

# Even the Little Children Cooperated: Family Strategies, Childcare Discourse, and Social Welfare Debates 1945-1975

Alvin Finkel

AS A NATIONAL DEBATE over daycare raged in the early 1970s, J. Eric Harrington, president of Canada Vickers Ltd., wrote a pointed letter to Grace Mac Innis, New Democrat MP for Vancouver Kingsway:

Could you please tell me what on earth “day centres” of which you claim we need 130,000 and “family planning centres” of which you claim we need 700, have to do with “equal rights for women?”

Surely family planning and day-care centres for children are purely a family responsibility and a personal matter and don't have a damn thing to do with equal rights.

Please, all of you, stay out of our family affairs and our bedrooms, leave our children alone and do some planning that might help the economy, the unemployment situation and a hundred other more important problems on which to date you have been ineffectual.<sup>1</sup>

Mac Innis replied equally pointedly:

The fact that you can believe that family planning and day care centres for children are purely a family responsibility and a personal matter, indicates very clearly that you enjoy an income standard where you and those who surround you are well able to handle such matters from your own resources. Such, I regret to have to tell you, is not the case for a very large percentage of the Canadian people.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>National Archives of Canada (NAC), MG 32, C 12, Grace Mac Innis Papers, Vol. 19, File “Women, Status of, 1972,” J. Eric Harrington, president, Canada Vickers Ltd., Montréal, to Mac Innis, 9 May 1972.

<sup>2</sup>NAC, MG 32, C 12, Vol. 19, File “Women, Status of, 1972,” Mac Innis to Harrington, 18 May 1972.

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This paper explores the impact on social policy in the childcare area of social activism and of public discourse about the desirability of mothers working outside the home. This discourse shifted during the period under study from overwhelming social condemnation to growing, though often begrudging, acceptance. What changed more slowly was the assumption that the nuclear household was and ought to remain the major institution for reproduction of social labour, a place where unpaid mothers socialized children, and provided the prepared food, clean house, and happy, wholesome home that guaranteed employers a relatively productive, contented work force.<sup>3</sup> In the late 1940s, it was generally assumed that mothers would stay out of that work force. But, as paid work outside the home became common for mothers, the "double work day" of home and outside employment became equally common. Feminists denounced women's subordination in both home and workplace, and called for communal kitchens and other arrangements that challenged the two-parent nuclear household as the locus for social reproduction.<sup>4</sup> But more conventional views of gender roles followed mothers into the workforce, allowing governments to assume that it was a working mother's responsibility alone to arrange for the care of her children while she earned an income.

Scholars on daycare issues have debated the usefulness of the "reserve army of labour" thesis in explaining social policy in the childcare area.<sup>5</sup> Married women,

<sup>3</sup> Among useful works on the family as a locus of social reproduction and the state's attempts to shape it as such are: Jane Ursel, "The State and the Maintenance of Patriarchy: A Case Study of Family, Labour and Welfare Legislation in Canada," in James Dickinson and Bob Russell, eds., *Family, Economy and State: The Social Reproduction Process Under Capitalism* (Toronto 1986), 150-92; and Linda Gordon, "The Welfare State: Towards a Socialist-Feminist Perspective," in Ralph Miliband and Leo Panitch, eds., *Socialist Register 1990* (London 1990), 171-200.

<sup>4</sup> The evolution of such ideas among radical American feminists is traced in Dolores Hayden, *The Grand Domestic Revolution: A History of Feminist Designs for American Homes, Neighbourhoods, and Cities* (Cambridge 1981). In Canada, feminists in the CCF had sufficient influence in the 1940s for its national convention in 1946 to adopt a "Status of Women" resolution that included calls for sexual equality "in the economic and cultural life of Canada" and proposed policies for the "emancipation of the housewife." Measures meant to achieve the latter goal included "public or co-operative restaurants, laundries, housecleaning services, home nursing services, nursery schools, supervised recreation areas, community centres." Nothing was said however about who would staff these services; there was an implicit understanding that the movement of these women's jobs from the nuclear household into the community would not alter the gendered character of the labour to be performed. NAC, MG 28, I 103, Canadian Labour Congress Papers, Vol. 314, File 4-1, "Report of Ninth National Convention Co-operative Commonwealth Federation," 7-9 August 1946, Regina, Saskatchewan.

<sup>5</sup> Among works that take a position on this issue, see, Ruth Roach Pierson, *"They're Still Women After All: The Second World War and Canadian Womanhood"* (Toronto 1986);

according to this thesis, have been treated as peripheral elements of the work force, hired when the economy is on the upswing and dismissed when a slump occurs. This paper casts doubt on the utility of this view in explaining daycare policy. The dramatically different daycare policies of Québec and Ontario during the immediate post-1945 boom demonstrate the dangers of reducing public policy to a reaction to one economic factor. So do the failure of governments everywhere in the country to produce a childcare policy in the 1950s when the absolute need for more workers was greatest and the comparative willingness of the state to increase daycare provisions in the 1970s when rates of unemployment in Canada were rising. Since employers appear generally to have been able to hire as many married women employees as they wanted, there was never any organized clamour from them for a generous state childcare policy.

So while we cannot ignore the strictly economic underpinnings of childcare policy, it is important to provide equal focus on the ideological debates and social activism that shaped social policy on this question. This paper argues that the daycare system that has evolved in Canada is, in large part, the product of struggle between feminist forces (broadly defined to include all groups that fought for more rights and/or more social influence for women) and the powerful forces of patriarchy. Until the 1960s feminists tended to use a maternalist discourse to subvert the arguments of opponents of women's waged labour and of publicly-provided childcare: childcare outside the home would benefit some children and aid women to perform the mothering role that was supposedly their exclusive purpose in life. As a growing international literature demonstrates, maternalist discourse did result in gains for women and children though, because this discourse subsumed women's rights to children's rights, it made it difficult for women to proclaim a right to economic independence as citizens.<sup>6</sup> By the late 1960s, with the emergence of an organized women's liberation movement that challenged the core of patriarchal beliefs, the discourse shifted, at least in part, towards an assertion of women's entitlements: women had a right to the economic independence that waged labour could provide and, given the gendered character of childcare that had evolved

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Ruth K. Abbot and R.A. Young, "Cynical and Deliberate Manipulation?" Child Care and the Reserve Army of Labour in Canada," *Journal of Canadian Studies*, 24, 2 (1989), 22-38; Patricia Connelly, *Last Hired, First Fired* (Toronto 1978); Ronnie Leah, "Women's Labour Force Participation and Day Care Cutbacks in Ontario," *Atlantis*, 7, 1 (1981), 36-44; and Meg Luxton, "Taking on the Double Day: Housewives as a Reserve Army of Labour," *Atlantis*, 7, 1 (1981), 12-32.

