with the Criminal Code, and ensure access for women from marginalized communities" (CWMC, September 2000: 8). Clearly, the contradictions continue.

In an article recently published in the *Winnipeg Free Press*, Cameron Charlebois, volunteer Chairperson of the Canadian Council for International Cooperation (CCIC), described what he saw as an emerging "broader vision of volunteerism". This vision, Charlebois explained, is "built on the ideas of greater civic engagement, global citizenship and advocacy, the ability to activate the many, and through them to influence the crucial few" (2000: A 11). Notably, Charlebois credits the women's movement and the environmental movement for the promotion of such ideas. Calling both movements "pioneers" in the mobilization of the "new volunteerism," Charlebois maintains that "they have moved beyond helping the disadvantaged to forging a spirit of collaboration, creating powerful connections from their volunteers and supporters out into business, government and civic life" (2000: A11). How then has a movement which "pioneered" the "new volunteerism" been marginalized from activities and efforts to strengthen the capacity of voluntary groups in Canada?

This thesis endeavours to tackle some of these contradictions. Specifically, my aim is to ascertain how the relationship between national women's advocacy

organizations, operating in English-Canada, and the federal state has altered in the past decade. I maintain that, until the 1990s, national women's advocacy groups enjoyed a unique relationship with the Canadian state that enabled them to represent women's claims and influence policy processes and policy outcomes. This is no longer the case. While recognizing that government efforts to forge new relationships with voluntary groups are still in their infancy, and that the position of women's advocacy organizations within this sector is still somewhat ambiguous, I will argue that national women's advocacy organizations, operating in English-Canada, have been displaced as sources of knowledge on policy issues. Stated another way, the state-conferred legitimacy of these organizations as representatives of Canadian women's collective voices is deteriorating. Currently, the state discourse concerning the importance of civic engagement and "consulting" with civil society serves to disguise this reality thinly. These arguments will be supported through an examination of how the federal government has redefined the ways in which it consults with women's advocacy organizations.

In stating that I am examining the changing role of national women's advocacy organizations, it must be clarified that I am only studying the role of national women's organizations, *operating in English-Canada*. Further, the nature of the relationship between the federal state and national Aboriginal women's organizations is not addressed specifically in the following pages. In addition, when referring to women's advocacy organizations, I must emphasize that I solely refer to women's equality-seeking organizations, those organizations dedicated to advancing women's equality in Canada.

As will become evident in later discussions on Canada's voluntary sector, I make

a sharp distinction between women's organizations committed to service delivery and women's organizations whose prime role is advocacy. The representation of women's interests to the federal state (and the struggle to achieve this representation) has been carried out by advocacy organizations. They are, therefore, my primary focus. In assessing the current status of national women's advocacy organizations, however, it is instructive to note the increasing importance to the state of service-oriented organizations. This point will be examined in later chapters.

Chapter One presents three concepts necessary to understand the contradictions that exist between the reduced legitimacy of women's groups as representatives of women's collective voices to the Canadian state and the federal government's commitment to building stronger partnerships between the state and civil society. The chapter explores the concepts of civil society, participatory democracy and representation. It argues that in order to understand the current situation of national women's advocacy organizations, these three concepts must be situated with a feminist framework.

Chapter Two presents a brief history of the relationship between national women's organizations, operating in English-Canada, and the Canadian state until the end of the post-war consensus in Canada. It illustrates that these women's groups historically have oriented their political struggles towards state processes. The state responded to these early struggles of women's organizations by legitimizing their voices through the provision of state funding and the establishment of women's state machinery. As a result, national women's organizations have occupied a unique position in Canadian society as

accepted representatives of women's collective voices to the Canadian state.

Chapter Three documents the deterioration of the relationship between national women's advocacy organizations and the Canadian government. It argues that the state's adoption of neo-liberal philosophies has closed political spaces necessary for women's organizations to represent the interests of their constituents to the state. This has also delegitimized the role of women's organizations in policy development.

Chapter Four situates the current position of Canadian national women's advocacy organizations, operating in English-Canada, within the context of the renewed state interest to consult with "Canadians" on policy issues. I examine Status of Women Canada's newly-defined policy on consultation mechanisms and argue that the implementation of these mechanisms has entrenched a "top-down", state-controlled process of policy deliberation that has contributed to the further displacement of women's advocacy organizations as sources of knowledge on policy issues.

In conclusion, the subsequent pages document the contradictions between the current neo-liberal context and the federal government's renewed interest in civil society participation. The arguments established throughout the following chapters will maintain that federal government activities carried out during Canada's neo-liberal regime have dismantled the working relationships established between national women's advocacy organizations, operating in English-Canada, and the federal state over the first eight decades of the twentieth century.

CHAPTER ONE

From "Participatory Democracy" to "Civil Society": The Role of Canadian Women's Organizations

Introduction

This thesis is concerned with understanding how the relationships between national women's advocacy groups and the Canadian state have changed since the mid-1990s. I argue that, until recently, women's organizations have represented women's collective voices to the federal government successfully and frequently have acted as catalysts for substantive change on issues concerning women. Reasons for these successes are explored in Chapter 2 where I document how women's groups fought for and gained legitimacy in the eyes of the state. This legitimacy enabled women's organizations to represent the voices of Canadian women to the federal government. In the years following 1995, however, the legitimacy of national women's organizations has come into question. Does the Canadian state still recognize women's groups as representative of women's voices across Canada? In order to engage in this discussion, certain key concepts must first be explored.

Throughout this thesis, three particular concepts emerge and reemerge. The first is the concept of *representation*. Since I assert that there has been a distinct shift in the relationship between national women's advocacy organizations, operating in English-Canada, and the Canadian federal state since the mid 1990s, I am concerned with understanding "who" represents women's collective demands to the state and "how" this

is done.³ The second concept to be discussed is *participatory democracy*. Briefly, participatory democracy developed as a key tenet of many social and civil rights movements during the 1960s and 1970s. As a philosophy, participatory democracy advocated for greater public participation in, and control of, political decision making processes. One of the major roles of Canadian women's advocacy organizations has been to challenge the state to become more responsive to their demands for inclusion and participation in political processes. This has led to the development of a particular "working relationship" between national women's organizations, operating in English-Canada, and the Canadian state, a relationship that has deteriorated steadily in recent years.

The task of the second half of this thesis is to ascertain the kind of relationship national women's advocacy organizations now have with the federal government. In trying to find answers to this question, I have continuously come across the concept of *civil society*. It is, therefore, the third concept to be discussed. Not surprisingly, this concept is fraught with contradictions. I present two specific (and opposing) definitions of the term. The final, and most important, task of this chapter is to situate what has been discussed within a feminist framework. Since the concepts of *representation*, *participatory democracy* and *civil society* could very well inform studies of the situations

³ It must be asserted that when referring to women's collective demands, I do not assume that women comprise a "monolithic" group. While many feminist scholars of representation emphasize the need to recognize differences among women (race, ethnicity, levels of ability, sexual orientation and class), they contend that discussions concerning the representation of women, as a social group, can take place because "women have at least some shared interests" (Maillé, 1997: 59). Vickers (1997b: 28) maintains that "feminist representational practice must balance differences and commonalities, identities and interests..."

of other societal groups in Canada, it is critical that this thesis employs a feminist analysis in its examination of the changing relationship between the federal state and national women's advocacy organizations operating in English-Canada.

Representation

The point of departure for this dialogue is the concept of representation. More specifically, this discussion touches on the concept of liberal representation, or the system of representation in place in liberal democracies. Williams (1998) identifies two specific "strands" of liberal representation: the first is the idea of "one person, one vote"; the second hinges on "interest-group pluralism." Since the purpose of this thesis is to explore the representation of women's collective interests by Canadian women's organizations, Williams' second "strand" of representation is of primary concern.

Williams argues that the second strand of liberal representation centres on the premise that every individual has an equal opportunity to organize around interests that are of concern to her/ him. At the electoral stage of representation, citizens have the opportunity to mobilize with other citizens in order to support election campaigns. At the legislative stage of representation, groups of citizens can mobilize in order to influence the direction of policy outcomes. In this model, "fair" representation is achieved through competition between interest groups (1998: 10-11). According to liberal representation theory, the groups that have organized themselves well enough will have their claims represented in legislation. Williams explains:

Like equal opportunity doctrine, interest-group pluralism so conceived is a self-legitimizing process....Groups whose interests are not currently represented in the policy-making process have no grounds for complaint; like the intelligent individual who seeks admission to a good university, they have only to assert themselves to achieve their goals (1998: 68).

In this model, access to state processes is determined largely through competition and is usually granted to those groups that have the greatest access to monetary, technical, and human resources (Mishler and Clarke, 1995: 149). Critics of this model have exposed the undemocratic nature of this relationship. Inequalities in access to democratic processes subsequently exacerbate inequalities in political participation. Mishler and Clarke have stated that this “can distort the representation of public interests and undermine the fundamental basis of political equality” (1995: 147). They argue that the more powerful interest groups are comprised of societal elites and the government, therefore, is “placed in the somewhat anomalous position of defending the strong against the weak” (Prethuis, as cited in Mishler and Clarke: 149).

Critiques of the Limits of Liberal Representation

Criticisms of liberal theories of representation stem from perceptions of exclusion or marginalization in political processes (Williams, 1998; Phillips, 1995; Young 1990). Such criticisms question (and reject) the liberal notion of equality of opportunity in the competitive arena of “interest group” politics. Iris Marion Young asserts that oppression occurs when policy makers refuse to accept the existence of “social groups” in society.

She explains:

[w]hile groups do not exist apart from individuals, they are socially prior to individuals, because people's identities are partly constituted by their group affinities. Social groups reflect ways that people identify themselves and others, which lead them to associate with some people more than others, and to treat others as different (1990: 9).

Young maintains that differences exist between social groups; some groups are privileged and others experience oppression. Failure to "acknowledge" and "attend to" group differences results in the perpetuation of "institutionalized domination" (1990: 3-10).

The recognition of difference is also advocated by Anne Phillips (1995). In her work, *The Politics of Presence*, Phillips highlights debates concerning representation. She states that debates very often centre around the competing ideologies of the "politics of ideas" vs. the "politics of presence". Traditional conceptualizations of representation advocate "the politics of ideas" approach: that politics is rational, a "matter of judgement and debate". Political allegiances, therefore, "develop around policies rather than people" (1995: 6). Said another way, diversity has traditionally been equated with ideas rather than with the identity or social characteristics of different groups in society. In this model, "who" participates in decision-making processes is of no importance; "what", or the ideas generated through political debate, is what matters (1995: 6). Hanna Pitkin has termed this approach "substantive representation" where representation is determined by "[t]he substance of the issues, policies, and legislation the representative pursues" (cited in Duerst-Lahti and Versteegen, 1995: 216).

This runs in opposition to approaches advocating a "politics of presence"

(Phillips, 1995) or “descriptive representation” (Pitkin, as cited in Duerst-Lahti and Versteegen: 216). Phillips describes the “politics of presence” as an alternative to liberal representation. Developed as a response to perceptions of marginalization and exclusion from arenas of political decision making, the politics of presence demands that the characteristics of the people who have the power to make and effect decisions reflect the diversity of various racial, linguistic and ethnic groups that comprise a society; representation is based on “being something rather than doing something” (Pitkin, cited in Duerst-Lahti and Versteegen: 216). Phillips states that the extension of a politics of presence is an identity-based politics that advances the notion that oppressed groups should mobilize in order to have their voices heard and represented in political decision making (1995: 9).⁴ She cautions, however, that political presence alone will not ensure that diverse voices are incorporated in decision-making processes; a representative from a particular social group might not necessarily promote ideas and policies that will advance the interests of her/his social group. Therefore, Phillips maintains, a politics of presence must be merged with a politics of ideas in order to create a more inclusive, democratic vision of representation.

The politics of presence approach developed and gained momentum in the 1960s and 1970s with the rise of civil rights, social, student and women’s liberation movements (Phillips 9).⁵ These movements challenged traditional forms of representation and the

⁴ While Phillips asserts the need for a “politics of presence”, she states that she does not embrace Iris Marion Young’s conceptualization of “social groups”. Phillips maintains, that she does “not see [a politics of presence] as based on any strong notion of ‘group representation’” (1995: 21).

⁵See also: Rebeck, 2000; Pal, 1993; Barber, 1984; Kramer, 1972; Cook and Morgan, 1971.

status quo of elite accommodation in many liberal democracies. These challenges chiefly asserted the need for expanded, more inclusive visions of citizenship and argued for active citizen participation in policy development. Furthermore, they rejected traditional political processes that had institutionalized the marginalization of particular social groups and demanded the acknowledgement of group differences.

Participatory democracy

In 1963, political scientists Gabriel Almond and Sidney Verba wrote: “[i]f there is a political revolution going on throughout the world, it is what might be called the participation explosion” (cited in Cook and Morgan: 2). Throughout the 1960s and 1970s, civil rights groups and social movements mobilized in response to perceptions of exclusion from structures of power and decision-making processes. Demands for increased citizen participation in state processes took aim at the centralization of power in bureaucratic structures of representative governments. Specifically, the participatory democracy “movement” 1) advanced the concept of public participation in decision making; 2) promoted the idea of “collective knowledge” as an alternative to what was considered the undemocratic practice of relying on “appointed expertise” for policy development; and 3) questioned the “division of labour” between the “representatives” and those being represented. These three points will be discussed below.

Proponents of participatory democracy advocated a greater decentralization of power in decision-making processes and argued for a more inclusive form of representation:

Centralization in administration tends to promote remote and absentee control, and thereby increasingly denies to the individual the opportunity to make decisions and to carry those responsibilities by which personality is nourished and developed (Lilienthal, 1971: 411).

Decentralization of decision-making, it was argued, necessitates the inclusion of greater numbers of people in policy development processes. Specifically, proponents of participatory democracy advanced the notion that people whose lives will be affected by policy decisions must be included in the development of these decisions. In contrast to the “remote”, top-down application of liberal representation, participatory democracy encouraged “bottom-up,” “community-based” development of programs and policies.

Debates between supporters of participatory democracy and those who favour more traditional forms of liberal representation generally centre around the competing concepts of “collective knowledge” vs. “expertise.” Those who advocate the politics of participatory democracy, emphasize the value of the collective knowledge of human experience as opposed to the detached, logic of individual “expertise.” In his book, *Strong Democracy: Participatory Politics for a New Age*, Barber (1984: 152) asserts that decision-making should become the “politics of amateurs” rather than the “activity of specialists.” Advocates of participatory democracy have questioned the capacity of “policy specialists” and “appointed experts,” functioning in centralized offices, to comprehend the needs and lived realities of different groups of citizens (Cook and Morgan: 4; Barber: 152). Cook and Morgan (1971: 12) elaborate on this idea, explaining

that the ideas of amateurs may, indeed, be “superior to elective or appointive officials because their feelings, reflections, and experiences lead them to better choices of ends and means.” Lilienthal adds to this line of thinking by stating that greater inclusion of citizens in decision-making processes encourages a diversity of ideas and greater degree of creativity of solutions (1971: 411). Doubts concerning the capacity of amateurs to make sound decisions are countered by arguments that with collective knowledge, participants can “offset” each other’s weaknesses thereby forming a competent “decision-making unit” (Cook and Morgan: 12).⁶

Indeed, Barber’s response to concerns over weaknesses that may exist in the public’s ability to formulate policy decisions is that it is the government’s responsibility to assist the participation of amateurs by 1) facilitating their access to policy information and 2) by guiding the public through the processes of policy development (Barber: 1984). This leads the discussion toward the subject of the “division of labour”(Cook and Morgan: 2). Demands for greater public inclusion in policy development processes naturally asserted the need for a division of labour in decision-making between public participants and state officials. By according value to collective knowledge, proponents of participatory democracy contended that citizens had the capacity to carry out activities related to policy development.

Critics of this ideology cautioned that it is extremely important to keep in mind *who* is advocating increased public participation (ie. the state vs. societal actors). In

⁶ For a similar argument, see also: Lilienthal: 418.