<sup>6</sup>Important recent works on maternalist discourse in the welfare state debates include: Seth Koven and Sonya Michel, eds., *Mothers of a New World: Maternalist Politics and the Origin of Welfare States* (New York 1993); Alisa Klaus, *Every Child a Lion: The Origins of Maternal and Infant Health Policy in the United States and France, 1890-1920* (Ithaca 1993); Gisela Bock and Pat Thane, eds., *Maternity and Gender Policies: Women and the Rise of the European Welfare States, 1880s-1950s* (London 1991); and Linda Gordon, *Pitied But Not Entitled: Single Mothers and the History of Welfare* (New York 1994).

historically, that right was only meaningful if families of all kinds had access to quality affordable daycare.

After World War II,<sup>7</sup> state and employer policies,<sup>8</sup> abetted by media propaganda claiming that full-time motherhood was the destiny of married women,<sup>9</sup> produced a large-scale exit of married women from the labour force. The propaganda in favour of a two-parent nuclear household in which father worked for wages and mother kept the home fires burning was so all-pervasive<sup>10</sup> as to virtually make invisible the many women who both raised children and worked outside the home.

The Québec government quickly closed the small number of publicly-subsidized daycares once the war ended, ignoring petitions from the mothers suggesting that because of their poverty, they could not match the nutrition, health care and training the day nursery provided.<sup>11</sup> The largely anglophone Local Council of Women of Montréal decided that a campaign to keep the day nurseries open would be futile. They opted instead for a joint study of the daycare problem with the Montreal Council of Social Agencies, which grouped the anglophone charitable organizations. That study would focus equally on half-day nursery programs for at-home pre-schoolers meant to socialize them to collective environments before they reached the school years.<sup>12</sup> In this way the two councils could avoid the ire of those who objected to making it easier for women to work outside the home.<sup>13</sup> Indeed the resulting study found widespread disapproval of mothers of young children seeking paid work. The Community Chest provided limited funding for

<sup>7</sup>On childcare policies during the war, see Pierson, *They're Still Women After All*. An outline history of daycare in Canada is Patricia Vandebelt Schulz, "Day Care in Canada: 1850-1962," in Kathleen Gallagher Ross, ed., *Good Day Care: Fighting For It, Getting It, Keeping It* (Toronto 1978), 137-58.

<sup>8</sup>On state policies that discouraged paid work for married women, see Ruth Roach Pierson, *They're Still Women After All*, 48-9.

<sup>9</sup>The media campaign is discussed in Veronica Strong-Boag, "'Women with a Choice': Canada's Wage-Earning Wives and the Construction of the Middle Class: 1945-60," Paper Presented to the Canadian Historical Association Annual Meeting, May 1992.

<sup>10</sup>The range of views about the lives of suburban women who supposedly embraced this ideal is recounted in Veronica Strong-Boag, "Home Dreams: Women and the Suburban Experiment in Canada, 1945-60," *Canadian Historical Review*, 72, 4 (1991), 471-504. Less attention has been paid by both labour historians and women's historians to the lives of women in the inner city at home with children.

<sup>11</sup>Ruth Roach Pierson, *They're Still Women After All*, 55.

<sup>12</sup>Nursery schools had become popular among upper-income parents in Canada in the 1920s. "The result was that only the very poor who were subsidized, or the children of parents who could afford the fees had the advantage of preschool programs, a situation that effectively continues to this day." Status of Women Canada, *Report of the Task Force on Child Care* (Ottawa 1986), 230.

<sup>13</sup>NAC, MG 28, I 64, Montreal Council of Women Papers, Volume 2, "Minutes of the Sub-Executive Committee of the Local Council of Women of Montreal," 9 January 1946.

day nurseries in the 1950s but there was no government money and no system of licensing for daycares in the province.<sup>14</sup>

In Ontario, by contrast, a concerted campaign by mothers using the daycares, women's and welfare organizations, as well as the Communists and the CCF,<sup>15</sup> convinced the provincial government to continue its support for daycares.<sup>16</sup> Though the province was unwilling to make up the loss of federal funds, it agreed to pay fifty per cent of the costs of existing daycares for which the municipalities agreed to pay the remaining fifty per cent. Toronto city council and a few others agreed to keep their daycares open on this basis.<sup>17</sup>

Provincial grants were available only for pre-schoolers, forcing municipalities to decide whether to provide care for school-aged children. Toronto, responding to the well-organized campaign for daycare within the city, agreed to maintain existing centres for school children.<sup>18</sup> Daycares for Ontario pre-schoolers receiving subsidies required a provincial license, which was issued only to daycares that met fairly strict requirements set out in the Day Nurseries Act of 1946.<sup>19</sup> Again, responding to the daycare advocates' evidence that, as the Minister of Public Welfare observed, day nurseries had "value as a centre of child training" and "value

<sup>14</sup>NAC, MG 28, Canadian Welfare Council/ Canadian Council on Social Development (CWC/CCSD) Papers, Vol. 50, File 448, Miss Ghislaine Guindon, Assistant Secretary, Family and Child Welfare Division, Canadian Welfare Council, to Mrs. Winifred Moore, Day Care Consultant, United Community Defense Services, Child Welfare League of America, New York, n.d.

<sup>15</sup>On the role of women in the Left parties in Toronto's daycare struggles, see Susan Prentice, "Workers, Mothers, Reds: Toronto's Postwar Daycare Fight," *Studies in Political Economy*, 30 (1989), 115-141.

<sup>16</sup>The Minister of Public Welfare made clear that he had been impressed by the number of campaigners for daycare who had written him, signed petitions, or appeared before him in delegations, and by their arguments. Archives of Ontario, RG 3, George Drew Papers, Box 455, File 228-G, "Public Welfare, Department of, Day Nurseries," W. A. Goodfellow, Minister of Public Welfare, to George Drew, 25 February 1946. See also Pierson, *They're Still Women After All*, 57.

<sup>17</sup>In Toronto, for example, Labour Progressive (Communist) alderman Norman Freed argued fruitlessly for a program to open new daycares in the city. His opponents were unwilling to engage in debates about the value of day nurseries to mothers and children, focussing simply on the cost of operating the six subsidized licensed daycares then operating within the City of Toronto. *The Globe and Mail*, 16 October 1947.

<sup>18</sup>NAC, MG 28, Vol. 50, File 448D, "Nursery Day Care 1950-6," Margaret J. Newton, Assistant Executive Secretary, Welfare Council of Toronto and District, to Phyllis Burns, secretary, Child Welfare Division, Canadian Welfare Council, 23 March 1953.