1971, Kaase maintained that state rhetoric promoting participatory democracy is a tactic used by state administrators because it “consciously or unconsciously justifies undemocratic administrative behaviour in a democratic society.” He furthers that “therefore the chief beneficiaries of citizen participation as a bureaucratic ideology are the bureaucrats themselves” (1971: 420). In Cook and Morgan’s exploration of participatory democracy, they remark:

...it is far from obvious that the nature of the decisions reached is less important than whether the manner in which they are reached produces personal satisfaction with oneself and one’s society. To have participated in the making of decisions does not necessarily mean greater satisfaction with the results (1971: 11).

While written thirty years ago, these points are becoming increasingly relevant to our current political context, where contradictions exist between the implementation of neo-liberal socio-economic policies and state efforts to encourage greater citizen engagement. They also highlight an important point of inquiry that will be raised in Chapter Four: Does the participation of societal actors in state-designed consultation processes result in the actual representation of their interests in policy decisions? Earlier debates concerning the division of labour in decision-making processes are also becoming increasingly relevant today.

Wainright contends that decision-making in liberal democracies has traditionally allowed for the public “expression of opinion”, but has reserved the responsibility and authority to make decisions strictly for the “experts” (Wainright, as cited in Rebeck: 37).

Young (1990: 10) furthers that “[w]elfare state practices define policy as the province of

experts, and confine conflict to bargaining among interest groups about the distribution of social benefits. The distributive paradigm of justice tends to reflect and reinforce this depoliticized public life, by failing to bring issues of decision-making power, for example, into explicit public discussion.” The relegation of decision-making processes to such “experts” has been called by one author, “a serious threat to democratic representation” (Pocklington, 1994: 23).

Maille argues that currently, “representative democracies in the Western World are witnessing the decline of parliamentary government. More and more, decisions are left in the hands of a strong executive that relies on *the expertise of public servants*” (1997: 56, my emphasis). Pocklington asserts that Canada is now witnessing a movement toward greater technocracy and that this trend is “buttressed...by an unwarranted level of government secrecy” (1994: 23). Ironically, these assertions are being made at a time when the Canadian government is calling for increased public participation and “citizen engagement” in political processes.

The discussion has touched on three specific aspects of the participatory democracy debates that took place during the 1960s and 1970s in many western liberal democracies: the demand for increased public participation in political processes; the assertion that “collective knowledge” can enhance policy decisions; and the questioning of how “labour” in political decision-making processes is divided. Indeed, participatory democracy can be viewed as motivated by attempts to create a more democratic vision of representation. In our current political context, where tensions abound between neo-liberal political practices and state discourse advancing the importance of citizen

participation, it is instructive to re-examine the earlier ideals of participatory democracy.

In Paulo Freire's words, participatory democracy

recognize[s] the potential of women and men to know, to value, to establish limits, to choose, to imagine, to feel, to create, to decide, to formulate an action and direct it toward a goal, to refine and evaluate that action in order to humanize the world, reshaping or re-creating it (1993: ix).

Young contends that the recognition of differences among social groups and the inclusion and participation of "all groups" in public life is essential to the achievement of social justice" (1990: 10). Indeed, this line of argument can be continued by stating that the inclusion and participation of "all groups" must occur in both formal politics and in "civil society."

Civil Society

This thesis is concerned with exploring contradictions: those which exist between government discourse and government practice; the contradictions that emerge when particular concepts are shifted between political paradigms; and the contradictions that surface when specific concepts are espoused by opposing categories of state and societal actors. One of the main contradictions this thesis highlights is the Canadian state's call for increased partnerships and collaboration with "community" and the encouragement of greater participation on the part of civil society while the same political regime has closed political spaces and limited the political participation of one particular "civil society" group in Canada.

The concept of “civil society” is one which some scholars admittedly have referred to as illusive (Swift, 1999). While first theorized in the 1700s, the term has reemerged in recent years (Swift: 4; Levine, 2000). In examining current definitions of civil society, it becomes apparent that these definitions can be sub-divided into two categories: those which define civil society as categories of societal actors and those which define civil society as a political space. Both will be examined below.

In basic terms, civil society alludes to “voluntarism, charity, community organizing, grass roots activity. It means advocacy groups, representation, citizen engagement, and service delivery” (Swift: 5). More generally, the re-emergence of this term signifies a changing tide in the interaction between states and their citizens and a redefinition of forms of political participation. In many industrialized countries, there are calls for an enhanced role for “civil society”. This is redefining the relationships between governments and non-governmental organizations operating within nation states.

Similarly, on the international stage, a new trend is developing in the relationship between international institutions (such as the United Nations and the World Bank) and international NGOs. In 1994, Boutros Boutros Ghali, former UN Secretary-General, announced to NGO delegates that, “I want you to consider [the UN] your home.” Evaluating this comment, Rice and Ritchie remarked: “Until recently, these words might have caused astonishment. The United Nations was considered to be a forum for sovereign states alone... [NGOs] are now considered full participants in international life” (cited in Hudock, 1999: 51). Consistent with this shift, Boutros Boutros Ghali declared in his opening remarks to the Fourth World Conference on Women in 1995 that:

I have spoken often of the evolution of civil society and its importance for economic, cultural and democratic advancement. More effective mechanisms to ensure partnership between governments and civil society will contribute significantly to the implementation of the policies and measures that are called for in the [*Platform For Action*]⁷ (Pietilä and Vickers, 1996: xv).

Formally used as tools in the implementation of development programmes, Hudock maintains that international NGOs are now “seen as vehicles of democratization and civil society development” (1999: 51). Further, in developing countries, NGOs rather than state governments, are often considered “the preferred channel for collaboration” with international institutions (Huddock: 52). While Hudock’s work outlines both the formal and informal interaction between NGOs and international institutions, she also describes a chief role of international NGOs as aiding in the “development of a global civil society in which state behaviour becomes less central to collective choice” (1999: 58). By this, the author refers specifically to the advocacy role of NGOs in helping to organize and mobilize groups of people to “challenge powerful organizations such as the United Nations and the World Bank to respond to poor or disadvantaged groups...” (1999: 85). Swift (1999: 142) also describes the rising tide of “international solidarity” (attributed in large part to the increasing speed and ease of communication) in international “resistance campaigns.” Herein lies the tension between the two contending roles of advocacy organizations: the work involved in developing and sustaining working relationships with

⁷The *Platform for Action* is the official document of the United Nations 1995 Fourth World Conference on Women. It has been ratified by 189 nations.

national or international political institutions; and the work involved in challenging these same institutions to become more responsive to the needs and demands of their citizens. The same tension exists at the national level between state governments and voluntary organizations.

Defined as a category of societal actors, civil society has come to mean, in its most basic sense, politically active groups and individuals in society who do not directly form part of either the private sector or the public sector. This “third sector”⁸ (Hudock:1; Lewis, 1999; Swift,1999) has become a repository of not-for-profit groups and individuals who often hold opposing political goals and mandates.⁹ Interestingly, definitions of civil society as the “third sector” originated from circles that espouse neo-liberal philosophies. Inherent in this understanding is the creation of “partnerships” between the three sectors. Government (and, to a lesser degree, business) linkages are being forged with “community” or civil society groups to compensate for the loss of activities and services once carried out by a now-depleted welfare state (Swift: 72). The shrinking role of the state has demanded an increased role for the third sector.

With this definition of civil society, questions arise concerning the role of organizations within the third sector. While there appears to be a greater need for third sector participation, Jenson and Phillips (1996) argue that this involvement is

⁸ The term “third sector” is often used interchangeably with the “voluntary sector.”

⁹ Even this definition is somewhat murky, as “civil society” has been described as including “... the family and (sometimes) corporations” (Levine, 2000: 74). Trivedy and Acharaya (1996) have stated the following: “By definition civil society consists of a variety of groupings. These include fascists, terrorists, racketeers, criminal elements as well as individuals and groups committed to democracy, and the much fancied neighbourhood organizations...” (cited in Swift: 7).

increasingly restricted to roles associated with “service provision” rather than advocacy. In Canada, from the mid 1980s to present-day, the state has systematically engaged in a process of delegitimizing many of its advocacy organizations. As a result, a hierarchy of groups within the third sector exists; those associated with service delivery are “on top” and those devoted mainly to advocacy are “deemed irrelevant” (Jenson and Phillips: 127). The forging of partnerships with the third sector has been referred to as Canada’s “contracting regime” or “partnership regime” (Jenson and Phillips, 1996; Swift: 75) where, one could argue, the development of economic relationships between the sectors is the primary objective.

Swift’s work also addresses hierarchy within civil society. He states,

Activists and NGOs concerned with participation and empowerment must certainly be aware that much inequality of rank, position, and remuneration exists between NGOs and all manifestations of civil society ... and that in this they are a mirror of society at large (1999: 19).

The combination of the state’s defunding of particular societal groups and the funding (read: allocation of contracts for service provision) of other voluntary organizations has contributed to an increase in inequality of rank, position and remuneration among NGOs. This has led to the inability of some groups to represent adequately the voices of particular (disadvantaged) segments of the Canadian population. The closing of political spaces for particular advocacy organizations has limited access to democratic processes for certain groups in Canada.

This brings us to the second definition of civil society. Swifts argues that civil

society is a space set apart from “formal” politics but, nonetheless, very politically “engaged” where people actively participate in influencing decisions that directly affect them or that contribute to a greater “public good.” Such participation, Swift affirms, will result in the democratization of both the market and the state (1999: 147). Obviously, this goal runs in opposition to many of the main tenets of neo-liberalism.

Other scholars have attributed such a space to the creation of *social capital*, in other words, “the degree of trust, reciprocity, and engagement between individuals in a particular society” (Hudock: 16). Hudock states that one of the chief roles played by NGOs should be supporting the participation of local and grassroots communities in activities which develop social capital and therefore contribute to a “thickening” of civil society (Fox, as cited in Hudock: 16).¹⁰ A recent discussion paper by Wyman, Shulman and Ham (1999), builds on the ideas surrounding social capital and challenges the current power imbalances in decision-making between citizens and government. It argues that governments and citizens in many countries “face the challenge of recreating the ways in which they relate to one another” (1999: 74).

Beginning with the concept of citizen engagement, defined as government initiatives to involve individual citizens in policy development (1999: 3), the authors propose lengthening the “continuum of engagement” to include the concepts of “government engagement” and “mutual engagement.” Government engagement refers to citizen initiatives to include decision makers in policy dialogue on issues that are of

¹⁰See also Fullinwider, 1999.

concern to them (1999: 4). Linked to this idea is the growing skepticism of citizens regarding the legitimacy and competence of their governments (O'Hara, as cited in Wyman et al, 1999: 4). The authors define mutual engagement as a process involving "ongoing deliberation and communication between citizens and governments" (1999: 4). Inherent in both of these concepts is the basic idea that citizens possess the capacity and will to participate actively in the substantive processes involved in making public policy. This fundamental point is a departure from current neo-liberal conceptualizations of civil society that view voluntary organizations as partners in the provision of services, but regard policy development as the domain of government decision-makers.

In the past decade, the term "civil society" has entered into mainstream political usage (Swift: 4). It has become a politically charged term, however, because, depending on how the word is used, or more specifically, who is using it, "civil society" can have contradictory meanings. Indeed, even the usage of the term "participation" is fraught with inconsistencies.¹¹ For those who support the current neo-liberal political regime, civil society has come to signify a pool of labour that will deliver many essential services once administered by government. Seen this way, civil society is a tool of the neo-liberal state. The idea of civil society participation revolves around those activities which will contribute to a strong "voluntary sector," a sector capable of responding to the new "contracting regime." For those who do not subscribe to this ideology, civil society is a

¹¹ Swift (1999: 72) remarks that "participation," once embraced by the "New Left" and social movements of the 1960s and 70s, is now a 'buzz word' adopted by national governments and powerful institutions like the World Bank.

space which encourages political participation and community activism. Pearce has stated that an “authentic civil society must involve the poor and the weak gaining real and meaningful rights as citizens, genuinely enfranchised and able to build organizations to defend their interests. It is about the rights of individuals to associate voluntarily” (as cited in Hudock: 16). Using this definition, civil society can be seen as a site of resistance or as a force for change. The contradictions that emerge between these two definitions permeate my analyses throughout the following chapters. National women’s advocacy groups, operating in English-Canada have, since their inceptions, been politically active. The political spaces afforded to them have enabled them to resist or to struggle for change. Current neo-liberal (re)definitions of civil society, however, challenge the fundamental roles of these organizations.

This chapter has introduced the concepts of representation, participatory democracy and civil society. Until this point, however, these ideas have not been viewed through a feminist lens. I argue that each of these terms are gendered and that in order to understand how the relationship between national, women’s advocacy organizations, operating in English-Canada, and the Canadian state has altered in recent years, analyses must be informed by a feminist perspective.

Toward a feminist framework

Feminist theory is structured around an identity politics that argues that women’s lives can be examined as a series of shared experiences than are not reducible to individual realities. Women constitute a “social group” (Williams, 1998). Feminist

scholars maintain however, that women do not comprise a homogeneous category and emphasize the need to recognize differences among women (race, ethnicity, language, levels of ability, sexual orientation, and class) (Maillé: 59; Rankin and Vickers, 1997: 345; Vickers, 1997b: 44). In examining how the relationship between women's advocacy organizations and the state is being redefined, I assert the need for a framework that incorporates current ideas surrounding representation, participation and civil society from a women-centred perspective.

Maillé contends that one of the strongest experiences that links all women is their categorical marginalization from formal politics and political decision-making; "one issue that unites all women ... [is] the historical exclusion from public space of women as a social group" (Maillé, 58). Indeed, the historical relationship between women and the state has incited specific feminist analyses of women's political participation and has informed feminist understandings of representation. In the paragraphs that follow, I will argue that women have been unable to participate actively in political decision-making because women's participation has been shaped in particular ways.

Feminist critiques of mainstream political paradigms expose the narrowness in conceptualizations of political participation and representation. Vickers (1997a: 12) states that the "political science" paradigm defines activities carried out in the public sphere as "political" but fails to recognize activities carried out in the "domestic sphere" and in "*civil society*" (my emphasis) as political. This is an extremely significant argument since feminist academics assert that much of women's political activity takes place *outside* the realm of "formal politics" (Vickers, 1997a: 12; Arscott and Trimble, 1997:

3; Rankin and Vickers: 343). This activity occurs, instead, in “local communities or institutions outside of the state” (Vickers, 1997a: 12).

Chapter 2 provides a brief overview of women’s political organizing through national women’s organizations operating in English-Canada. It describes how two national women’s organizations, the National Council of Women of Canada (NCWC) and the National Action Committee on the Status of Women (NAC), emerged during the first and second waves of mobilization, respectively, to become parallel political bodies to the Canadian state. While women’s claims were (and remain) under represented in federal politics, women’s demands were represented in these alternative “parliament[s] of women” (Vickers et al., 1993). In turn, these claims were articulated to the Canadian state.

Indeed, this thesis argues that an integral role of women’s national advocacy organizations, operating in English-Canada, has been to represent women’s interests to the federal state. In fact, “women are represented as much by autonomous women’s organizations as by the women s/elected for legislative or judicial office or selected for jobs in the bureaucracy” (Vickers, 1997b: 40). Similarly, Maillé states that, “in Quebec, the women’s movement has been the most important factor in the political representation of women. It has been the most influential factor in advances made by women over the last 30 years” (Maillé: 62).

If “civil society” is now construed to mean organizations and individuals who do not comprise part of either the “public” or “private” sector, then this paradigm serves to depoliticize the activities of women’s advocacy organizations. A diminished policy

relationship between the federal state and women's advocacy organizations impedes significantly the potential representation of women's collective interests in federal political decision-making.

Since much of women's political activity has taken place outside of formal political arenas, this has allowed for alternative visions of political expression to take root. As with other social movements of the 1960s and 1970s, the Women's Liberation Movement advanced the importance of the ideals of participatory democracy. One of the most significant concepts of this movement became the valuing and advancement of collective knowledge. Slogans such as, "the personal is political" emphasized the validity of personal experience. Women participating in feminist consciousness-raising groups developed critiques, based on their own experiences, of existing government policies and programs that had, to that point, failed them. These critiques were then transformed into action for change (Rebick, 2000a: 32). Many feminists endorsed the idea that the "struggle [for transformation was] to be controlled by those who are part of the struggle" (Adamson, Briskin and McPhail, 1988: 173).

Rebick claims that after the disintegration of the New Left, the "women's movement" became the vehicle for advancing and extending the meaning of participatory democracy (2000a: 34). This resulted in the development of feminist conceptualizations of knowledge that are "so different from the expert-based knowledge that dominates our democratic process" (2000a: 35). Women's organizations, advocating the importance of women's knowledge, developed alternative services, political spaces and alternative visions of representation.

Indeed, feminist analyses of mainstream politics have caused one scholar to question whether the concept of representation is compatible with the concept of feminism. Maillé asserts that representation assumes a strict division of labour between the people who are being represented and those who are charged with representing their interests to the state. This, therefore, necessitates a(n) (unequal) power relationship between the “representative” and the “represented.” She concludes that the institutionalized perpetuation of inequality is antithetical to feminist goals of equality and the “participatory,” “decentralized view[s] of power” (Maillé: 56).

Other feminists have stated that a more just vision of representation is possible to achieve. Young argues for a “principle of political decision making that encourages autonomous organizations of [social] groups within a public.” She explains that this “entails establishing procedures for ensuring that each group’s voice is heard in the public through institutions of group representation” (Young: 11). Vickers claims that women’s movements are sites where alternative visions of representation can be developed. She asserts that “within women’s movements, we can explore how to transform representation, citizenship and politics” (Vickers, 1997b: 44) . Indeed, operating as a “parliament of women,” the National Action Committee on the Status of Women was challenged by women of marginalized groups to develop more inclusive forms of representation, forms that would be sensitive to differences in race, ethnicity, language, class, sexual orientation and levels of ability (Vickers et al., 1993: 39). As a result, strategies for more democratic visions of representation have been tried and tested within the organization.

Feminist literature has advocated for a politics of presence, yet, argues that presence, in itself, is not enough; that this representation must endeavour to advance women's shared interests while respecting differences among women (Vickers, 1997a; Vickers, 1997b; Rankin and Vickers; 1997). Arscott and Trimble assert that feminist representation, "or representation 'as if women matter,' is more likely to occur when it is undertaken both by and for women" (Arscott and Trimble: 4). Maillé has furthered that this vision of representation "can be provided only by the women's movement" (Maillé: 61). Using lessons learned from feminist organizing, Vickers has identified a feminist theory of representation that rests on three principles: that understandings of women's representation must recognize both state institutions *and* organizations in *civil society* as legitimate vehicles for women's demands; that feminist concerns regarding the limits of representation must be addressed and; that alternative visions of representation such as the "democratization of institutions, self-organization, and direct action" must be considered seriously (Vickers, 1997b: 44, my emphasis). Indeed, a feminist conceptualization of representation, participatory democracy and civil society informs the subsequent chapters in this thesis. I argue that such a framework is critical in assessing the current relationship between the federal government and national women's advocacy organizations operating in English-Canada.

Conclusion

The concepts of representation, participatory democracy and civil society will emerge and reemerge throughout this thesis. I argue that conceptualizations of the role of

Canada's voluntary sector are being re-defined. The following chapters will explore some of the possible implications for national women's advocacy groups. I proceed, however, with the understanding that not all actors in civil society / Canada's new voluntary sector are equal. Just as women have been marginalized and under-represented in formal politics, I suggest that the voices of women's organizations might well be marginalized in state initiatives to engage with civil society. Therefore, these initiatives must be evaluated from a feminist perspective in order to ensure that women's voices continue to be heard and that feminist visions of representation, participatory democracy and civil society are considered.

CHAPTER TWO

The Emergence of a Consultative Relationship Between the Canadian State and National Women's Advocacy Organizations Operating in English Canada

Introduction

This chapter briefly outlines the historical relationship of Canadian national, women's groups, operating in English-Canada, to the Canadian state. In comparison to the anti-state stance adopted by many women's movements in the United States and in Europe, women's groups in Canada have historically oriented their mobilization towards state political processes (Sawer, 1996: ii; Phillips, 1990: 37). While there exist numerous reasons to account for the pro-statist stance of most national women's groups, operating in English-Canada, one major factor remained, until recently, the state's regular engagement of women's groups in the development of public policy (Pal, 1993: 244). This chapter will trace the evolution of the relationship between the federal state and national women's groups in order to set the context for later chapters that overview how this relationship has eroded due to the increasing influence of neo-liberal philosophies on state policies and processes.

The purpose of this chapter, then, is to formulate an understanding of why the change in the relationship between women's groups and the federal state has been so profound. This brings the discussion back to the concept of democracy. As I illustrate below, the first mobilization of women's groups in Canada initiated a relationship with the Canadian federal state that allowed for the creation of political spaces for women. The

maintenance of these initial political spaces enabled women during the second wave of mobilization to voice their collective demands. The political culture of the 1960s and 1970 fostered efforts to advance participatory democracy and the federal state responded to women's demands by expanding existing political spaces for women and helping to develop new ones. The rise of neo-liberalism, however, has resulted in the closing of these spaces and, therefore, the narrowing of Canadian women's access to democracy. Further, the closing of these political spaces signifies the state's marginalization of national women's groups as legitimate sources of knowledge for the development of Canadian public policy.

The First Wave of Mobilization: Establishing Links with the Canadian State

The emergence of the relationship between national women's organizations and the Canadian state began with the first mobilization of Canadian women at the turn of the 20th century. The formation of Canada's first national women's organizations during this time marked a strategic departure among women of Canada's social elite engaged in charitable activities to improve the lives of individual people in their communities. Traditionally, such women had organized through local religious institutions in order to carry out acts of charity. When the goals of women shifted from those of charity to those of social reform, the forum to affect change shifted from the community church to the Canadian federal state (Mitchinson, 1987: 78). In Mitchinson's words, "[o]nly the power of the state could exert any influence in such a situation" (1987: 86) and, in order for women to have their claims to the federal state heard, it was necessary for them to

mobilize through national women's organizations.

The orientation of women's groups towards social reform fostered a belief in pursuing change through state processes. Mitchinson states that "The goal for both reformers and the state was and still is objective; that is, the creation of a stable, ordered, and peaceful society where the needs of those being served were and are secondary to those of the society as a collective entity" (1987: 78). The perpetuation of a stable, ordered and peaceful society required allegiance to state institutions and state laws. Those who were afflicted by "societal problems" would also retain their faith in institutions and processes that helped find solutions to their grievances. This ideology of English-Canada's early women's organizations such as the Young Women's Christian Association (YWCA), the Women's Christian Temperance Union (WCTU) and the National Council of Women of Canada (NCWC), was, in part, influenced by religious doctrine (Mitchinson: 88). Work to secure the rights of women was seen as a small part of this much larger goal and, in fact, was only supported by these national organizations when the realization of these rights would lead to a greater political ability of women to bring about social reforms (Phillips, 1990: 40). Nevertheless, struggles for enfranchisement and greater political participation generated the conditions necessary for the establishment of working relationships between the Canadian state and national women's organizations (Vickers, Rankin and Appelle, 1993: 62).

Volunteerism, helping others in need, and demanding that the government provide services to improve the situation of the less fortunate were the main features of women's organizing during this time. In fact, the work of these early women's organizations has

been credited with paving the way for the establishment of Canada's social welfare system (Vickers et al.: 39; Mitchinson: 89). Vickers et al. further argue that the tremendous involvement of women in the establishment of the welfare state might explain the greater belief in the state to affect change held by Canadian women than held by women elsewhere (1993: 39). Phillips (1990: 42) maintains that when the social reform movement lost its impetus in the 1920s, national women's organizations, operating in English-Canada, continued to work away "quietly and persistently" to affect changes in areas concerning "unemployment, women and work, penal reform, appointment of women to the public service, international development assistance, social and child welfare, alcohol abuse, education and civil liberties."

The organizational structures of national women's organizations of the first wave of mobilization were also established to enable women to organize their claims for state action. The formation of the NCWC is one example of a national women's organizational structure that succeeded in representing women's demands to the federal government. Indeed, the success of such a structure influenced the founding members of the National Action Committee on the Status of Women (NAC) to model the operation of their organization on the NCWC (Phillips: 49). The NCWC created an umbrella organization to coordinate the voices of local and provincial women's organizations across Canada as well as the voices of its national affiliates. As a national forum, the NCWC provided women (and does until this day) "with information on which to base their opinions, gave them an arena for debate on differing views, and taught the principles of cooperative action between those of different beliefs" (Griffiths, 1993: 11). The organization viewed

itself as Canada's first "parliament of women" (1990: 40).

In summary, early women's organizations in Canada established a particular way of working with the Canadian state, and therefore, fostered a belief in working through the state to affect societal change. Phillips' examination of national women's groups points to their dual role during this time of lobbying the state for public policy reform and providing "direct social service to women and community" (1990: 39). Their views, methods and organizational structures were carried forth into the second wave of Canadian women's mobilization in the late 1960s.

Tactics Used by the First Wave to Lobby the Government

The 1924 meeting of the NCWC with the federal government provides one example of the number of methods employed by women's organizations to work with the state for policy reform. During the formal meetings of the NCWC Executive with members of the Federal Cabinet and the Prime Minister, the NCWC Executive presented a series of resolutions for action. This practice occurred regularly throughout the decades, became an annual event during the 50s and 60s (Griffiths: 248) and continued until the end of the 1980s (Griffiths: 378). It became a tradition of the NCWC to organize an annual general meeting (AGM) which lasted two or three days and then follow this meeting with a "lobby day" at which the organization would present the representatives of federal political parties with their demands for action. The NCWC also established a comprehensive monitoring system where the outcomes of resolutions presented to the federal cabinet, and forwarded to Ministers and M.P.s, were tracked, "requests for

information were traced, responses were tabulated and the Council was able to follow government reaction to its requests” (Griffiths: 173).

As the relationship between the federal government and the NCWC matured, the NCWC became more directly involved in public policy. By the 1950s, the state looked to the NCWC for expertise in policy development. Beginning in 1952, members of the NCWC were “regularly appointed” to federal committees such as the National Advisory Committee on Manpower, the National Employment Committee and the National Advisory Committee on Vocational Training (Griffiths: 249). This marked the emergence of a reciprocal relationship between the Canadian state and women’s organizations, where the state formally acknowledged women’s organizations as legitimate repositories of knowledge and expertise.

Transition from the First to Second Wave of Mobilization

In historical accounts of Canadian women’s organizing, scholars are quick to establish that the second wave of mobilization did not occur in a vacuum and that the continuity of women’s organizing and ideology from the first to second wave is key to understanding Canadian patterns of feminist mobilization (Phillips: 43; Vickers et al.: 16; Adamson, Briskin and McPhail, 1988). Phillips states that this continuity “kept women involved in social issues ... and encouraged both social service and political action.” (1990: 43) In addition, women organizing during the mid to late 1960s “inherited” from established women’s organizations ideas and values about how political action should be conducted. Vickers, Rankin and Appelle term this the “operational code” of the women’s

movement and argue that this code, referred to by the authors as “radical liberalism,” encompassed:

a commitment to the ordinary political process, a belief in the welfare state, a belief in the efficacy of state action in general to remedy injustices, a belief that change is possible, a belief that dialogue is useful and may help promote change, and belief that service or helping others is a valid contribution to the process of change. (1993: 36)

In this next section, I establish that women’s beliefs in state processes to effect change were sustained throughout the second wave of Canadian women’s mobilization. The state legitimized the voices of the women’s equality-seeking organizations by providing them with state funding, technical and policy research support, establishing state machinery at the federal level to respond to women’s claims, and by consulting with national women’s equality-seeking organizations for the purpose of policy development. In turn, national women’s organizations legitimized the role of the state as an “active state,” by regularly engaging with the state to achieve their goals.

The Royal Commission on the Status of Women and the Founding of NAC

The Royal Commission on the Status of Women (RCSW), struck in 1967, is an example of the belief of women in state processes to bring about change, and how action through state processes can perpetuate “the transmission of the values of radical liberalism” (Vickers et al.: 36). While the fight for the RCSW was won, in part, due to intensive lobbying tactics from national women’s groups established during the first wave of mobilization and, finally, Laura Sabia’s threats of militancy, this did not deter women from organizing around the state. In fact, Phillips states that, “even to the present day, it

has entrenched a focus among Anglophone Canadian women's groups on the federal government" (1990: 48).

The significance of the RCSW for entrenching pro-statist, radical liberal values among feminists lies in several factors. Perhaps most importantly, the efforts of the Commission to consult with and obtain information from women across Canada stimulated a nation-wide exercise in consciousness-raising, an exercise which led to the proliferation of new women's organizations across Canada. It was also an exercise which promised state responses to the problems identified by Canadian women, and therefore, instilled in women hope that change would occur via the federal state. Furthermore, the recommendations of the Commission led directly to the development of the Canadian Women's State¹² and the Canadian Women's Agenda.¹³

The founding of the National Action Committee on the Status of Women (NAC) to oversee the implementation the Royal Commission's recommendations marked a defining moment in the second wave of mobilization of Canadian women and its continued existence exemplifies the commitment many feminists have to orienting equality claims towards the state. Vickers (1991: 88) observes that, "[w]hile NAC does not 'represent' even the English-Canada's women's movement in the fullest sense, it does constitute the most representative body presently in the movement ..." NAC was

¹²This term was coined by Sue Findlay (1987) and refers to the institutionalization of women's policy machinery within the federal government. Before its "restructuring" in the early 1990s, the Canadian Women's State consisted of three main bodies: the now defunct Canadian Advisory Council on the Status of Women (CACSW), the Women's Program, and Status of Women Canada (SWC).

¹³The "Canadian Women's Agenda" is a term used by Sandra Burt (Burt, 1997) to encompass the ways in which the Canadian state responded to women's demands. This will be discussed in more detail below.

conceptualized as an umbrella organization, formed to coordinate and moderate the voices and demands of its members groups and then articulate their collective demands to the federal government. In 1972, its member organizations numbered 31. By the late 80s, this figured ballooned to 600 (Vickers et al.: 4). The study by Vickers et al. (1993), on the National Action Committee on the Status of Women follows the transformation of the organization as a “lobby coalition” in its early days to a “parliament of women with radical grassroots” by the year 1988.

In studying the early years of NAC, it is possible to identify important similarities with women’s organizations and the philosophies of the first wave of Canadian women’s mobilization in English-Canada. Indeed, the characterization of NAC as a “parliament of women” resembles the organization of the National Council of Women of Canada (Phillips: 40). Vickers et al. state that the NCWC became a model for the new NAC (1993: 291). Early lobbying practices of NAC, such as annual lobby days with federal government officials are reminiscent of similar practices of organizations, such as the NCWC. What differentiated NAC and other groups born during the second wave of mobilization from earlier women’s groups, however, was their specific focus on struggles to advance women’s equality.

Indeed, the rhetoric of early second wave organizations signified a departure from the social reformist efforts that defined women’s groups established at the beginning of the 20th Century. Later groups abandoned earlier maternal feminist visions of improving society and instead focussed on discourse and action revolving around “gender equality and rights” (Phillips: 44) and the links between social policy and issues that affected

women's lives. The shift in the ideology between older and newer women's organizations is evident in the example of the NCWC being turned down for funding from the federal government in 1987 on the basis that, "the Council was not a status of women organization" (Griffiths: 374). While the organization successfully argued to have its funding restored, this example also serves to illustrate the way in which the state was able to render legitimate and perhaps even control (Findlay, 1987) the actions of women's organizations. Phillips points to the significance of creating a focus of gender equality and rights discourse as an agenda which would need "government involvement, lobbying the government and government action" (1990: 44). The state-focussed agenda of Canadian feminists in the 1960s and 1970s revolved around issues of "equal-opportunity" such as "labour-market justice, child-care, legal rights, and reproductive rights" (Bakker, 1996: 11). Such an agenda indicated the belief held by national women's organizations in the federal government to advance women's equality struggles.