<sup>19</sup>The number of licensed centres grew rapidly from 69 in 1945-6 to 348 in 1963-4. But the growth in licensed spaces and particularly subsidized spaces was far less spectacular. There were 4,335 licensed spaces in 1945-6 of which 1135 were subsidized, and 11,581 spaces in 1963-4 with 1291 receiving subsidies. Abbott and Young, "Cynical and Deliberate Manipulation?," 28.

to the health of children who use their service,"<sup>20</sup> the Act stipulated the physical and program qualities a daycare had to meet to be licensed.<sup>21</sup> Petitions from the mothers who used the nurseries subsidized under the wartime legislation had remarked favourably on the attitudes of staff, the physical equipment, and the programming of their daycares, and so the Ontario legislation represented a victory for them in putting forth the principle that working mothers' children needed quality care rather than just supervision. Their attitude was shared by the Welfare Council of Toronto which regarded nurseries as a benefit to all children and believed that they should be incorporated into the school system.<sup>22</sup> Indeed the arguments made in favour of nurseries by a section of the social work community — they gave children a chance to socialize and mothers an opportunity to have time away from their children — provided the embryo of the view that would develop twenty years later that paid work for mothers and quality daycares for children might be as advantageous for both groups as the stay-at-home model.

Ontario's commitment to daycare was soon demonstrated to be limited. By 1951, daycare fees in Toronto had risen sixfold since 1948 and though only applications from the most needy applicants received consideration,<sup>23</sup> few needy people could afford licensed daycare at the new rates. Because of the important role of Communists in the daycare struggles of the period, opponents of publicly-subsidized daycare Red-baited daycare advocates rather than responding to their arguments.<sup>24</sup> Still, Ontario's initial response to the women's campaign demonstrates the danger of limiting a discussion of the state's response to childcare concerns to the question of the "reserve army." The determination of governments to have women dismissed from their jobs when "the boys came home" varied, depending both on the degree to which women protested this supposed solution to male unemployment and the intensity of the campaign of male-dominated organizations (such as the Roman Catholic Church in Québec) against working mothers.

<sup>20</sup> AO, RG 3, Goodfellow to Drew, 25 February 1946.

<sup>21</sup> AO, Ontario, Department of Public Welfare, "Regulations Made Pursuant to Section 3 of Day Nurseries Act 1946" (passed by Order-in-Council 6 March 1947).

<sup>22</sup> AO, RG 18, Royal Commission on Education in Ontario, Series B, B-115, *Briefs*, Box 16, Nursery School Committee and Day Nursery Committee, Welfare Council, Toronto.

<sup>23</sup> The policy approved by the civic authorities in Toronto in 1951 specified the children who could be admitted. They included children without fathers in the home, children whose fathers earned meagre incomes, children with special needs, and children from homes that had special needs that made two incomes mandatory. NAC, MG 28, Vol. 50, File 448D, Toronto Public Welfare Department, "Nursery and Day Care Centers," April 1953, enclosed with Margaret J. Newton, assistant executive secretary, Welfare Council of Toronto and District, to Phyllis Burns, secretary, Child Welfare Division, CWC, 23 March 1953.

<sup>24</sup> Prentice, "Workers, Mothers, Reds," 130.

Linda Gordon warns that functionalist arguments with a focus on social control<sup>25</sup> exaggerate the “rationality of welfare programs for those in power.” Welfare policies often embody contradictory concepts because of the “fragmented and inconsistent goals of policy-makers,” and because “most welfare policies represent the jerry-built compromises which are the artifacts of political and social conflict — a dynamic that functionalism cannot encompass.”<sup>26</sup> It was more than coincidence that “the announcement that the day nurseries would remain open came the same day that a mass meeting [in Toronto] had been called in Carleton United Church to support the drive to have the day nurseries and day care centres remain open.”<sup>27</sup> It showed the success of a social struggle based on family strategies for economic survival and drawing on support from social workers and others who suggested that, in some circumstances, the combination of quality daycare and paid work for mothers was beneficial for children and society and no threat to overall gender roles within the country.

Scholars wedded to the “reserve army” argument also tend to ignore that it was working mothers and their supporters in popular organizations who argued that daycare provision would increase the efficiency and workforce longevity of mothers; capitalists rarely asked the state to take an interest in the childcare concerns of their employees.<sup>28</sup> It is true, as Susan Prentice has suggested, that

<sup>25</sup>There is a vast literature on the differential impact of the welfare state on women and men. Much of this literature stresses ways in which the welfare state oppresses women as both clients and workers and reinforces patriarchal norms. See, for example, Mimi Abramovitz, *Regulating the Lives of Women: Social Welfare Policy from Colonial Times to the Present* (Boston 1989); Hilary Rose, “Women and the Restructuring of the Welfare State,” in Else Oyen, ed., *Comparing Welfare States and Their Futures* (Aldershot, Hants 1986), 80-95; and Wendy Brown, “Finding the Man in the State,” *Feminist Studies*, 18, 1 (1992), 7-34. Somewhat opposing views suggesting that unintentionally the welfare state unleashes forces that have liberatory potential for women include: Frances Fox Piven, “Ideology and the State: Women, Power, and the Welfare State,” in Linda Gordon, ed., *Women, the State, and Welfare*, (Madison 1990); and Barbara Ehrenreich and Frances Fox Piven, “Women and the Welfare State,” in Irving Howe, ed., *Alternatives: Proposals for America from the Democratic Left* (New York 1983). A statistically-based argument, which not only rejects the view that the welfare state shores up traditional family roles but suggests that it has already demonstrated a largely positive role in empowering women within western countries, particularly Sweden, is Jon Eivind Kolberg, “The Gender Dimension of the Welfare State,” *International Journal of Sociology*, 21, 2 (1991), 119-48.

<sup>26</sup>Gordon, “The Welfare State,” 186.

<sup>27</sup>NAC, MG 50, Vol. 77, File 564, “Red Feather,” 1, 2 (June 1946).

<sup>28</sup>Pressure for the establishment of a public presence in the daycare field during the war came from welfare groups such as the Welfare Council of Toronto, whose executive secretary, Bessie Touzel, had presented an ambitious plan for daycare provision to the federal and provincial governments in early 1942. *The Globe and Mail*, 11 April 1942. See also Pierson, *They're Still Women After All*, 50. Employers played a negligible role in reinforcing such pressures and, as noted below, were equally inactive in promoting state programs regarding childcare in the 1960s.

daycare advocates in Toronto, including Communists, adopted a conservative discourse in which daycare was a preventative measure against juvenile crime.<sup>29</sup> So did daycare advocates everywhere in the country; yet a real daycare program survived only in Toronto where militancy resulted in at least minimal provision of state-subsidized childcare.