Women's Engagement with the Canadian State (1968-1986)

The following section argues that the successes attained by national women's organizations, operating in English-Canada, until the end of the 1980s were due, in large part, to the political will which encouraged and sustained a working relationship between the Canadian state and national women's organizations. Just as some of the early achievements of women at the turn of the century can be attributed to a combination of the social connections they held with the ruling elite and their participation in a socio-political environment which advocated social reform, the successes of the second wave

can be linked to a particular political environment that fostered citizen participation.

It is essential to situate the successes of women's struggles with the Canadian state in the second half of the 20th Century within the context of what Vickers, Rankin and Appelle term, "the long era of Liberal rule" (1993: 17). The political context of this era encouraged the development of a political "regime" (Jenson and Phillips, 1996) centred around the Liberal vision of centralized politics and the fostering of participatory democracy. Over the many years of Liberal rule, this vision was translated into the establishment of state structures and processes designed, in part, to encourage citizen participation.

Indeed, Pierre Trudeau's government came to power in 1968 campaigning on a promise to usher in a "just society." His vision of such a society hinged on the creation of a new model of citizenship that included access to, and influence of, state processes. Leslie Pal refers to this period as "the New Liberal Agenda" (Pal, 1993: 148). This agenda established a particular political environment that encouraged the generation of proposals aimed at working towards the representation of, and equality-seeking measures for, collectivities within Canadian society: "[a]chieving social justice and equity were legitimate goals, and therefore groups which made claims, and programs which responded to such claims, were in the political mainstream (Jenson and Phillips, 1996: 119).

The directive for greater citizen participation was delivered by redefining the government's relationship with, and the role of, voluntary organizations. As Pal's scholarship documents, the Citizenship Branch of the Secretary of State began actively

funding advocacy organizations whose mandates corresponded with the government's goals of achieving social justice and equity. A memorandum of voluntarism issued by cabinet in 1971 stated that: "The purpose of this program is to strengthen the voluntary sector to enable citizens to participate more effectively in the decisions that effect the quality of their lives. Financial and technical support is given to a wide variety of citizen's organizations, with emphasis on low income and disadvantaged citizen's groups" (Pal: 116). Early visions of Trudeau's participatory democracy regime held that state funds would support voluntary organizations so that these groups would be "prime participants" in policy development and would therefore experience an "enhanced sense" of citizenship (Pal: 244). The words, "prime participants" in policy development are very important to an understanding of exactly how the government viewed the role of voluntary groups. While Pal is explaining the government's conceptualization of all voluntary groups, I will make the case that the federal Liberal government established a particular relationship with national women's organizations, operating in English-Canada, that accorded them a great deal of access to state structures and, in turn, aided their interventions in the policy process.

Unique to Canada was the design of federal programs aimed at fostering citizenship participation, in particular, programs that "were often explicitly directed at organizations whose primary purpose was *advocacy* of a particular political agenda"(Pal: 244, my emphasis). In contrast, American programs specifically segregated advocacy organizations from associations whose primary mandates focussed on research and service provision. In the United States, provision of public funds was restricted to

organizations in the latter category (Pal: 244). Jenson and Phillips claim that the legitimization of advocacy groups through state funding initiatives “may comprise one of the distinctive characteristics of Canada’s citizenship regime” (1996: 118). The legacy of this practice also helps to explain why national women’s groups focussed their activities toward the state and supports the argument that, especially in the early years of Trudeau’s Liberal government, women’s groups were seen as legitimate societal actors for the articulation of policy directions.

The state funding of women’s groups reaffirmed the commitment of many women’s organizations to the operational code of radical liberalism. While there exists an obvious contradiction surrounding the state provision of financial and technical support to advocacy groups whose mandates encouraged lobbying the state for change, Vickers et al. maintain that even “quite radical groups” did not turn down federal funding for their initiatives (1993: 38). The state’s response to women’s demands at this time actually encouraged the growth of women’s organizing in Canada. Phillips’ study of national Canadian women’s organizations points to the state’s role in the creation of new groups. She notes that the federal government was instrumental in providing funding and “assistance” to women for the specific purpose of holding a founding conference (1990: 50-53). The first such group founded with the aid of the federal government was the National Action Committee on the Status of Women (NAC). Subsequent groups, such as the Canadian Research Institute for the Advancement of Women (CRIAOW), MATCH, the Canadian Congress of Learning Opportunities for Women (CCLOW), and the

Canadian Association for the Advancement of Women in Sports (CAAWS), were founded similarly with the aid of government funding for activities surrounding the International Women's Year (IWY) (1990: 51). In the 1980s, government support was critical in the emergence of national groups like the Congress of Black Women, Pauktuutit, the DisAbled Women's Network (DAWN), and the National Organization of Immigrant and Visible Minority Women (NOIVMW) (1990: 53). State assistance to this last group of women's organizations is especially significant because, in Phillips' words, "[w]ithout state assistance such conferences may never have been organized at the national level due to the inability of minority women, who usually have considerably fewer financial resources than other women, to subsidize personally their own organizational costs" (1990: 53).

The state funding of women's voluntary groups is one indicator of a political environment which enabled and even encouraged women's engagement with the Canadian state. Similarly, especially in the early years of the funding programs, the availability of such monies helped instill in women's organizations a view that the Canadian state was the logical point of direction for their demands for change. This practice, however, also reinforced the "dependency" of national women's organizations on the Canadian state (Burt, 1997: 259). While this was not necessarily of great significance in a political environment that legitimized citizen participation, it became an increasingly important factor as Canada's citizenship regime shifted to one defined by the values of neo-liberalism.

State Machinery and Mechanisms for Responding to Women's Demands

The growth in the role of the federal government for fostering citizenship engagement necessitated the creation of federal bureaucratic structures and mechanisms that would represent the claims of different groups in Canadian society. Up until the 1970s, only one area in the federal government was specifically assigned to advance women's equality in policy development. The Women's Bureau in the Department of Labour was established in 1954 to carry out this mandate. Following the release of the *Report of the RCSW*, the Liberal government initiated the creation of women's bureaucratic mechanisms throughout the federal bureaucracy. In 1971, the Office of Equal Opportunity was established in the Public Service Commission, a Co-ordinator of the Status of Women was appointed to the Privy Council Office and a Cabinet Minister was designated responsible for the Status of Women. In 1972, a federal Interdepartmental Committee was organized in order to support preparations for International Women's Year. The year 1973 saw the establishment of the Canadian Advisory Council on the Status of Women (CACSW). Three years later, in 1976, Marc Lalonde, then- Minister Responsible for the Status of Women, initiated a directive on the further integration of measures to advance women's equality into federal structures. Lalonde struck an interdepartmental committee on integration mechanisms that precipitated the founding of "departmental units" such as the office of the women's advisor in Health and Welfare Canada (Sawer, 1996: 12). Findlay points out, however, that not all departments were required to set up integration mechanisms; she states that "advisors were appointed in departments with mandates so clearly related to women's

issues that failure to focus on women's status would have been politically embarrassing" (1987: 38).

The three main institutional bodies that carried out the federal government's women's agenda became the Canadian Advisory Council on the Status of Women, Status of Women Canada (SWC), and the Women's Program (WP) (housed within the Secretary of State). This machinery is referred to by Sue Findlay (1987) as the Canadian Women's State. Phillips' 1990 study of national women's organizations discovered that, "national women's groups have a restricted range of contacts in advocacy with federal government officials, and tend to concentrate their efforts on apparatus specifically designed to deal with 'women's issues' " (1990: iii). The Canadian Women's State was structured along a three-pronged approach. SWC's dual role was to act as a coordinator, providing policy advice to different departments of the federal government, and to act as a policy secretariat (Vickers et al.: 81). The CACSW was established as an "arms-length" advisory organization to coordinate information gathering, research and policy analysis. The Women's Program in the Secretary of State coordinated the allocation of state resources to women's organizations.

The Women's State has been criticised by feminist scholars for only integrating the demands of women which supported "legal equality thinking" and the development of policies geared towards the realization of "equal opportunity" (Burt, 1997: 251; Findlay, 1987) rather than on the utilization of feminist analyses to bring about substantive, transformative change. Both Findlay and Burt's analyses, however, point to the early and intermediate years of the Women's Program as an exception to this rule. Initially, the

Program was staffed by women who held more loyalty to the Canadian “women’s movement” than to the bureaucratic processes of the state (Findlay: 36; O’Neil, 1993) and, as a result, the allocation of funding for women’s initiatives was determined more by the priorities of the “movement” than the priorities of the Canadian state (Findlay: 40). Burt remarks that through the Women’s Program, “alternative feminist visions of women’s claims were gaining a public voice” (1997: 251). O’Neil balances the above criticisms by stating that the Women’s Program “contributed to the success of the women’s lobby. It made a myriad of community initiatives possible and was not halted in its growth until 1986” with the rise of right-wing, anti-feminist forces (1993: 324). In conclusion, then, the development of state machinery as a response to women’s demands, not only strengthened the capacity of women’s organizations to articulate their claims to the Canadian state, but it also fostered the ability of women’s organizations to build their own capacity to organize collectively. Inevitably, it also reinforced the views of many women that the Canadian federal state could adequately represent and respond to women’s organized claims.

The Interaction of the Canadian State and Women’s Organizations

This view can be substantiated further by examining the ways in which the state consulted with its women citizens. Findlay has marked the period 1966-1979 as a time when the Canadian state endeavoured to translate women’s demands into the policy processes of the federal government. She argues that during this period, “the state demonstrated a commitment to *consult* with the women of Canada ...” (1987: 31, my

emphasis). Indeed, an examination of the report of the first Coordinator of the Status of Women establishes the political will of the Canadian government to consult with national women's organizations. In the section of the report which discusses "Support to Voluntary Organizations," the Coordinator remarks, "The briefs prepared by [the NCWC, the Canadian Federation of Business and Professional Women's Clubs, the Canadian Federation of University Women, and NAC] as well as the numerous letters and submissions of others drawing their concerns to the attention of the government were given careful consideration in the formulation of policy decisions" (Paltiel, 1972: 19). The political will during this time can also be seen with the federal government's coordination of the first National Consultation of Women's Organizations held in 1970 (Paltiel: 20). Further examples of the federal state actively consulting women's groups are outlined in Bonnet's history of the Canadian Research Institute on the Advancement of Women (CRIAW). She states that during the period 1981-1985, the Canadian state "began to seek input from CRIAW on a variety of policies, including labour market development and unemployment insurance" (Bonnet, 1996: 62). Similarly, before the federal Conservatives came to power in 1988, NAC was consulted on "a number of social-policy and economic issues" such as pre-budget consultations with the Minister of Finance and also "regularly advised the Social Policy Reform Group of Ministers" (Vickers et al.: 223). And, in 1986, representatives of NAC met several times with the Prime Minister "to discuss a full range of 'women's issues' " (Vickers et al.: 223) .

Additionally, the federal state's continued participation in the lobby days of the National Council of Women of Canada and the National Action Committee on the Status

of Women until 1988 signalled at least a token commitment to consult with women's organizations. The NAC lobby involved the coordination of a "mass lobby" of Canada's primary political parties following its Annual General Meeting (Vickers et al.: 216). This followed a format where each party was invited to participate in a question and answer period. Questions asked during this time were drawn from discussions among NAC delegates during the AGM. Media were invited to attend and NAC held a news conference following the lobby. The importance accorded to national women's groups as representatives of the collective voices of Canadian women is also evidenced in the participation of these parties in NAC's 1984 nationally televised leaders debate on a range of public policy issues (Vickers et al.: 219).

During the 1980s, tensions increased among feminists regarding methods of organizing to effect change. Within NAC, divisions occurred between an earlier generation of feminists who opted for "brief and lobby" tactics and newer, more radical grassroots feminists who had visions of a more transformational form of politics. Feminist academics have maintained that even in the 1990s, however, the focus of national women's organizations, operating in English-Canada, to effect change has remained the Canadian federal state (Bonnet, 1996; Vickers et al., 1993; Phillips, 1990). Bonnet's history of the CRIAW, depicts the "soul-searching" undertaken by the organization to decide whether it would join with other national women's organizations in calling for a Royal Commission on Violence Against Women (1996: 80). Despite internal tensions among women who wished for a more grassroots approach to addressing issues of violence against women, and women who preferred more traditional,

institutionalized approaches, the national organization, “added its voice to the myriad of women’s groups demanding a Royal Commission...” (Bonnet: 80). Bonnet’s description of women’s efforts culminating in the establishment of a Federal Panel on Violence Against Women also credits the “willingness” of the federal government as a contributing factor to the lobby’s success (1996: 80).

In the case of CRIAW, Bonnet’s history indicates that the organization overcame many of its tensions between grassroots and institutional feminist approaches and, in fact, increased its interaction with the Canadian state. What is remarkable about the timing of this shift, is that it coincides with the state’s shift to neo-liberalism and its round of drastic funding cuts to national women’s organizations (1996: 80-88). Bonnet describes one of CRIAW’s emerging roles throughout the 1990s as a “liaison between the federal government and the women’s movement” beginning with the Constitutional Forums held across Canada in 1992 when CRIAW was asked by the state to supply names of participants (1996: 82). This role increased in the mid 1990s when CRIAW, in conjunction with the Women’s Program and Status of Women Canada, facilitated and monitored the election of a committee of representatives from 18 “national, provincial and territorial” women’s organizations to coordinate women’s work leading up to the Fourth International Conference on Women held in Beijing (Bonnet: 88). This role was echoed once more at the end of the 1990s when CRIAW helped oversee the formation of the Canadian Feminist Alliance For International Action (FAFIA), a coalition of 40+ women’s organizations mobilized to formulate Canadian women’s responses to the UN’s Beijing+5 meetings. These examples illustrate that despite severe reductions in state

funding, national women's advocacy organizations continued to view the federal state as a vehicle for the advancement of women's equality struggles.

Conclusion

Until recently, therefore, national, women's equality-seeking organizations, operating in English-Canada, have occupied a unique position in Canadian society as representatives of women's collective voices to the Canadian state. Early struggles of Canadian women during the first wave of mobilization secured the political and civil rights necessary for women to become political actors. Furthermore, activities of organizations like the National Council of Women of Canada and the Young Women's Christian Association were reform-centred and therefore necessitated the development of a working relationship with the federal government. The state responded by legitimizing the role of national organizations through its presence at annual national lobby days, its appointment of feminists to national advisory bodies and through consultation with groups on policy issues.

The importance of this relationship and the strategies of radical liberalism held by national women's organizations, operating in English-Canada, carried through into the second wave of mobilization of Canadian women. The *Report* of the Royal Commission on the Status of Women served to expand the machinery of state feminism.

Recommendations of the *Report* called for the funding of women's groups and federal state mechanisms to incorporate the demands of Canadian women into the federal bureaucracy. Consequently, the implementation of the recommendations of the RCSW

Report encouraged the endurance of women's belief in organizing via state processes to affect change (Wine and Ristock, 1991: 6).

Despite tensions among feminists working for institutional change and feminists who desired more radical, grassroots approaches, national women's groups, operating in English-Canada, continued to orient their claims towards the federal state. Even with the state's adoption of a neo-liberal political and economic agenda over the past decade, women's organizations have continued their stance of radical liberalism. The most recent example of this was the presentation by the Canadian Organizing Committee of the World March of Women 2000 of its demands to end violence and poverty for Canadian women to Prime Minister Jean Chretien.

The lukewarm reaction of the Prime Minister to the March, however, is an indicator that the relationship between national women's organizations and the Canadian state has deteriorated significantly in the past several years. As this chapter documents, prior to the recent entrenchment of Canada's neo-liberal political "regime,"¹⁴ national women's groups functioned as legitimate political "intermediary groups" (Jenson and Phillips: 112) between women and the Canadian federal state. This role is evidenced by the example of NAC's transition from a lobby coalition to a state recognized, parallel political body – a parliament of women. Furthermore, the processes of consultation between women's organizations and the state, dating back to the first wave of women's

¹⁴See Jenson and Phillips (1996) for their discussion of Canada's "Regime Shift". They argue that the Post-War Consensus manifested itself in Canada in the form of a citizenship regime. This regime began with the development of the welfare state and evolved to include institutions and programs which supported and furthered both individual and collective citizenship rights. Recently, this regime has shifted to one which has dramatically narrowed the parameters of citizenship and is working to systematically reduce the access collective actors once had to the Canadian state.

mobilization led to the federal government's recognition of national equality-seeking women's groups as respected sources of knowledge on policy interventions to advance women's equality. The following chapter describes the declining relationship between the Canadian state and national women's equality-seeking organizations and argues that the role of Canadian women's organizations as knowledge bases on issues impacting women's equality has been displaced in the new, neo-liberal environment.