The discourse of daycare campaigners in Toronto stressed that many women had no choice but to work, whether good childcare was available or not. These women were poor and victims of the housing crisis that plagued most cities at war's end.<sup>30</sup> Irene V. Walker, spokeswoman for the Committee of Parents for the Day Care and Day Nursery Association of Toronto, informed Ontario Premier George Drew of the desperate position of the women using Toronto daycares. Seventy per cent, she claimed, were sole providers, sometimes because they had no husbands and sometimes because their husbands were mentally or physically unable to work. "In some cases, the family's home consists of one room, where they have to eat, sleep and live. The meals are prepared on a one or two burner gas plate. In some cases there are as many as 21 people in one house where they have to share one bathroom and sometimes the kitchen."<sup>31</sup> In such homes there was "no place for the children to play" and parents worried that their children, forced to play on the streets, would be killed in traffic accidents. The result:

In many cases some of our parents have had to buy homes at outrageous prices. It would be impossible for them to meet these payments if the mother of the family had to retire from business. Other parents have purchased homes where they cannot get possession and are still living in one room. One case we know of the mother is the sole support of her four children and living in a third storey room. Another case we know where the veteran father returned home completely disabled. They had to buy a house at an exorbitant price. It would be impossible for them to carry on their obligations on his small pension, if the mother could not go to work.<sup>32</sup>

<sup>29</sup>Prentice, "Workers, Mothers, Reds," 120. As noted below, opponents of daycare laid blame for juvenile delinquency on working mothers. Thus it was only natural that childcare advocates tried to destroy that argument by claiming that it was not lack of parental care, as such, that led children astray, but lack of adequate adult supervision of any kind. Professionally-staffed and state-monitored childcare centres were presented as an alternative to haphazard childcare arrangements rather than to stay-at-home mothers.

<sup>30</sup>On the housing situation in the 1930s and during the war, see the report prepared by C.A. Curtis, Professor of Economics at Queen's University: Canada, Advisory Committee on Reconstruction, *Final Report IV; Housing and Community Planning: Final Report of the Subcommittee* (Ottawa 1944). Glimpses of the postwar situation are found in NAC, RG 19, Department of Finance, Vol. 716, File 203-C-15, "Report of the City of Winnipeg, Fact Finding Board. On Housing in Winnipeg," 27 June 1947; and File 203 C-17, Vancouver Housing Association, *Housing Vancouver: A Survey of the Housing Position in Vancouver*, March 1946.

<sup>31</sup>AO, RG 3, Box 455, Irene V. Walker to Drew, 29 July 1946.

<sup>32</sup>*Ibid.*



While many unionized males would experience wage increases during the late 1940s and through the 1950s and 1960s that allowed for a better standard of living, the cost of housing remained high. The "working wife" became the key to many families' strategy to leave behind cramped rented quarters and become homeowners. The state, responsible for housing policies<sup>33</sup> that discouraged the stay-at-home model for mothers it claimed to prefer, still invoked that model to avoid taking responsibility for the childcare needs of these women.<sup>34</sup>

Public attitudes opposed the working mother. A Gallup poll in 1960 asked: "Do you think that married women should take a job outside the home if they want to or should they concentrate on looking after the home when they have young children?" Ninety-three per cent of respondents favoured the latter option.<sup>35</sup> The numbers changed only modestly during the 1960s though afterwards support for the concept of mothers working outside the home began to grow dramatically.<sup>36</sup> Indeed the dilemma of working mothers was embedded in the widespread patriarchal perspective that men were family providers and should have first claim on jobs. Only nineteen per cent of Canadians in 1950 agreed that women "should be given equal opportunity with men to compete for jobs." While that percentage rose to 32 per cent in August 1956, it tumbled to 16 per cent in June 1961 as a prolonged recession made job-finding more difficult. Among women support for equal opportunity fell from 35 per cent in 1956 to 17 per cent in 1961.<sup>37</sup> A large majority of Canadians in 1961 felt that even married women without children should not be in the workforce, with women noticeably more opposed than men.<sup>38</sup>

Yet the participation rate of married women in the workforce grew steadily in the post-war period. From 4.1 per cent of married women engaged in waged or salaried work in 1941 the percentage jumped to over one in ten in 1951 and to 22.9 per cent in 1963. A similar percentage of divorced, widowed or separated women worked in 1963 and the married and once married group together composed half

<sup>33</sup>On housing policy see John C. Bacher, *Keeping to the Marketplace: The Evolution of Canadian Housing Policy* (Montréal 1993).

<sup>34</sup>In fairness, it is unclear that a social housing policy or a greater social wage generally would have significantly reduced the number of women seeking paid employment. In countries where the social wage is generous, as is the case in Scandinavia, rates of taxation are often high enough to encourage the view that two incomes are necessary if a household is to afford more than bare necessities.

<sup>35</sup>Monica Boyd, *Canadian Attitudes Toward Women: Thirty Years of Change*, Prepared for Canada, Women's Bureau, Labour Canada (Ottawa 1983), 46.

<sup>36</sup>In March 1970 only 13 per cent of Canadian adults believed married women with young children should consider employment outside the home while 80 per cent were against their doing so. By January 1982, 38 per cent supported the woman's right to seek employment while 54 per cent were opposed. *Ibid.*, 47, 49.

<sup>37</sup>NAC, MG 28, IV-3, National Liberal Federation Papers, Vol. 1024, File "Gallup Poll Canada-General-1956"; Vol. 1024, "Gallup Poll 1960-68."

<sup>38</sup>Monica Boyd, *Canadian Attitudes*, 45.

the female labour force. The Women's Bureau of the federal Department of Labour estimated that half of these women had children under sixteen and two-fifths had preschoolers.<sup>39</sup>

A survey by the Department of Labour in 1958 of married women in the labour force in eight cities found that a tiny minority had recourse to organized daycare facilities. Grandmothers and other relatives, older children, and neighbours looked after young children while mothers worked. The report authors suggested "there was a natural tendency for mothers to be protective in replying to questions about the care of their children" and that this might explain "why there was little demand for organized child-care facilities." They added however that the mothers surveyed "would have welcomed some place where school-aged children could go after school and spend the time until their mothers returned from work."<sup>40</sup>

Given society's hostility to working mothers, the mothers had reason to be "protective." An admission that there were problems with one's childcare arrangements might be seen as a reflection on the mother. The public discourse that made unproblematic the needs of children to have mother at home all day and that accused working mothers of stealing jobs from those who "really needed to work"<sup>41</sup> compelled silence regarding the difficulties of finding good childcare on the part of mothers who could not remain home. By the late 1950s women's and welfare groups were becoming quite concerned that the childcare arrangements of many working mothers were haphazard.

In Edmonton, for example, two studies in the late 1950s suggested unsatisfactory arrangements for daycare. A study done by the Edmonton Council of Com-

<sup>39</sup>Canada, Department of Labour, Women's Bureau, *Bulletin*, January 1964, Number XI, "Day Care Services for Children of Working Mothers."

<sup>40</sup>Canada, Department of Labour, *Married Women Working for Pay in Eight Canadian Cities* (Ottawa 1958).

<sup>41</sup>This accusation was not taken lightly. In 1957, when I was in grade three at a "tough" inner-city school in North Winnipeg, an irate mother burst into our class, an oasis of child-centredness in a school that emphasized corporal punishment, and accused the teacher, Mrs. Doyle, of calling her daughter a rude name. Somewhat mollified by a group of girls, for whom this teacher was a role model and who spontaneously made a human chain between her and the mother and insisted that Mrs. Doyle never insulted us, the mother calmed down and began to leave the class. First, however, she yelled loudly at Mrs. Doyle that she should be ashamed of herself taking a job that a married man could hold so that she could wear a mink stole. Mrs. Doyle, after thanking the class for our support and asking us to remain friends with the troubled little girl with a big imagination, then felt the need to add words to the effect: "I don't own a mink stole or any other fur. I'm a widow and the only support of my adult daughter who is confined to a wheelchair. I want all of you and your parents to know that I would not be working if my husband were still alive to support my daughter and myself."

munity Services<sup>42</sup> in 1956 found children as young as one month "being left at 6 a.m. and being picked up at 7 p.m. in places which cared for 25 or 30 children with one adult in charge." Two years later the University Women's Club investigated 54 places that had advertised facilities for care of pre-schoolers. Again, concerns were raised about the condition of facilities (usually private homes), the competence of supervisors, the lack of programming, and the supervisor-child ratio. While the Edmonton Council of Community Services called upon city council to set standards for child daycare and the University Women's Club presented their concerns to the provincial government, nothing was done.<sup>43</sup>

In other cities the situation was similar. In Toronto the Women Electors Association warned the Welfare Department in the early 1950s that, with the cost of spaces in licensed daycares rising dramatically and the number of spaces remaining flat, children were being placed in "precarious private home care and in some cases in black market day care centres."<sup>44</sup> Yet Toronto had 17 of the 20 full-day licensed daycares in Ontario that received provincial assistance (twelve more centres in the province received subsidies for a half-day program).<sup>45</sup> Marion Royce, director of the Women's Bureau in the federal Department of Labour,<sup>46</sup> and an advocate of women's right to work, was disturbed to learn from Cenovia Addy, the executive director of the Calgary Family Service Bureau, that the services available for childcare in that city in 1957 were so poor that "after careful consideration of all that is involved mothers have decided that it is not worthwhile from any point of view for them to take a job while their children are small."<sup>47</sup> The

<sup>42</sup>The Council received the cooperation of placement officers with the National Employment Service in securing information about the childcare arrangements of married women seeking employment. During a two-month period, 816 women were interviewed, of whom 343 had children at home. The mothers in the sample averaged three children each. The Council also investigated "homes offering private boarding or day care for children." NAC, MG 28, Vol. 50, File 448, File - "Nursery-Daycare 1957-68," "Material Given to Mr. Smit by Miss M.V. Royce," June 1957.

<sup>43</sup>NAC, MG 28, Vol. 50, File 448, "Nursery-Daycare 1957-68", *Minutes*, Study Group on Family Welfare Services, 24 November 1960.

<sup>44</sup>Schulz, "Day Care in Canada," 155.

<sup>45</sup>NAC, MG 28, Vol. 50, File 448D, "Nursery Day Care 1950-6," Deputy Minister of National Health and Welfare to Canadian Welfare Council, 24 February 1954.

<sup>46</sup>The Women's Bureau had been established in 1953 as a result of lobbying by women's organizations. Their concerns, mentioned by Hon. Milton R. Gregg, Minister of Labour, included the gathering of pertinent information about women in the labour force and the "study of the particular problems of women in special situations, such as those who are both workers and homemakers or older women who might become self-supporting." Canada, House of Commons, *Debates*, 14 May 1953.

<sup>47</sup>NAC, MG 28, Vol. 50, File 448, "Nursery-Daycare 1957-68," "Conversation with Mrs. Cenovia Addy [executive director, Calgary Family Service Bureau], Included in "Material given to Mr. Smit by Miss M.V. Royce," June 1957. "Some notes re discussions of day care for children of working mothers in Edmonton, Calgary and Vancouver, June 1957."

secretary of the Family and Child Welfare division of the Community Chest and Council of Greater Vancouver described childcare provision for working mothers in his city as "at a very embryonic stage."<sup>48</sup> The federal Deputy Minister of National Health and Welfare indicated in 1954 that only Ontario and BC either licensed or subsidized daycares.<sup>49</sup> Three years later, licensing had begun in Manitoba and Saskatchewan. Yet in the opinion of Eric Smit, secretary of the Family and Child Welfare Division of the Canadian Welfare Council, only Ontario had a "fully developed system of licensing" with close inspection of centres on a continuing basis.<sup>50</sup>

The popular press trivialized the issue of women's paid work by typecasting the working mother as a middle-class wife augmenting her husband's respectable salary so that the household could pile up material possessions and engage in status contests with neighbours.<sup>51</sup> This created a discourse in which the working woman was presented as someone who chose to have a double work day of home and outside-home labour for largely fanciful reasons. Charlotte Whitton, a member of the Board of Control in Ottawa, demonstrated the reaction women might expect when they asked for publicly-subsidized daycare. In 1951 the Carling and Merivale Road Mothers' Committees had presented a brief to the Board of Control calling for more day nurseries in the city. The controllers rejected their request and Whitton denounced "the woman who much prefers to work outside her own home, though with little or no economic need. ... What is of more value to a state, a spinster may sentimentiously enquire, than fully and faithfully to discharge the vocation you chose?"<sup>52</sup>

Even organizations and individuals that defended women's rights to a career and opposed job and pay discrimination on the basis of gender rarely tackled the issue of the right of mothers to seek paid employment. In the discourse of the trade union movement, the view that mothers should stay home with children was implicit. While a local trades council, prompted by women activists, might oppose discrimination on the basis of marital status,<sup>53</sup> the notion of actively encouraging

<sup>48</sup>CWC/CCSD Papers, Vol. 50, File 448, "Telephone Conversation with Mr. Watson [E.F. Watson, Secretary, Family and Child Welfare Division, Community Chest and Council of Greater Vancouver]" Included in "Material given to Mr. Smit by Miss M. V. Royce," June 1957.

<sup>49</sup>NAC, MG 28, Vol. 50, File 448, "Family Day Care," Deputy Minister of National Health and Welfare to Canadian Welfare Council, 24 February 1954.

<sup>50</sup>NAC, MG 28, Vol. 50, File 448, "Nursery-Day Care 1957-68," Eric Smit to G.A. de Coq, executive assistant, Edmonton Council of Community Services, 6 May 1957.

<sup>51</sup>Strong-Boag, "Women with a Choice."

<sup>52</sup>P.T. Rooke and R.L. Schnell, *No Bleeding Heart: Charlotte Whitton, A Feminist on the Right* (Vancouver 1987), 146.