CHAPTER THREE

The Dismantling of a Consultative Relationship

Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to analyse exactly how the relationship between national women's groups and the state has altered in the years following the state's embrace of neo-liberal socio-economic policies. The precise aim of this discussion will be to draw out how the state has reevaluated the consultative role of women's advocacy organizations; specifically, I will argue that the role of national women's groups as legitimate sources of knowledge for the advancement of women's equality is under fire. In addition, the political spaces once created to facilitate women's groups' influence of the policy development process are closing.

The following chapter outlines three aspects of the state's systematic delegitimization of women's advocacy organizations. The first describes the impacts of deep cuts to the state funding of women's advocacy organizations. The second assesses the significance of the dismantling of the Canadian Women's State to the work of national women's advocacy groups. The third considers the newly implemented federal Gender-Based Analysis strategy (GBA). I argue that this approach to policy development has contributed to the reduced legitimacy of women's advocacy organizations as sources of knowledge on issues influencing women's equality through the designation of gender "specialists" within the federal government.

These arguments are grounded in a broader argument that the political regime that once fostered the emergence of a working relationship between women's advocacy

organizations, operating in English-Canada, and the federal state has ended. Furthermore, Canada's new neo-liberal regime has eroded many of the gains made by national women's organizations during the Canada's post-war era. Before embarking on a discussion of how Canadian women's organizations have been affected by Canada's shift to neo-liberalism, it is necessary to briefly outline specific aspects of the state's neo-liberal ideology.

Neo-liberalism: A Disabling Political Regime for Women's Active Participation

Integral to understanding the changing relationship between Canadian women's organizations and the Canadian state is an analysis of the political regime which ushered in these changes. Chapter 2 argued that federal state initiatives to advance women's equality have achieved some measure of success, especially in terms of advancing women's legal equality.¹⁵ This has been due largely to the paradigm under which the Canadian welfare state operated.¹⁶ Janine Brodie's analyses (1996a; 1996b; 1995) of this paradigm shift to neo-liberalism have characterized it as a shift in "cultural forms" where "cultural assumptions," political identities and forms of political struggle are being transformed. This shift has permeated all forms of social organization and has, in effect, challenged the foundations of Canada's post-war welfare state.

¹⁵See Burt (1997: 251) for her analysis of state efforts to advance women's legal equality vs. "alternative feminist visions of women's claims."

¹⁶See also Jenson and Phillips (1996) for their discussion of Canada's "Regime Shift." They argue that the Post-War Consensus manifested itself in Canada in the form of a citizenship regime. This regime began with the development of the welfare state and evolved to include institutions and programs which supported and furthered both individual and collective citizenship rights.

Indeed, the dismantling of Canada's welfare state indicates a transformation in state philosophy regarding its role in ensuring the collective provision of services and therefore its responsibility to broaden access to citizenship rights for people living in Canada. Brodie contends that, "[k]ey front-line women's organizations recognized, from the early 1980s, that the neo-liberal vision of a minimalist state and unfettered market-driven development threatened the very foundations of second wave feminism's equity agenda" (1995: 21). The onslaught of neo-liberal philosophies has extinguished the extension of citizenship rights through the redistributive processes of the welfare state and through state mechanisms once designed to create greater citizen political participation.

Furthermore, the way in which neo-liberal policies have been implemented marks a shift in terms of norms of government accountability to its citizens. Reduced government accountability to collective actors has been cited by Jenson and Phillips (1996) as a trend that began in the 1980s. They name the Meech Lake Accord and the Canada-USA Free Trade Agreement (FTA), "the two crucial events of the 1980s," as symbols of the federal government's refusal to take into account the views of its citizens (1996: 120). Day and Brodsky (1998) further substantiate Jenson and Phillips' argument. They term the changing role of the Canadian government, "shape shifting." These authors maintain that public policy decision making has moved from the public arena to "intergovernmental bodies - working groups, task forces, ministerial conferences," areas that are not accessible to citizens and citizen groups. In their analysis, "[p]ower is being shifted, without public agreement, to forums that are so far, impenetrable" (1998: 151).

The Neo-liberal Vision of Citizen Engagement

The neo-liberal project to reduce the accountability and accessibility of the federal government to the Canadian public is exemplified further by the way in which citizen engagement with the state has been redefined. It is extremely important to understand who now fits within the newly defined, legitimate categories of "citizen." This chapter argues that advocacy groups are losing their legitimacy in the eyes of the state. Instead, citizen groups oriented towards service provision, individuals, and business interests have now replaced advocacy groups as legitimate representatives of "civil society."

Rather than structuring political discourse around the recognition of collective claims to citizenship and access to social justice for particular groups of citizens, the new political discourse stresses the need to place emphasis on "individual solutions to individually determined problems" (Bakker, 1996: 39). While Canada's post-war citizenship regime enshrined the rights of both individuals and collectivities, neo-liberal rhetoric has endeavoured to curtail the rights of societal groups. Collective actors, once accepted partners in the policy development process, are now stigmatized as "special interests" (Brodie, 1995: 69) and dismissed by neo-liberal politicians as examples of that which is antithetical to an agenda that espouses self-reliance and individualism. Jenson and Phillips maintain that "[t]he legitimacy of group action and the desire for social justice are losing ground to the notion that citizens and interests can compete equally in the political marketplace of ideas" (1996: 112). What is under attack is the right of citizen groups to advocate, or to voice their specific claims to the Canadian state, specifically, to

make demands that render them as different or outside the category of an individual, self-reliant “citizen.”

Organizations devoted to service delivery, however, have become increasingly valuable to a state currently engaged in downloading its responsibilities for service provision. The demarcation between advocacy groups and service-oriented groups began to deepen at the beginning of the 1990s. The rhetoric of Preston Manning’s Reform Party propagated sentiments that identified advocacy groups as “threats to representational democracy in Canada” and Reform Party pamphlets made statements like, “in Ottawa, every special interest group counts except one: Canadians” (Brodie, 1995: 69). This ideology transcended party lines when, in 1993, federal leadership candidate for the Progressive Conservatives, Kim Campbell, promised that if she was elected, she would cut funding to “advocacy groups” (Brodie, 1995: 69). The following year, Liberal Finance Minister Paul Martin proclaimed that he would “consider whether the federal government should get out of the business of funding ‘lobby groups’ altogether” (Brodie, 1995: 69).

Just as the delegitimization of advocacy groups intensified, however, the importance of social service groups in society increased. The reduced role of the government in providing public social services encouraged it to look to the “community” to deliver social programs. Jenson and Phillips have stated: “[i]n the era of less interventionary states, organized groups are being pressed into service to represent the state in civil society. Advocates may be out but service providers are in” (1996: 129). The implications of this for Canadian national women’s organizations is tremendous.

Indeed, the paradigm shift to neo-liberalism has severed the relationship, established at the beginning of the twentieth century, between national women's groups and the Canadian state. The 1980s and 1990s have witnessed the systematic delegitimization of national women's advocacy groups. The following details three aspects of this delegitimization: the impact of funding cuts to women's organizations; the dismantling of the Canadian Women's State; and the state's adoption of its Gender-Based Analysis framework.

Funding Cuts to Women's National Advocacy Organizations

The reduction of state funding to women's groups across Canada brought into question the ongoing commitment of the federal state to responding to the organized claims of national women's organizations. During Canada's post-war citizenship regime, the extension of funding to advocacy organizations gave legitimacy to women's organizations and the demands they presented. Cuts to this funding, which began in the mid 80s, served to delegitimize the goals of women's organizations and indicated the decreasing importance of women's organizations to the Canadian state. These funding cuts have reduced the capacity of women's advocacy organizations to mobilize amongst themselves, to carry out their daily activities, and to initiate public education campaigns. Ultimately, this has affected the capacity of women's organizations to present their claims to the federal government.

The move away from "state clientelism" (Phillips, 1990: 53), or, the state provision of financial support to voluntary groups began to impact national women's

groups in the mid 1980s. In 1986, the Women's Program received its first series of cuts to its operating budget. While the 5% loss in federal funds was "loudly protested" by 54 women's groups, the cuts continued (Bonnet: 70). The year 1987 saw the refusal of state funding to Canada's oldest national women's organization, the NCWC. Following vigorous protests from the group's national Executive, however, the funding was reinstated (Griffiths: 374). In 1989, the second series of cuts was implemented. This time, the budget of the Women's Program was reduced by a substantial 15%. The following year, the budget for Women's Program's core funding was slashed by another 20% (Bonnet: 70). Budget reductions continued throughout the 1990s and resulted in a revamping of the state's funding criteria in 1997. The impact of these cutbacks was compounded by the refusal of the state to index funding of women's groups against inflation after 1995-1996 (Morris, 1999: 31). An examination of the changes in the funding criteria of the Women's Program appears in the next section.

The dependency of national women's organizations on state funding has been documented by a number of scholars (Burt, 1997: 259; Vickers et al., 1993; Phillips, 1990). Arguably, this dependency was encouraged by Canada's post-war political regime that produced the Report of the Royal Commission on the Status of Women, that facilitated the birth of new, national women's groups through the provision of monetary and non-monetary resources for "founding conferences" (Phillips: 50-53), and that created state structures to coordinate the allocation of both core and project funding for women's advocacy organizations. The federal government's current stance, however, asserts the desire to curtail the dependency of women's groups on state funding. As a

1999 Status of Women Canada (SWC) publication states: "The transition from government dependency to self-sufficiency is one of the greatest challenges facing SWC's client women's groups" (cited in Morris: 32). Under previous regimes that legitimized women's advocacy organizations as key partners in policy development, dependency on state funding did not carry significant negative consequences. Under a neo-liberal regime, however, dependency on state funding has very different implications. Three major areas of women's organizing have been greatly hampered by funding cutbacks: the mobilization and networking amongst women's groups across Canada; the daily activities necessary to carry out the mandates of the organizations; and education or communication efforts with the Canadian public.

National or pan-Canadian organizing for many national advocacy groups has been impeded by the withdrawal of government funding. The linking of women's voices, ideas and demands across Canada has been aided in the past by the state provision of funding and technical assistance. This served true for other social movements as well; Valentine and Vickers' study (1996) of disability organizing in Canada claims that, "federal government support for this expansion of citizenship was essential to the emergence of movements which could address the federal state in a country characterized by vast territory, sparse population and a harsh climate for much of the year" (1996: 157). In recent years, the difficulties of national anglophone women's organizations to communicate across language divides has increased: "funding for translation and interpretation, essential in a bilingual country such as Canada, has been virtually eliminated, isolating anglophone and francophone women. As well, there is little funding

to make documents accessible to women with disabilities” (Morris, 1999: 35). As the importance of organizing at the international level is augmenting due to globalizing economies, women’s organizations find effective participation in multilateral initiatives hampered by shrinking budgets. Marika Morris states that “Women's Program funds are not awarded for initiatives taking place outside of Canada ... making international networking and multilateral events problematic” (1999: 33).

Daily activities of national women’s advocacy organizations have been greatly impeded by cuts in state funding. Many women's organizations have had to initiate a series of painful cuts to their internal operations. This is evident in Bonnet's depictions (1996: 83) of CRIAW's response to its fiscal crisis,

That year, the organization discontinued printing its Annual Report ...; in the face of further funding cuts in 1993, the Board of Directors voted to change CRIAW's annual conference to a biennial event, eliminate executive meetings in between Board meetings, and reduce their annual grants-in-aid from eight to four ... It also forced the cancellation of the Canadian Women's Periodical Index and reduced CRIAW's overall publications ...

Other responses to funding reductions have seen cuts to paid staff (Bonnet: 70), increases in unpaid labour to compensate for understaffing, reductions in office space (Vickers et al.: 290) and, ultimately, an overall reduced capacity of women's groups to deliver comprehensive responses and demands to the federal state. This is especially evident in the example of NAC; in light of NAC's staff reductions and smaller quarters, Vickers et al. remarked, “[a]nother serious problem has been the lack of a collective memory in NAC. Its now reduced office cannot easily retain a common memory of approaches and

actions that failed and those that succeeded in the past” (1993: 290).

The visibility of national women's organizations, operating in English-Canada, has also receded in recent years. While communicating with the public to raise awareness and support for women-centred analyses of policy issues is an essential part of lobbying the federal state for changes to government policy, activities of this nature have been curtailed, due in part to funding cuts. Morris attributes reduced media visibility to a combination of “chronically underfunded” and under resourced women's organizations that are trying to deal with a diminished capacity to monitor government activities, and an increase in media “hostility” or, at least, “indifference” to women's organizations (1999: 35). According to Morris, the end result is this: a “virtual eliminat[ion of] government accountability for its actions, or lack of action, on women's equality issues” (1999: 35). Furthermore, it can be argued that reduced public visibility of women's organizations has diminished the visibility of activities carried out to advance the collective claims of women in Canadian society and, therefore, undermined the legitimacy of national women's organizations in the eyes of the Canadian public.

The cutbacks to women's funding prompted the coordination of a national lobby effort, *Fair Share Campaign*, in 1997 and 1998 to pressure the government to reinstate federal funding to the Women's Program. The *Fair Share Campaign* estimated that current funding levels for women's organizations equated to federal spending of 53 cents per woman and girl in Canada. During the lobby effort, a coalition of national women's groups endeavoured to raise federal spending to the equivalent of two dollars per Canadian woman and girl. The slogan of the campaign read: “Women - worth more than a

cup of coffee” (Morris: 31). The federal government was unresponsive to the women's efforts.

The failure of the *Fair Share Campaign* to secure a positive government response was yet one more sign that the relationship between national women's advocacy organizations, operating in English-Canada, and the federal state had altered significantly. No longer a partner in the formation of policy development, women's advocacy groups instead were considered extraneous “special interests” whose demands for different treatment ran contrary to the portrayal of the new, self-reliant “citizen.” The reduction in federal funding was one large step towards closing political spaces opened for advocacy groups at the beginning of Pierre Trudeau's political tenure. It signalled the delegitimization of national women's advocacy organizations and the reduction of these organizations' access to the democratic process. A recent publication by the National Action Committee on the Status of Women declares: “Cutting women's groups impedes our ability to be heard in any democratic process, and to participate fully in engaging the government on its chosen economic path” (1997: 8).

The Dismantling of the Women's State (1995)

The transformation of the federal government to a less interventionist state has extinguished its once perceived sense of responsibility for expanding citizenship in Canada. This has manifested itself in several different ways. The move to privatize public services has resulted in the need for a much smaller federal bureaucracy. Similarly, the shift in the state's role to an “impartial,” non-interventionist stance has negated the

requirement to promote active citizenship. This has been illustrated by the restructuring, and in some cases, the dismantling of state structures once charged with the mandate of incorporating the collective voices of societal actors into federal structures, processes and policies.

This was first exemplified in 1993 with the dismantling, of the Citizenship Branch of the Secretary of State. O'Neil (1993: 318) states: "[f]rom 1970 on, the Citizenship Branch of the Secretary of State was the crucible for experimentation with the very particular relationships between 'social movements' and the government itself." When this state experimentation in citizen participation ran contrary to the shift to neo-liberal philosophies and when vocal societal actors became increasingly critical of state policies which contravened earlier government commitments to fostering social justice and equity, it became necessary "to lower the visibility of certain categories of citizens and to remove their means of advocacy from within the state" (Jenson and Phillips: 120). In 1993, with the succession of Kim Campbell as the Prime Minister of Canada, the department of the Secretary of State closed, symbolizing the end of Canada's long experiment with participatory democracy (Jenson and Phillips: 121).