<sup>53</sup>Such a resolution, for example, was passed by the Vancouver Labour Council, Congress of Canadian Labour, in April 1950. Though the women who introduced the resolution began by emphasizing that women should have the same opportunities as men, they felt the need

paid work for mothers had little purchase within an overwhelmingly male-dominated movement. The Congress of Canadian Labour (CCL), the most progressive federation, did call in 1945 for "day nurseries for working mothers, either within individual establishments or on a community basis, whichever seems more effective."<sup>54</sup> Afterwards however labour organizations, both federal<sup>55</sup> and provincial,<sup>56</sup> gave little consideration to the childcare issue for twenty years.

Women's organizations confronted the issue of married women's work with greater seriousness but with considerable difficulty. The National Council of Women of Canada (NCWC), for example, could not fully reconcile its view that discrimination against working mothers should end<sup>57</sup> with its perspective that full-time mothers were the bulwarks of a free society. Largely avoiding the daycare issue, the organization implicitly endorsed the view that only single women and a

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to placate the men's fears that the labour of working wives undermined the "family wage" argument. According to the meeting's minutes: "Sister Stuart felt there was some confusion on the resolution, and that the underlying factor was, of course, the economic condition of the country. She further stated that the family can be kept together if women are allowed to go out to work." NAC, MG 28, I 103, Canadian Labour Congress (CLC) Papers, Vol. 78, File 178-1, Vancouver Labour Council Minutes, 25 April 1950.

<sup>54</sup>NAC, MG 28, I 103, Vol. 345, Congress of Canadian Labour, *Political Action by Canadian Labour* [29-point program] (Ottawa 1945).

<sup>55</sup>Judging by the reports of the CCL's annual meetings with the federal Cabinet from 1945 to 1955 and the meetings of the CLC with the government in the five years following as well as convention reports from this period for the two organizations in the papers of the CLC, Vols. 103, 114, 314. The evidence in the files of the CCL and the CLC for the late 1940s and the 1950s is that gender issues received no recognition in any forum within the trade union movement. Progressive documents such as the "Official Program for Social Security of the UAW-CIO in Canada," also called the "UAW-CIO Win the Peace Plan," ignored daycare and other problems associated with the gender division of labour in the household and in the workplace. NAC, MG 26, J1, Mackenzie King Papers, Vol. 398, George F. Addes, international secretary-treasurer, UAW-CIO, to Mackenzie King, 26 April 1946, 35919-20.

<sup>56</sup>For example, daycare was not dealt with at any convention of the Manitoba Federation of Labour before 1974. Provincial Archives of Manitoba, P 404 and P 405, Manitoba Federation of Labour Papers, "Report of Proceedings," for annual conventions, 1955-79.

The Alberta Federation of Labour similarly did not discuss the issue of childcare at conventions from 1945 to 1970. Provincial Archives of Alberta, "Proceedings," for conventions 1945 to 1970.

On the attitudes of Québec unions to women in this period, see Mona-Josée Gagnon, "Les Centrales Syndicales et la Condition Feminin," *Maintenant*, 140 (novembre 1974), 25-7.

<sup>57</sup>As evidenced for example in a long, eventually successful campaign to end discrimination against married women in awarding unemployment insurance. See Ann Porter, "Women and Income Security in the Post-War Period: The Case of Unemployment Insurance, 1945-1962," *Labour/Le Travail*, 31 (1993), 111-44.

handful of professional women, able to afford full-time house help should seek paid employment.<sup>58</sup>

The NCWC had opposed efforts to encourage the employment of married women during World War II<sup>59</sup> and was silent when the federal government withdrew all support from childcare at war's end. National president Laura Hardy argued during the war that "the nurseries and kitchens should not be continued longer than is necessary for two reasons, because of the cost to the Government in maintaining them and the need to keep intact the home and the life of the family."<sup>60</sup> This within a speech that reiterated the NCWC's support for equal pay for equal work and denounced the military for violating this principle.<sup>61</sup> The war over, Hardy, still defending equal opportunities for women in the labour force, implied that "women" should be read "women without children," though her organization

<sup>58</sup>Women's organizations in Britain after World War II, and not just bourgeois ones, assumed a similar stance, as Denise Riley makes clear regarding the stance of the Standing Joint Committee of Working Women's Organizations. Denise Riley, "'The Free Mothers': Pronatalism and Working Women in Industry at the End of the Last War in Britain," *History Workshop*, 11 (1981), 107. The same had been true after World War I, according to Jane Lewis, *The Politics of Motherhood: Child and Maternal Welfare in England, 1900-1939* (London 1980), 80.

<sup>59</sup>NAC, MG 28, I 25, National Council of Women of Canada (NCWC) Papers, Vol. 82, File 1, "Minutes of the 50th Annual Meeting and War Conference of the National Council of Women of Canada," 16-19 June, 1943, Toronto. The conference passed a resolution to "commend the National Selective Service in stating that married women with young children will not be asked to take employment unless in the utmost urgency." Also, assuming the responsibility for childcare arrangements was solely a mother's responsibility, rather than a responsibility shared with the father and the state, the conference moved that Selective Service "should not give employment to mothers with young children unless the mother has furnished adequate proof that her children are being properly cared for in her absence."

<sup>60</sup>NAC, MG 28, I 25, NCWC Vol. 82, File 15-"President's Speeches: Correspondence, speeches 1942-1943," "Women and the World We Want," by Mrs. E.D. Hardy, president, n.d.

<sup>61</sup>The opposition to work by married women was not universal within the NCWC and its affiliated organizations. In her report to the 1944 national convention, Harriet Scadding, Convener of Moral Standards, who had denounced the notion of working mothers a year earlier, indicated that daycare nurseries were helpful for both children and working mothers and called for an expansion in their number and their continuation "on a permanent basis" rather than simply as a wartime expedient. NAC, MG 28, I 25, NCWC Vol. 84, File 14, "National Committee Conveners' Reports 1943-44." The Moral Standards Committee of the Local Council of Women of Toronto also wanted daycares established on a permanent basis but added that it "urged that mothers should consider only part-time work, in order to keep a home life for their children." NAC, MG 28, I 25, NCWC Vol. 84, File 1, "Digest of Minutes of the Fiftieth Annual Meeting of the Local Council of Women of Toronto," 28 January 1944.

officially deplored discrimination against married women.<sup>62</sup> She joined critics who blamed working mothers for a perceived increase in juvenile delinquency<sup>63</sup> and told them to stay home and prevent their children becoming criminals or communists or both.

With juvenile delinquency on the increase, it is high time we took a firm stand in placing the cause right where it belongs. Bad housing conditions may contribute but all juvenile delinquents do not come from such surroundings. Many of us have reared our own families, and I am sure believe we have done a good job. Why not a crusade to maintain to women who are mothers that their greatest contribution to their country is the training of their children for loyal Canadian citizenship and Christian living....

May it ever be said of us that we are building for a strong and virile nation; that we are standing shoulder to shoulder with the men as they face momentous problems; that we are fighting all insidious inroads in our national life.<sup>64</sup>

Hardy and other traditionalists also argued that state-organized daycare took power from individual women and handed it over to the state. She told the Canadian Chamber of Commerce in October 1946: "As women, we want to live in a Canada in which we can raise our children in our own homes and in the schools of our choice, not in public institutions under the guidance of the State."<sup>65</sup>

<sup>62</sup>The NCWC, in a resolution calling for the federal government to make appointments purely on the basis of qualifications with no reference to sex, noted: "a policy of discrimination in the employment of married women is not only an injustice but often limits the choice of workers in fields where the widest latitude is needed to find the best qualified persons for the jobs available." MG 28, I 25, NCWC Vol. 87, File 1, "Minutes of the Sub-Executive Meeting," National Council of Women of Canada, Toronto, 27 November 1945.

<sup>63</sup>The propaganda suggesting that working mothers were responsible for alleged growth in the incidence of juvenile delinquency had some currency among the mothers themselves. Notes Linda Ambrose, on the basis of interviews conducted by the Canadian Youth Commission's Family Committee: "Mothers internalized the problems, accepting the notion that their own work was at least partly responsible, and fearing that they would be held personally responsible for their children's behaviour." Linda M. Ambrose, "Youth, Marriage and the Family": The Report of the Canadian Youth Commission's Family Committee, 1943-1948," Paper Presented at the Canadian Historical Association Annual Meeting, Kingston, 1991.

<sup>64</sup>NAC, MG 28, I 25, NCWC Vol. 87, File 9, "National President: correspondence, addresses, 1945-6," "We Talk of Peace."

<sup>65</sup>NAC, MG 28, 3, 62, Canadian Chamber of Commerce Papers, Vol. 1, "Annual Meeting" (17th) *Addresses*, 1946, "Address by Mrs. Edgar D. Hardy, C.B.E., vice-president, International Council of Women to Luncheon, Canadian Chamber of Commerce, Royal Alexandra Hotel, Winnipeg," 9 October 1946.

The Canadian Federation of Business and Professional Women's Clubs (CFBPW)<sup>66</sup> and its provincial affiliates<sup>67</sup> also ignored the childcare issue in the 1950s, though for different reasons. Unlike the NCWC, leaders of this organization rejected a maternalist discourse in favour of an "equal rights" discourse. Their campaigns focused on equal pay for equal work and the breaking down of barriers to women's participation in decision making at all levels of business and government. They had campaigned for a Women's Bureau in the Department of Labour and for an end to discrimination against married women in the regulations of the Unemployment Insurance Act.<sup>68</sup> Yet their underlying view that the different treatment of the sexes in law and society slowed women's advance perhaps accounted for a reluctance to support legislation meant to give special aid to mothers. The CFBPW struggled against the marriage bars that ended many professional women's career advancements, bars that were justified by their male creators on the grounds that marriage lead to babies and babies meant women returning to the home. It was crucial for their members to challenge the conflation of married women with women with small children,<sup>69</sup> and a childcare campaign might hinder this objective.

Similar ideological tensions to those found on the childcare issue in the NCWC marked the report on the post-war problems of women prepared by a sub-committee to the federal government's Advisory Committee on Reconstruction.<sup>70</sup> The sub-committee consisted of ten prominent women and overall their report had a progressive tone. In addition to supporting a full-employment policy for Canada and a comprehensive program of social security, it stated that the right to choose her occupation "must be conceded as a right to which every citizen is entitled." Women "must also have the right to equality of remuneration, working conditions,

<sup>66</sup>NAC, MG 31 K7, Elsie Gregory MacGill Papers, Volume 1, "The Canadian Federation of Business and Professional Women's Clubs, Reports," 1952-4, 1954-6, 1956-8, 1958-60, 1960-2, contain not one mention of childcare as an issue.

<sup>67</sup>The employment conditions committee and the legislation committee of the Ontario provincial organization, for example, while undertaking a variety of campaigns to improve the position of women in the work force, did not discuss the issue of childcare in the 1950s and early 1960s except indirectly on one occasion in 1963, when they asked Premier John Robarts to "set up a training course for certified household assistants" to deal with the shortage of domestics in the province. Archives of Ontario, F 207, Business and Professional Women's Clubs of Ontario Papers, especially File 5-5-3, "Resolution of Business and Professional Women's Clubs of Ontario to John Robarts."

<sup>68</sup>NAC, MG 31, K7, "The Canadian Federation of Business and Professional Women's Clubs, Reports, 1952-1954," Report of National President (Mrs. Margaret Campbell) to 1954 Convention; "Minutes of Fourteenth Biennial Convention," 26 to 30 July 1954, Toronto.

<sup>69</sup>My thanks to Shirley Tillotston for informing me of this aspect of CFBPW thinking.

<sup>70</sup>A detailed assessment of the report and the circumstances of its preparation is Gail Cuthbert Brandt, "Pigeon-Holed and Forgotten": The Work of the Subcommittee on the Post-War Problems of Women, 1943," *Social History*, 25, 29 (1982), 239-59.



and opportunity for advancement."<sup>71</sup> Overcrowded and sub-standard housing rather than inadequate mothers were blamed for juvenile delinquency and the committee defended the right of married women to remain in the labour force. Nonetheless the sub-committee limited its discussion of childcare outside the home to nursery schools operating from 9 a.m. to noon. These schools, it argued, promoted the development of children's social skills while giving mothers time for household and community activities difficult to undertake with a child under foot. Their numbers should be increased and they should be included within the educational system. The schools "would also care for the children of married women who need or wish to work outside their homes, for a part of the day."<sup>72</sup> But obviously they were not to work outside those homes for too much of the day.

Some prominent women refused to accept the contradictory argument that women must have equality with men in the labour force and yet married women should regard "homemaking" as their only real vocation. Dorise Nielsen, a feminist and socialist, who was elected MP for North Battleford as a "Unity" candidate in 1940,<sup>73</sup> became a spokesperson in Parliament for "the emancipation of women as wage earners."<sup>74</sup> In a booklet entitled *New Worlds for Women* (1944), she argued that an extensive program of publicly-funded-and-regulated childcare was essential if married women were not to be denied real opportunities to work outside the home. Similar arguments were made by the first two CCF women elected to the British Columbia legislature: Dorothy Steeves (member from 1934 to 1945) and Laura Jamieson (member from 1939 to 1945 and 1952-3).<sup>75</sup> Jamieson, author of a feminist book, *Women, Dry Those Tears* (1945), was a legislative voice for retention of married women in civil service jobs, and for better wages and working conditions for women domestics, retail clerks, and factory employees.<sup>76</sup>

<sup>71</sup>Canada, Advisory Committee on Reconstruction, VI, *Post-War Problems of Women: Final Report of the Sub-Committee*, 30 November 1943 (Ottawa: King's Printer, 1944).