In 1995, the federal government attacked the central vehicles of state advocacy used by women's groups in Canada. The Canadian Women's State, comprised of three federal bodies: the Canadian Advisory Council on the Status of Women, Status of Women Canada, and the Women's Program underwent a massive restructuring. CACSW, the role of which had been to serve as an "arms length" advisory organization consulting with government and women's organizations on policy research and policy

analysis, was disbanded. The Women's Program was relocated to Status of Women Canada and SWC became the official federal state structure responsible for channelling women's equality demands.

What this restructuring, or more appropriately, the "swift dismantling" (Jenson and Phillips: 120) of the Canadian's Women's State did was to reduce Canadian women's access to the federal government from three main entry-points to one. Second, the amalgamation of the roles of the three distinct federal structures for women's equality served to narrow the focus of the federal government's project to advance women's equality. Burt argues that the consolidation signals "the demise of a diversity that could accommodate a variety of feminist positions" (1997: 272). Third, the reduction of women's state machinery from three structures to one reduced the visibility of efforts to advance women's equality within the federal bureaucracy. Morris describes SWC in the following way: "[i]t is a small department with a diminishing budget ... Some officials in other departments have never even heard of SWC and think it is an NGO" (1999: 36). Fourth, the dismantling of the Canadian Women's State has also diminished the visibility of the federal government's commitment to women's equality in the public eye. Morris is correct in observing that, "[SWC] also has a very low profile among Canadians at large" (1999: 36).

Chapter Two argued that the establishment of the Canadian Women's State advanced the relationship between the Canadian federal state and national women's advocacy organizations operating in English-Canada. It helped strengthen women's organizations' commitment to radical liberalism, it supported women's networking and

mobilization which, in turn, ensured their capacity to organize collectively, and the Canadian Women's State enhanced the ability of women's advocacy organizations to articulate their demands to the Federal government. Finally, it enabled the Canadian state to engage with women's organizations in a manner that indicated the state's view of women's advocacy groups as sources of knowledge and partners in the policy development process. The dismantling of the Canadian Women's State ended this relationship. Jenson and Phillips conclude "[t]he state experiment to facilitate and even promote the collective voice of women and its representation within the state is gone" (1996: 123).

Restricted avenues to federal government officials and processes delivered negative consequences for the work of women's advocacy organizations. The closing of the Canadian Advisory Council on the Status of Women reduced access of women's groups to policy information and government research. Formally, the CACSW had operated as a main point of contact for women's advocacy organizations for "information, policy analysis and lobbying support" (Burt, 1997: 259). Burt documents the increasing "reliance" of women's groups throughout Canada's post-war regime on the state provision of funding and state support for policy analysis (1997: 259). The function of the CACSW did not completely disappear, however. The state responsibility for aiding the policy research of women's organizations was assumed by Status of Women Canada in the form of the Policy Research Fund (PRF).

In 1996, the SWC instituted the fund to "support independent, nationally relevant forward-thinking policy research on gender equality issues" (SWC, 1999b). The PRF has

received criticism, however, for failing to reproduce the function of the CACSW.

Morris' critique of the PRF rests with reduced resources allocated to the Fund (in comparison to the CACSW), and the inaccessibility of the research to Canadian women and to policy makers. While Morris describes the production of research under the CACSW as "excellent, timely, well-respected and high profile," she states that research supported through the PRF can take over a year to publish and the authors are required not to discuss their research findings or recommendations until their research has been published (1999: 7). Since many of these policy issues are "time sensitive" and "urgent issues" (SWC, 1999b); the researchers have often missed "valuable, timely opportunities for policy input," by the time their research has been made public (Morris, 1999: 7).

Morris argues further that although the PRF has supported "valuable research" on many issues, there is no indication that this research is consulted by policy makers (1999: 7).

This point very aptly signals the federal government's shifting position regarding the importance of women's advocacy organizations in the policy process. In addition, Morris' criticisms lie in stark contrast to the SWC statement that, "[a]n informed accessible knowledge base can contribute to improved government policy making and the ability of individuals and organizations to participate more effectively in the policy development process" (SWC, 1999b).

A second example of discrepancies between government discourse and action on the role of state feminist machinery to promote women's interests can be found in an examination of SWC's *New Direction* for its Women's Program Funding Guidelines. After "consultations" with almost 400 women's organizations and "others interested in

advancing equality for women” the Women’s Program adopted two new funding mechanisms that came into effect in March 1997 and April 1998 respectively (SWC, 1998: 1). SWC cites the reasons for the WP’s new direction as “the need for increased accountability, greater equity and more program flexibility while maintaining a strong commitment to support for community-based action to advance women’s equality” (SWC, 1997e: 3). However, as Morris states, “[w]omen’s organizations [during the consultation process] did *not* recommend that the Program move exclusively to project funding, and that the Program’s funds should remain at the same low level it was throughout the 1990s” (1999: 33, author’s emphasis).

In the past, the Women’s Program had provided Canadian women’s organizations with “project” and “core” funding. Core funding had been granted to women’s organizations to assist them with the large variety of operating costs associated with activities necessary for the fulfilment of their mandates. Project funding, by contrast, is allocated to women’s organizations for the purpose of carrying out specific activities related to the realization of the goals of a particular project for the advancement of women’s equality. Under the new funding guidelines of the Women’s Program, project assistance is given to women’s equality-seeking organizations providing that their project description falls within the Objectives and Areas of Focus of the WP. The Women’s Program will not provide funding for 100 per cent of the costs associated with any proposed initiative (SWC, 1998: 8). SWC claims that the new funding guidelines “will allow the Program to concentrate more on measurable results linked to its objectives and areas of focus” (SWC, 1997e: 3). It can be argued, however, that these funding changes

have served to limit the activities of women's organizations and have forced them to adhere to the specific goals of SWC.

In 1998, NAC protested the government's decision to eliminate core funding for women's organizations by refusing to apply for funding under the new guidelines. NAC president, Joan Grant-Cummings expressed these sentiments:

We feel that the current position of the government is regressive... It actually undermines the ability of the independent women's movement to survive and continue to do the kind of advocacy work that it currently does (Ayed, 1998: A8).

After a financial crisis that forced NAC to temporarily close their doors, the national women's organization applied for and received a project grant to study "the influence of globalization on the government's economic policy choices, and the resulting implications on the status of women in Canada" (Cobb, 1999: D19). Grant-Cummings described the organization's fears at the time in the following way:

We aren't happy [with this method of funding] because the government has the option of quashing our report, or deciding on the wording... If [Dr. Fry, Secretary of State for the Status of Women] doesn't like what we say, we might not get all the money (Cobb: D19) .

NAC's response to the federal government's changes in funding highlights an important pattern in the redefinition of the relationship between women's advocacy organizations and the Canadian federal state under the new neo-liberal regime.

The evidence suggests that the state is quietly, but steadily, limiting the role of women's advocacy organizations in the policy development process. The dramatic shift

from core funding to project funding ensures that activities of women's advocacy organizations fit within the state-approved framework of the WP. The reduced amount of funding available for project funding limits the number of women's organizations selected to receive funding and impacts the amount of money these women's groups can secure. The disbanding of the CACSW and the subsequent establishment of the PRF has narrowed access to policy research carried out by feminist researchers. Furthermore, the lengthy process involved in bringing policy documents to publication has reduced the relevance of reports that were originally commissioned to respond to "timely" and "urgent" policy issues. Finally, the consolidation of the activities of Canadian Women's State into one central agency, an agency which is a small, and relatively unknown structure within the federal bureaucracy, has greatly reduced the visibility of women's equality initiatives within the federal state. It has diminished women's access to the federal government and, therefore, has made it difficult for women's groups to articulate their collective claims. Burt comments: "[t]he consolidation of the status of women responsibilities suggests a reduced commitment by the Liberals to feminist perspectives [and] a growing gap between women's groups and the federal government" (1997: 267). She argues that the federal government's move to lessen its involvement in the provision of social services signifies an "ideological commitment" to neo-liberal philosophies as much as "a cost-cutting measure." Burt concludes that "certainly the decision to amalgamate services for women in SWC had little to do with cost-cutting" (1997: 270).

The combination of the dismantling of the Canadian Women's State and the systematic defunding of women's advocacy organizations has resulted in the dismantling

of the relationship between national women's organizations and the Canadian federal state. As will be argued in the following section, the role of Canadian women's advocacy organizations as a knowledge base on women's policy issues has been further displaced by the federal state's adoption of Gender-Based Analysis.

Changes in State Processes for Incorporating the "Women Question" into the Federal Government: the Rise of GBA 'Experts'

The legitimacy of national women's advocacy organizations as sources of knowledge for the advancement of women's equality was further compromised by the federal state's implementation of Gender-Based Analysis (GBA).¹⁷ The following will suggest that the way in which the Canadian state has instituted this new approach to policy development has contributed to the emergence of state "experts" in GBA. Consequently, the state's growing "expertise" in "gender" matters has further diminished the role of national women's advocacy organizations operating in English-Canada.

In 1995, the same year that witnessed the dismantling of the Canadian Women's State, the Canadian government endorsed the United Nations *Platform for Action* and the *Commonwealth Plan of Action on Gender and Development*. Both of these agreements obligated signatories to implement a gender analysis mechanism into state processes (SWC, 1996b: 5). In 1995, Canada's Gender-Based Analysis initiative received Cabinet sanctioning. This committed all federal departments and agencies to incorporate gender

¹⁷The following paragraphs will use the words, Gender-Based Analysis and Gender-Equality Analysis interchangeably. Although both terms refer the same federal government initiative, departments and agencies within the federal government have opted to use one or the other term to describe their particular department-initiated strategy.

analysis into their policy and program development. SWC adopted a lead role in facilitating the “interdepartmental collaboration” of the Gender-Based Analysis initiative throughout the federal government (SWC, 1997d: 14). The target date for GBA to be integrated into “the planning and subsequent stages of policy, legislation and program development by federal departments and agencies” was set at 2002 (SWC, 1997b: 14). The process of implementing this initiative has contributed to the progressive marginalization of national women’s advocacy organizations.¹⁸

The first step in the state’s differentiation between the knowledge of women’s advocacy organizations and the expertise of government officials, was to highlight the ‘objectivity’ of Gender-Based Analysis. The following examples indicate a disconcerting trend among various federal departments and agencies to depict government-conducted gender analyses as ‘unbiased,’ scientific research while implying that analyses carried out by non-governmental organizations are subjective. Indeed, an information sheet produced by the department of Human Resources Development Canada (HRDC) declares “Gender-based analysis is not advocacy. It is a way of conducting policy research and analysis that explicitly takes into account differing realities in order to make more

¹⁸It is important, at this point, to assert that I do not view the Canadian state’s position on GBA as monolithic. Each government department/ agency is charged with implementing its own GBA initiative in a way that is relevant to its internal operations. As a result, the ways in which departments/agencies have implemented (or, are in the process of implementing) their GBA strategies do differ. Of note are the Department of Justice and the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA). GBA literature produced by these two federal bodies do exhibit more inclusive visions of interaction with non-governmental organizations. Since one of SWC’s primary roles is to facilitate the coordination of GBA implementation throughout the federal government, however, certain disturbing trends can be observed. These will be discussed in the following pages.

informed policy choices” (HRDC, no publication date: 2).¹⁹ The *Gender Equality Analysis Policy* document produced by the Department of Indian and Northern Affairs asserts that their form of analysis is grounded in both “quantitative” and “qualitative” research (1999: 10). The document continues: “Gender-equality analysis looks at *data* and describes a socio-economic context” (1999: 10, my emphasis). The use of the word “data,” in this example, suggests the drive to identify government-conducted analysis as impartial and supported by scientific or economic quantitative information. It also suggests a concerted effort to elevate this form of analysis from the implied subjective work initiated by national advocacy organizations. Similarly, the GBA policy document produced by Health Canada’s Women’s Health Bureau attempts to depict its Gender-Based Analysis initiative as an objective, scientific policy framework. The Health Canada policy document asserts clearly that “GBA is evidence-based” (2000: 2).

The second step in this differentiation between state “expertise” and the knowledge of women’s advocacy organizations was to reduce the legitimacy of advocacy organizations. In the “Frequently Asked Questions” section of the Department of Indian and Northern Affairs policy document, *Gender Equality Analysis Policy*, the following question is considered: “Doesn’t gender-equality analysis impose particular views on government and on society?” (1999: 10). The document answers this question with these words:

¹⁹The significance of these sentences to the rest of the document is evidenced in the format of the information sheet. These words are highlighted in a different colour and set in a larger font. The whole quotation appears in a “text box” on the page (HRDC, no publication date: 2).

Gender-equality analysis does not promote any particular view, such as a *lobby group's* view. While the views of organizations can certainly be examined in the course of analysis, gender-equality analysis is not about simply accepting these views without question. It is research and analysis that takes both women and men into account using a variety of quantitative and qualitative data (1999: 10, my emphasis).

This example establishes the growing dichotomy between the work of advocacy organizations and the work carried out by employees of the federal department. It dismisses policy dialogue advanced by advocacy groups as biased and not necessarily substantiated by “data.” Gender-equality analyses produced by department officials, on the other hand, are characterized as impartial and validated by solid “research.”

The third component of the delineation between state “expertise” and women’s knowledge is the designation of particular state “specialists” in Gender-Based Analysis. Indeed, documents from Justice Canada and Health Canada refer to the creation of a “network” of “Gender-Based Analysis Specialists” or “Gender-Equality Specialists” throughout their departments (Health Canada: 9; Justice Canada, 1998: 21). The Justice document states that Justice Canada’s “network of Gender-Equality Specialists (GESs) act as *resource persons* for their colleagues and the Senior Advisor on Gender Equality on the application of a gender equality analysis in their area of responsibility” (1998: 75, my emphasis). Similarly, Human Resources Development Canada’s website (HRDC, 2001) refers to a “network of gender-advisors throughout HRDC.” The designation of state officials as “advisors” or “specialists” connotes an acquired level of “expertise” in “gender” issues. Indeed, Status of Women Canada uses the word “expertise” when referring to the agency’s GBA capacity. SWC’s 2000 *Report on Plans and Priorities*

describes SWC's "*expertise* and collaboration with other government departments in implementing a gender-based analysis of policy development" (2000:1, my emphasis).

In addition to the establishment of gender experts within the federal government, departments have also begun the process of developing resource "tools" that will enable policy analysts carry out GBA in their daily work (SWC, 2000: 14; HRDC, no publication date: 3). HRDC's website refers specifically to their increasing "range of knowledge products and services" and to the creation of a "gender-based analysis resource centre" (HRDC, 2001). One obvious ramification of the proliferation of GBA "specialists" and GBA "knowledge products" throughout the federal government, may well be that policy analysts will look *inward* for advice, documentation and data on issues pertaining to women's equality rather than calling on women's organizations for this information.²⁰ I argue that the federal GBA initiative has diminished the once-perceived need for the state to solicit advice and knowledge from women's advocacy organizations.

Finally, one of the most obvious indications of a strict delineation between the work of gender "specialists" and the work of national women's advocacy organizations is the term "gender" itself. In the words of Status of Women Canada, GBA is a process "that assesses the differential impact of proposed and/or existing policies, programs and legislation on women *and men*" (1996b: 4, my emphasis). Analyses of the differential impacts of policies on men's lives are not likely to be embraced by national women's

²⁰It must be acknowledged, however, that the policy binder produced by Justice Canada (1998), *Diversity and Justice: Gender Perspectives, A Guide to Gender Equality Analysis*, does include a listing of national and provincial "equality-seeking organizations" as well as a "Directory of Academics." Both of these lists include contact information for the various organizations and individuals.

equality-seeking advocacy organizations. State mechanisms, personnel and tools designed to increase knowledge on “gender” issues signifies an increasing gap between the work of women’s organizations and the Canadian state. The following is one response from a woman activist:

Gender-Based Analysis did not come from the activist community. Activists are unsure of what it is. Women do not talk about gender. They speak about their lives and experiences. Will women even know that a gender-based analysis is about putting both women’s and men’s experience into the policy process? (Williams, 1999: 10).

It could be suggested that the state’s shift from women’s to “gender” analysis serves to further entrench the current perception of women’s advocacy organizations as “special interests.”

In summary, this section has argued that disturbing trends can be observed concerning the ways in which the Canadian state is implementing its Gender-Based Analysis initiative. While some departments/ agencies are implementing their policies with more inclusive visions of interaction with women’s organizations (CIDA, 1999; Justice Canada, 1998), current trends attest to the further displacement of women’s organizations as sources of knowledge for efforts to advance women’s equality. The research of advocacy organizations has been portrayed as subjective and perhaps even unsubstantiated, while the work of Federal “gender specialists” is portrayed as objective, “evidence-based” research supported by both quantitative and qualitative data. The designation of gender “specialists” and “advisors” within federal departments and agencies has reduced the need for policy analysts to look outside of their work places for

resources and tools on gender issues. Finally, the adoption of *gender* analyses and frameworks throughout the government signals a further divide between the women-centred analyses that inform the work of women's organizations and the lens used by government workers to carry out their work.

Conclusion

This chapter argued that the legitimacy of national women's advocacy organizations, operating in English-Canada, has been reduced. The dismantling of the Canadian Women's State, the systematic defunding of women's advocacy organizations coupled with the state's implementation of its Gender-Based Analysis strategy have served to displace women's advocacy organizations as sources of knowledge on women's equality struggles.

The next chapter highlights the federal state's move towards implementing a formal consultation process with Canada's "civil society"/ voluntary sector and exposes the contradictions between Canada's neo-liberal political context and the federal state's move towards citizen engagement. While the federal government is endeavouring to include more voices in the policy process, this is being done at a time when national women's advocacy organizations have already lost their status as legitimate actors in policy development.

CHAPTER FOUR

Consultation is essential to the public policy process in Canada. Policy-makers need to hear the opinions, concerns, and suggestions of Canadians before they take decisions. It provides a direct link to the ideas and concerns of the women of Canada, and is an important tool for informing others on public policy issues affecting women (SWC, 1999a: 1).

Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to assess whether national women's advocacy organizations are still legitimate representatives of women's collective voices in Canada. Specifically, it endeavours to ascertain the current nature of the working relationship (SWC, 1996c: 7) between national, women's, advocacy organizations and the federal state. Earlier arguments in this thesis have asserted that during Canada's "long era of liberal rule," national women's organizations attained a particular status in the eyes of the state; these organizations were considered legitimate sources of knowledge for efforts to advance women's equality. Despite the sharp neo-liberal turn taken by the Canadian federal government in the past decade, national women's advocacy organizations still orient their claims toward the state. While these organizations continue to view the state as a legitimate point of direction for women's demands for change, the state-conferred legitimacy of these groups is in question.

The 1990s brought about sustained attacks to the funding of national women's advocacy organizations and, in some cases, diminished the capacity of organizations to fulfill their mandates. In addition, the dismantling of the Canadian Women's State has

influenced the ways in which national women's organizations interact with the federal state. In recent years, the federal state has institutionalized public consultation mechanisms as a method to create a more structured (and controlled) process of engaging with its citizens (Brodie, 1996b: 140). In this chapter, I argue that this method has particular ramifications for the "working" relationship established between the federal state and national women's advocacy organizations during Canada's post-war period.

Specifically, I posit that the implementation of state consultative mechanisms has contributed to the dismantling of the traditional working relationship between national women's advocacy organizations and the federal state in the following ways:

- new consultative mechanisms serve to limit the political space available to women's organizations;
- the mechanisms entrench a "top-down," government-controlled process of policy deliberation;
- new actors have been included in political spaces once reserved for women's advocacy organizations;
- the recognition of women's advocacy organizations as legitimate sources of knowledge on policy issues has been diminished.

Previous chapters have explained that the apparati of the Canadian Women's State provided women's organizations with three points of access to federal state processes.

The dismantling of the Canadian Women's State reduced this access to one point of entry, Status of Women Canada. Building on earlier assertions that the advocacy activities of national women's organizations have concentrated traditionally on "apparatus specifically designed to deal with 'women's issues' " (Phillips: 1990, ii), the

following examination will focus on analysing the current relationship between women's advocacy organizations and SWC. This chapter examines the nature of the new relationship between Status of Women Canada and national women's advocacy organizations, operating in English-Canada, in the particular context of state-initiated consultations.

The documents used in this examination are official documents of Status of Women Canada. It must be stated, however, that the documentation available to the public on SWC consultations is quite limited. The agency itself concedes that they are very much in the beginning stages of developing their consultation function (SWC Official. Personal Communication, 15 January 2001). Personal communication with a SWC official has further revealed that the agency is "currently in the process of updating the [available] communications materials on the Department" (SWC Official. Personal Communication, 16 January 2001). Unfortunately, the reports and minutes of two major consultations conducted by Status of Women Canada in December 1999 and March 2000 are not yet available. Having said this, the available documents on Status of Women Canada's consultation function provide an instructive glimpse into how this new process has altered the relationship between women's advocacy organizations and the Canadian state.

A New Consultative Framework for Policy Dialogue

Following the dismantling of the Canadian Women's State and the consolidation of its primary mandates into SWC, the new, reconstituted agency embarked on an

exploratory exercise to redefine its role with organized interests working towards the advancement of women. The first of the three main objectives was for SWC to develop “ways to enhance the working relationship between SWC and organizations and individuals interested in the advancement of women’s equality” (SWC, 1996c: 7)²¹. Analyses of this goal will inform the rest of this chapter.

This exercise began with the agency’s hosting of six Canada-wide consultations (5 regional consultations and one “pan-Canada” consultation), involving 396 participants in 1996. While details from these consultations will be examined in subsequent sections, it is important to keep in mind that these “structured” consultations, “with such a broad inclusive range of organizations across Canada, were the first of their kind for SWC” (SWC, 1996c: 7). This signalled a new direction for the consultative process between women’s organizations and the Agency.

Since 1996, the activities of SWC have demonstrated its intention of developing processes to establish structured mechanisms that will enable the Agency to “consult” with its “stakeholders.” In 1997, SWC identified as a “Key Plan and Strateg[y],” the establishment of “a consultation function” within the Agency and the hosting of “regular consultations and/or discussions with national and regional women’s organizations ...” (SWC, 1997d: 19). In April of 1997, SWC hosted a one-day “Task Group meeting” to discuss various approaches to, and considerations in, designing consultations. This meeting brought together “a cross-section of national and regional women’s and other

²¹The other two objectives included, “the development of a new Independent Policy Research Fund” and to decide the “future direction of the Women’s Program” (SWC, 1996c: 7).

equality-seeking organizations, representatives of federal government departments..., researchers and academics..." (SWC, 1997b) and culminated in the production of a discussion paper (SWC, 1997c) which examines different methods of consultations available to the agency.

The paper identifies pros and cons of working with various consultation models and the sorts of results that can be expected from each type of consultation. SWC defines its "vision" of official consultation as one where the agency will formally request input from organizations either in writing or at a meeting. The document adds that "informal discussions and exchanges" will also take place: "Status of Women Canada staff, in the course of their regular duties, will also sometimes ask individuals or organizations for specific information or input" (SWC, 1997c: 4). The discussion paper precipitated the establishment of the Agency's 1999 *Policy on Consultation with Stakeholders* (SWC, 1999a).

Finally, in 2000, SWC's commitment to institutionalizing structured processes of consultation within its agency was evidenced in changes to its structure. SWC's External Relations and Communications Directorate was renamed the Communications and Consultations Directorate (SWC, 2000: 5). The *Status of Women Canada Report on Plans and Priorities* for 2000-2001 describes the new role of the Directorate in the following way:

The Communications and Consultations Directorate *informs* women's organizations and the general public of federal priorities and programs relating to the status of women. It is the focal point for external communications, and for consultations advice and planning....

(SWC, 2000: 6, my emphasis).

Status of Women Canada has identified five possible formats for conducting consultations: “large scale face-to-face consultations”; “small group discussions”; “discussion paper with written input”; “brief questionnaire”; and “Internet discussions” (SWC, 1999a). To date, one large-scale consultation, a Roundtable and an Internet discussion have taken place in addition to smaller “informal consultations” (SWC Official, Personal Communication, 15 January 2001). On December 8-11, 1999, Status of Women Canada initiated a Consultation on Gender Equality with 120 “stakeholders” to discuss issues pertaining to four “key areas”: violence; economic issues; human rights and health. An Aboriginal Women’s Roundtable on Women’s Equality was held on March 30th - April 2, 2000 at which thirty-five people participated. The purpose of the roundtable was to produce a discussion paper. In the Spring of 2000, the agency held e-consultations with various groups on work leading up to the United Nations Beijing +5 Conference in New York. Participants of the “e-roundtables” were invited to participate in a closed, moderated discussion. This form of consultation was also the first of its kind to be initiated by the government agency. The “pilot” project was described in a SWC report as, “an additional and innovative way for SWC to consult with equality-seeking women’s groups in an effective, efficient and economical manner” (SWC, 2000: 2).

Clearly, Status of Women Canada is committed to establishing a structured consultative function to mediate the interests of external actors. Currently, the agency is in the process of establishing the parameters of this function. Indeed, SWC currently

views itself as being engaged in a “learning process” and states that the agency is still discovering how to “do” consultations (SWC Official. Personal Communication, 15 January 2001). Even though this function is in its beginning stages, however, it is possible to identify certain general trends. These trends offer insight into the newly emerging relationship between the state and national, women’s advocacy organizations and help enable a preliminary assessment of how Canadian women’s interests are represented to the federal state. The following sections will focus on three aspects of SWC’s consultation process: the parameters of the consultation process; the participants; and the redefinition of roles for women’s organizations and the federal state.

New “Partnerships”

One of the most significant trends to emerge from the government’s shift to structured, institutionalized models of consultation is the composition of the participants taking part in the consultations. I argue that this development serves to alter the unique relationship national women’s organizations once held with the Canadian women’s state on matters concerning women’s equality. There are two specific aspects to this trend: 1) the collective voices of women’s organizations appear to be becoming diluted with the influx of new players to the policy development process; 2) (consequently) the legitimacy of women’s advocacy organizations as the (sole) representatives of women’s collective voices is diminishing. This shift is apparent in the new language adopted by SWC.

The Message from the Secretary of State contained in SWC’s 1997 *Report on Plans and Priorities*, maintains that

Status of Women Canada will continue to strengthen its partnerships with women's groups and other equality-seeking organizations to benefit from their knowledge and to help empower their efforts. We will also expand our partnerships with private sector institutions, so they will become active stakeholders in achieving equality (SWC, 1997d: 2).

Of particular note in the above quotation is the government agency's specific mention of women's organizations and the importance of their "knowledge" to the activities of SWC. There exists a confusing juxtaposition, however, between SWC's desire to build strong relationships with women's organizations and its new vision of establishing a "broader range of stakeholders" (defined as: "governmental, non-governmental, private sector and the public" (SWC, 1997d: 4). Indeed, in later SWC documents there is evidence of the increasing importance of "other" "stakeholders" to the government agency. As will be shown below, the importance of women's organizations to the policy processes of SWC appear to decline in importance.

In the letter received by participants of SWC's December 1999 *Consultation of Gender Equality*, the Coordinator of the Status of Women declares: "Women's concerns are diverse, and we must employ the strengths of a wide variety of players to ensure that women's perspectives are taken into account as Canada charts its course for the future" (Ievers, 1999). Intriguingly, women's organizations are not mentioned once in the letter, although references to improving relationships and policy dialogue between "government" and "non-government organizations" are mentioned three times. Similarly, in contrast to the *Message for the Secretary of State* included in SWC's 1997

Report on Plans and Priorities, the Secretary of State's message in the 2000 Report does not name women's organizations, although it does make reference to its "partnerships with equality-seeking organizations" (SWC, 2000: 1). The inclusion of new players in policy discussions can also be observed in SWC's *Policy on Consultation With Stakeholders* (1999a). This time, women's organizations are referred to as one category of key actors in the policy development process: "most consultation relationships will be with women's organizations, individuals and other organizations working actively to advance women's equality" (1999a: 2). These words could be interpreted to mean that women's organizations are now given political space to voice their claims on the same footing as individuals and "other organizations." The document continues: "Status of Women Canada will also exchange views with other sectors to advance women's equality in all spheres of Canadian life" (1999a: 2).

The inclusion of "individuals" as representatives of women's voices in consultative relationships signals a departure from the distinctive status once accorded to women's organizations. Indeed, in a personal communication with an official from Status of Women Canada, it was emphasized that the SWC December 1999 Consultation on Gender Equality was conducted with 120 "individuals." While many of these "individuals" were also members of women's organizations, the SWC official asserted that the participants were selected based on their "individual expertise" (SWC Official, Personal Communication, 15 January 2001). In her discussion paper on the implications of Canada's new Social Union on the voluntary sector, Phillips discusses the federal government's move to engage with individual Canadian citizens. She states that

“[g]overnments are appropriately interested in engaging citizens, not just organizations” (2000: 20) . The significance of this statement on the role of national women’s advocacy organizations remains to be seen.

One issue that begs further reflection, however, is the presence of individual academics in state consultative processes. Of the 396 participants (“national, regional and local women’s organizations, community, social service and professional groups, other levels of government and individuals”) who participated in the 1996 SWC consultations, 40 individuals from academic institutions took part. It is only possible to speculate at this time whether this will be a growing trend. In light of the neo-liberal shift to delegitimize advocacy and “special interest groups,” however, the emergence of academics as perhaps a more legitimate source of knowledge is an interesting consideration.²² This point will be reviewed in more detail in the following section.

In summary, new actors have been given political spaces to voice their demands alongside the voices of Canadian women’s advocacy organizations. As this thesis documents, the inclusion of a wide variety of interests and voices in policy discussions traditionally reserved for women’s advocacy organizations, marks a significant departure from the unique relationship national women’s advocacy organizations enjoyed with the

²² This has also been cited as a concern for Canadian women’s organizations. During the SWC 1996 consultations, participants deliberated over SWC’s proposed Policy Research Fund. While there was general support for the Fund, women’s organizations questioned the distinction being drawn between the Fund and the mandate of the Women’s Program, specifically the distinction being drawn between “policy research” and “action research.” As will be discussed below, action research is being defined as research carried out by community and advocacy organizations. Research undertaken by government and/or academic researchers, on the other hand, is being called policy research. The report maintains that participants “wanted to ensure research issues did not become removed from the real concerns of women in Canada, and end up serving the needs of a small ‘ivory tower’ group” (SWC, 1996c: 20 -21).

Canadian state during Canada's post-war citizenship regime.

New Parameters: The Structure of SWC Consultations

Along with the inclusion of new “partners” in SWC policy discussions, the institutionalization of more structured consultative mechanisms signals a new way of conducting business for Status of Women Canada. This has specific ramifications for SWC's relationship with national women's advocacy organizations. The purpose of Status of Women Canada's new consultation process is three pronged (SWC, 1999a:3). First, it is designed to enable the agency to explore new ideas and emerging issues. Second, it provides a forum where agency officials can work towards “defin[ing] questions and issues.” Third, it provides the agency with the opportunity to understand how these issues affect women's lives. Status of Women Canada's consultation policy document states that the results obtained from their consultations can supply “the information we need to develop strategies and action on issues of concern to both Status of Women Canada and our stakeholders and ultimately provide the Secretary of State (Status of Women) with an important tool for influencing her Cabinet colleagues on public policy issues affecting women” (SWC, 1999a: 3). Furthermore, Status of Women Canada's 1999 consultation policy describes their consultation function as a “two-way communication process” which may occur “at any point during the decision-making process.” It asserts that consultations help to sustain the “ongoing relationship between Status of Women Canada and its stakeholders,” based on “mutual trust and understanding” (SWC, 1999a: 2). Other references found in Status of Women documents,

however, prompt questions concerning the nature of this “two- way communication process.” Indeed, the following references depict this process as a ‘top-down’, government-controlled process.

The same consultation policy asserts that the parameters of each consultation will be communicated to the participants before the start of the consultation and, “ *in some cases*, the objectives and parameters of the consultation *may* be established in dialogue with stakeholders” (SWC, 1999a: 4, my emphasis). The fact that the agency will have decided the agenda and discussion topics before meeting with women’s organizations could serve to narrow the focus of the dialogue considerably. In addition, SWC’s *Policy on Consultations with Stakeholders* declares that the issues for consultation for each coming year will be decided upon in advance and communicated to its “stakeholders” in SWC’s Annual Consultation Plan. The agency does maintain, however, that they will “consider” input and suggestions from stakeholders “when developing or updating” the plan (1999a: 6). In addition to the issues being discussed, the SWC will also decide on the type of forum most suitable for each consultation; this includes the number of participants selected, how they will participate and whether the scope of the consultation will have a national focus or will be limited by “sector” or region (1999a: 7-13). The concept of an open and inclusive communication forum is brought into question by the perception from some participants that the government-initiated consultation process actually curtails their capacity for action. Indeed a representative from a national women’s advocacy organization has stated: “...from my experience, I believe that the federal government’s inclusion of advocacy organizations in the policy process is very

smart. You are given information which is confidential and therefore you are unable to consult adequately with your constituency” (Representative of a national women’s advocacy organization. Personal Communication. 6 November 2000). Finally, the controlled, “top-down” approach of SWC’s consultation function seems to operate in contradiction to the agency’s stated goal of fostering “partnerships” with non-government organizations. Intriguingly, the Status of Women Canada’s 2000 *Report on Plans and Priorities* maintains that the role of its consultation function is to “better *inform* Status of Women Canada of the *realities* of its stakeholders base” (2000: 6, my emphasis); however, it does not depict its consultations as forums where SWC officials can also learn from the knowledge brought to the discussion tables by members of women’s organizations.

Throughout this chapter, it has been asserted that the new consultative process is becoming much more structured and, arguably, much more controlled. The previous section established that new players have been included in political spaces once reserved for women’s organizations. National women’s advocacy organizations are now just one group amid a “broad range of stakeholders” who participate in state-initiated policy consultations on policy issues that affect women’s lives. The intention of this next section is to demystify the consultation process in order to gain an understanding of how labour is divided between the state and the participants of SWC’s consultations. Such an examination is particularly instructive in determining the value accorded by the state to the “knowledge” and “experience” of national women’s advocacy organizations and, ultimately, their new role in the policy process.

New Roles: “Partners” or “Participants”?

In December 1999, SWC held a three-day Consultation on Gender Equality. The Co-ordinator of the Status of Women’s letter to participants suggests a remapping of roles for societal actors. The letter declares that expected outcomes of the three-day consultation include fostering a stronger working relationship between government and “non-government organizations” by enhancing an “awareness of our respective roles within the policy development process” (Ievers, 1999). This last statement is intriguing in several ways. Women’s advocacy organizations are not singled out as primary participants in the policy development process. Since national women’s advocacy organizations and the Canadian state have, over the years, sustained a long working relationship, it is curious that there is need for an enhanced “awareness” of their “respective roles.” If, indeed, the roles of women’s organizations in policy development are being redefined, one could argue that they are being redefined *for* them, not *by* them.

One of the first indications that the role of women’s organizations in the policy development process is being restructured is the language used by SWC to describe these organizations. Throughout SWC documents, women’s organizations are referred to as “stakeholders,” “constituents,” “clients” and “partners.” The confusing cross-over of these terms evidences a transition in the conceptualization of the roles of women’s organizations in the policy process. In the *SWC Report of 1996 consultations*, the term “constituents” is used interchangeably with the terms “stakeholders” and “partners in the policy development process.” While “constituents” does indicate the need for a certain level of government responsiveness and representation in decision making, “constituents”

does not denote the same level of involvement and power implied by the phrase, “partners in the policy development process.” The *Message for the Secretary of State (Status of Women)*, contained in SWC’s 1997 *Report on Plans and Priorities*, states the agency’s intention of “strengthening” its “partnerships with women’s organizations and other equality-seeking organizations”; however, the message continues by professing, “[w]e will also expand our partnerships with private sector institutions ...” (1997d: 2, my emphasis). The document does not explain the kind of private sector organizations with which the government agency intends on aligning itself. In giving women’s organizations and private institutions equal status as “partners,” however, the (former) role of women’s organizations in policy development has been revoked. As well, the juxtaposition of these two categories of “partners” serves to delegitimize the (former) recognition of national women’s advocacy organizations as unique sources of knowledge on women’s equality struggles.

In 1997, Status of Women Canada identified the implementation of a consultation function as a “key” strategy to develop “effective alliances and partnerships, both between Status of Women Canada and stakeholders, and among stakeholders (SWC, 1997d: 19). Indeed, the Secretary of State’s message in SWC’s 1997 *Report on Plan and Priorities* maintains that the purpose of their efforts to strengthen its “partnerships” with women’s organizations is to “benefit from their knowledge and to help empower their efforts” (1997d: 2). Yet, it becomes evident throughout the rest of the document that a hierarchy of “knowledge” and “expertise” has been established. Women’s organizations are mentioned frequently in the context of helping SWC achieve its goal of “strengthened

and more equitable public policy”; however, as will be illustrated below, all of these references imply the need for women’s organizations to improve their capacity to participate more effectively in the policy development process. In other words, SWC maintains that the “skills, abilities and tools” (1997d: 21) of these organizations need to be enhanced so that women’s organizations can become competent actors in policy development.

In order to aid women’s groups in this endeavour, the *Report* states that SWC research studies on gender equality are available to women’s organizations so that these groups will “have solid research to inform their contribution to the public policy process” (1997d: 16). This statement could be understood to mean that, in the eyes of the state, women’s organizations do not possess adequate knowledge on issues pertaining to women’s equality. Furthermore, these government-initiated research studies are set apart from the “action research” carried out by women’s organizations. The document explains that “action research, which assesses the impact on women’s equality of existing government policies or programs, [is] undertaken by women’s groups and other equality-seeking organizations” (1997d: 17). Such a delineation serves to elevate the research of government and other “experts” above the research carried out by women’s organizations. The separation of these two types of research is precisely what women’s groups had argued against in the SWC 1996 Consultations (SWC, 1996c: 20-21). By far the most explicit example of SWC’s demarcation between the knowledge of women’s organizations and the “expertise” of government is found in SWC’s discussion of its ongoing activities to implement its Gender-Based Analysis (GBA) initiative. In order for

women's organizations to become "better equipped with skills, abilities and tools," SWC discusses the possibility of "adapting gender-based analysis tools for use by NGOs" (SWC, 1997d: 21). From the information cited above, it is clear that women's organizations and the federal agency are not equal "partners" in the policy development process. One could cynically suggest that women's organizations are now seen by the state as policy actors 'in training.'

If women's organizations are, in fact, policy actors 'in training', it follows that one of SWC's roles is to aid in this capacity building. Indeed, one of SWC "planned results" to be realized by 2003 is to have "strengthened the capacity of non-governmental actors and civil society to take action to advance gender equality issues" (SWC, 2000: 14). By 2003, the agency plans to have "advanced the knowledge, skills and capacity of federal departments (including SWC), other governments, *NGOs* and the public at large to conduct GBA" (2000: 14, my emphasis) . Clearly, the agency views itself as an expert on "gender-equality" both within the government and in larger society. Why, then, are women's organizations included in the consultation process?

SWC's *Report on Plans and Priorities* for 2000-2001 lists as one of its primary commitments "influencing the development of fair and gender-equitable public policy" (2000:14). The agency states that one of the indicators of the fulfilment of this commitment will be the increased "access of women and women's equality-seeking groups to the public policy development process domestically and internationally" (2000:14). Certainly, the inclusion of women's organizations (and individual women) in a variety of SWC-initiated consultations could be seen as increasing women's access to

policy development processes. It gives the appearance of SWC actively engaging with civil society. Increased access of voluntary organizations to policy development processes, however, does not translate necessarily into increased influence over decisions in, and outcomes of, policy development, especially if policy makers already view themselves as “experts” in particular fields.²³

While the words “partners” and “partnerships” are used often in SWC literature when referring to the relationship between government and women’s organizations, it is already apparent that the government agency is not fulfilling its role in maintaining this partnership. In its policy on consultations, SWC lists government “accountability” as one of its “guiding principles.” The document claims that “Status of Women Canada will report back to participants about what was heard [in the consultations] and how this input feeds into the decision-making process” (SWC, 1999a: 4). To date, the reports from SWC’s December 1999 Consultation on Gender Equality and the smaller Aboriginal Roundtable on Gender Equality, held in March of 2000, have not been made available to participants (including participants from other government departments). Both documents are apparently stalled “in translation” (SWC Official. Personal Communication, 15 January 2001). While women’s organizations have been granted access to a particular process of policy development, it is clear that they do not (yet) have access to the results of the consultations, the interpretation of this information, or control over how and where their input will be utilized in the policy process. In contrast to SWC’s stated objective of

²³This recalls the earlier statements of Cook and Morgan (1971: 11) on participatory democracy: “To have participated in the making of decisions does not necessarily mean greater satisfaction with the results.”

“strengthening” its relationship with women’s organizations, it is apparent that the agency’s consultation function currently serves to distance women’s organizations from policy processes, while fulfilling federal government objectives of citizen engagement.

Conclusion

This chapter has illustrated how Status of Women Canada’s implementation of its new consultative function has contributed to the diminished relationship between national women’s advocacy organizations and the federal state. The designation of specific forums for policy discussion has limited and formalized the political spaces available to women’s organizations. The invitation of new categories of actors to these political forums has served to dilute the voices of women’s organizations and, consequently, has further dislodged women’s organizations from the unique standing it once held with the federal state. The inclusion of new organizations and individuals in these political spaces brings into question the legitimacy of women’s organizations as (sole) representatives of the collective voices of Canadian women. The ways in which these new consultative mechanisms have been institutionalized within Status of Women Canada have entrenched a “top-down,” government-controlled process of policy dialogue between national women’s advocacy organizations and the government agency. Such a process serves to control and contain the activities of women’s groups. While this process may have increased the access of women’s organizations to certain policy forums, their participation in these forums may indicate the fulfilment of a new, government-conferred role in policy development. Certainly, evidence presented in this chapter points to a

growing delineation (and hierarchy) between government and academic “expertise” and the “knowledge” of women’s organizations. Examination of available information on SWC’s new consultation function indicates that the current role of women’s advocacy organizations is far-removed from a policy development “partner.”

Before ending this discussion, it is worth considering the notion that structured consultations operate as “a governing instrument of the neo-liberal state” (Brodie, 1996b: 140). Brodie asserts that while consultations “give the appearance of democratic input” they, in fact, have become an “effective device for limiting the parameters of the debate.” Furthermore, the state’s move towards entrenching “democratic” processes of public consultation must be viewed in the context of its efforts to delegitimize the activities of advocacy organizations (Jenson and Phillips, 1996: 120). The combination of repeated attacks on women’s advocacy organizations and the creation of specific, controlled forums for women’s organizations to voice their concerns has dismantled the working relationship women’s organizations forged with the state during Canada’s post-war citizenship regime.

CONCLUSION

This thesis began with the assertion that a feminist lens must be employed when assessing how the relationship between national women's advocacy organizations, operating in English-Canada, and the federal state is being redefined. Central to this examination are the concepts of representation, participatory democracy and civil society. Indeed, I argue that an integral role of national women's advocacy organizations, operating in English Canada, has been to represent women's interests to the federal state. Feminist scholars of representation contend that the representation of women's collective demands is carried out as much by women's organizations as by women selected to bureaucratic posts (Vickers, 1997b). Revisiting earlier sentiments of Arscott and Trimble, "representation 'as if women matter,' is more likely to occur when it is undertaken both by and for women" (1997: 4), when a "politics of presence" is merged with a "politics of ideas". It has been argued that this vision of representation can only be fulfilled by women's equality-seeking advocacy organizations (Maillé, 1997: 61). A diminished policy relationship between the federal state and women's advocacy organizations, therefore, impedes significantly the potential representation of women's collective interests in federal political decision-making.

In recent years, the re-emergence of the concept of "civil society" is one indication of the current reconceptualization of how states and citizens interact. In order to understand some of the implications of this reconceptualization, it is instructive to revisit earlier debates concerning participatory democracy. These debates provide a framework through which to base discussions concerning the redefinition of national

women's advocacy organizations' participation in policy development. Evidence presented in Chapter Four addresses the "division of labour" between policy-makers and women's organizations in state-initiated consultations. I argue that these consultations contribute to a growing delineation (and hierarchy) between the appointed "expertise" of academics and bureaucrats and the "collective knowledge" of women's organizations. This hierarchy has contributed to state efforts to reduce the legitimacy of women's advocacy organizations and, indeed, has strong implications for the representation of women's collective demands.

This thesis endeavoured to expose some of the contradictions between the Canadian government's efforts to build partnerships with voluntary groups and its recent attempts to reduce the capacities of national women's advocacy organizations to influence policy processes and outcomes. Indeed, in contrast to current political discourse touting the birth of a "new volunteerism" (Charlebois, 2000: A 11), women's advocacy organizations, operating in English-Canada, have maintained a long history of formal engagement with the Canadian state.

The preceding pages have documented how, during the first and second waves of mobilization, women's advocacy organizations forged a particular working relationship with the federal state. This relationship accorded these organizations a certain degree of influence in the development of public policy. The endurance of such a relationship can be attributed, to a large extent, to a certain level political will maintained by the federal government throughout Canada's post-war citizenship regime.

Efforts carried out under Pierre Trudeau's vision of participatory democracy

endeavoured to assist *advocacy* organizations in becoming “prime participants” in policy development (Pal, 1993: 244). While this directive applied to a wide range of organizations, the distinct relationship established between women’s advocacy organizations, operating in English-Canada, and the federal state during this time enabled their successes in policy interventions. The state funding of women’s advocacy organizations and the institution of state machinery allowed these organizations to access (and influence) policy processes.

The 1990s witnessed a sharp redefinition of the relationship between national women’s advocacy organizations and the federal state. The dismantling of the Canadian Women’s State and the steady reduction in state funding to national women’s advocacy organizations have limited their access to policy processes. These events coincided with the legitimization of particular government officials as gender “experts” in policy development. I argue that national women’s organizations no longer occupy a unique position in federal politics. Instead, they appear to have been placed in one small category of Canada’s unwieldy “voluntary sector.”

The ways in which the state has redefined the role of national women’s advocacy organizations is evidenced in Status of Women Canada’s new consultation framework. This framework has dismantled the traditional working relationship between national women’s advocacy organizations, operating in English-Canada and the Canadian state in the following ways: new consultative mechanisms serve to limit the political space available to women’s organizations; these mechanisms entrench a “top-down,” government-controlled process of policy deliberation; new actors have been included in

political spaces once reserved for women's advocacy organizations and; the recognition of women's advocacy organizations as legitimate sources of knowledge on policy issues has been diminished.

While Chapter Four examined the implementation of new consultative procedures throughout SWC, future research could ascertain if (and how) various other federal departments/agencies have reviewed the ways in which they interact with national women's advocacy organizations. Are the four developments listed above unique to the relationship between SWC and national women's advocacy groups, or is this situation comparable to those of other federal government departments?

Future research could also explore the degrees to which national women's *advocacy* organizations are participating in (and indeed, influencing) the federal government's Voluntary Sector Initiative (VSI). In September 2000, the VSI established the creation of seven "Joint Tables" and two "Working Groups," with representation from a diverse range of voluntary organizations, to perform a consultative function for the initiative. Are service-oriented women's organizations playing a larger role than women's advocacy organizations in this initiative? How do national women's advocacy organizations view this initiative?

While current state discourse touts the importance of forging partnerships with civil society and engaging citizens in policy development, this thesis cautions strongly against the acceptance of ideology that assumes that all citizens (and all voluntary groups) are equal. I argue that a feminist lens must be adopted when examining the government's commitment to partnering with "Canadians" in order to ensure that the

avenues still open to national women's advocacy organizations remain viable.

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