<sup>72</sup>*Ibid.*, 14.

<sup>73</sup>Nielsen was a CCF activist in the 1930s but was expelled from the party because of her insistence that reformist forces, including the Communists, Social Credit and the CCF must work together against reactionary forces. She called herself a Unity candidate in 1940 and received active support from many members of the three parties mentioned above. In 1945 she ran as a Labour Progressive (Communist) candidate but was defeated. Julie Landau and Margaret Conrad, "Dorise Nielsen: A Tribute," *Atlantis*, 6, 2 (1981), 138-9.

<sup>74</sup>*Montreal Gazette*, 30 June 1943.

<sup>75</sup>Connie Carter and Eileen Daoust, "From Home to House: Women in the B.C. Legislature," in Barbara K. Latham and Roberta J. Pazdro, eds. *Not Just Pin Money* (Victoria 1984), 389-405.

<sup>76</sup>Joan Sangster has explored the limitations of the left-wing parties' attempts to deal with gender issues and the uphill battles of women within these parties to give women positions of responsibility. She notes that women in these parties committed to feminist perspectives received a hostile reception when they attempted to provoke discussion of patriarchy rather than limiting themselves to narrowly-defined economic and class-based issues. See particularly her *Dreams of Equality: Women on the Canadian Left, 1920-1950* (Toronto 1989).

There was also support from some sections of the female-dominated social work profession of the rights of mothers to work outside the home. While feminists such as Nielsen and Jamieson believed that publicly-supported childcare ought to be the fundamental right of all women, social workers stressed that most working mothers came from low-income households that might be destitute without the fruits of their paid labour. The all-woman Day Nurseries Committee of the Welfare Council of Toronto and District commissioned a social worker's study in 1941 of the childcare arrangements of 106 of the 500 women whose applications to place their children in the West End Creche in Toronto were unsuccessful in 1940. The results demonstrated "first of all, that these mothers are pretty desperate to take employment, and secondly, that the plans are, on the whole, inadequate."<sup>77</sup> The committee told the Canadian National Conference on Social Work in 1942 that the detailed information they collected on the financial circumstances of the households of the working mothers indicated "it is not easy to say in such instances that the place of the mother is with her family." They noted approvingly that the vast majority of the working women interviewed, while poor, had never approached a social agency for support. They predicted correctly: "If women remain in employment to the degree that they were there in the pre-war period without additional services, the outlook can be considered serious; if the trend on their employment continues as it has in previous decades, it will be acute, and there is every reason to believe that the trend will be maintained."<sup>78</sup>

The social workers who supported the extension of daycare facilities received no support from the wartime executive director of the Canadian Welfare Council, the organization that spoke most authoritatively on behalf of social agencies in Canada. Dr. George Davidson espoused maternalist views<sup>79</sup> and by war's end, he had become federal Deputy Minister of Health and Social Welfare, in a position to encourage that such views form the basis of federal childcare policy.

In the post-war period the Canadian Welfare Council (CWC) remained cautious in its questioning of the assumptions prevalent throughout Canadian society that condemned the working mother. Despite the proddings of Marion Royce, the Council undertook no national study of the childcare crisis. The secretary of its Child Welfare Division from the late 1940s to the mid-1950s, K. Phyllis Burns, also the first permanent secretary of the Canadian Conference on Social Work, regarded providing adequate care for children of working mothers as a priority for Canadian social workers. Though she focused on economic need as the main reason

<sup>77</sup>NAC, MG 28, Vol. 50, File 448E, Day Nurseries Committee of the Welfare Council of Toronto and District, "Report of Committee on Day Care of Children."

<sup>78</sup>NAC, MG 28, Vol. 50, File 448E, "Some Social Implications of Recruitment to Industry," Presentation to Canadian National Conference on Social Work, Montréal, May 1942. The authors are not indicated but it is clear that the study under discussion is the one commissioned by the Day Nurseries Committee of the Welfare Council of Toronto and District.

<sup>79</sup>*The Globe and Mail*, 12 June 1942.

why mothers sought work outside the home, she added, unusually for the time: "Some women make better parents when they have an outside interest. And often, if they are not with children too much, they can give them more love and understanding."<sup>80</sup> She does not however appear to have been able to convince the CWC to join her in making childcare a major focus of the organization's work in the 1950s.

Even Burns, like most social workers before the 1960s was influenced by studies that suggested negative effects of daycare on children.<sup>81</sup> She also recognized that "day nursery care was not entirely satisfactory if it still left the mother with all her household duties to be done after she returned from work."<sup>82</sup> She preferred "more adequate provision of public assistance, pensions and other forms of social allowances" so that "mothers who have small children can stay at home."<sup>83</sup> Social workers' general reluctance in the early post-war period to regard mothers' paid labour as a partial solution to problems of poverty is evident in the pages of

<sup>80</sup>NAC, MG 28, Vol. 50, File 448D, "Nursery Day Care 1950-6," newspaper clipping, no date.

<sup>81</sup>NAC, MG 28, Vol. 77, File 564, K. Phyllis Burns, secretary, Child Welfare Division, to Barbara Fraser, Halifax, 23 December 1947. The work of John Bowlby was particularly influential in promoting the view that children without stay-at-home mothers suffered emotional damage. His *Forty-Four Juvenile Thieves* (London 1947) gave an academic endorsement to popular prejudices that juvenile delinquency and working mothers were inextricably linked. His *Maternal Care and Health: A Report Prepared on behalf of the World Health Organization* (Geneva 1952), which studied institutionalized children, found that both their academic and emotional development were stunted. Bowlby attributed their misfortunes to their separation from their mothers and though any link between children removed from their parents completely and those in daycare may now appear absurd, the assumptions of the time regarding motherhood allowed such connections to be made. Writing regarding the United States, Margaret O'Brien Steinfelds notes:

Bowlby's Freudian emphasis on the unique quality of early childhood experience meshed neatly with the Freudian emphasis, at least in America, on women finding their satisfaction and life role through their husbands and children. Furthermore, the "separation" aspect of the whole theory buttressed the prevailing views of child welfare agencies that their most important task was to maintain the mother-child relationship intact and uninterrupted.

Margaret O'Brien Steinfelds, *Who's Minding The Children? The History and Politics of Day Care in America* (New York 1973), 75-6.

<sup>82</sup>NAC, MG 28, Vol. 77, File 54, Burns to Fraser, 23 December 1947.

<sup>83</sup>*Ibid.* Wrote Burns in part: "During the early years a child's own home setting with the care and supervision of his own mother is extremely important to his emotional development. It is disturbing to small children to be taken from their parents early in the day and whisked to a day care centre. Also children who may not be particularly husky often must be taken to the centre when they should be kept at home in order to enable the mother to continue her work uninterrupted."

*The Social Worker* and *Canadian Welfare* in the 1950s and most of the 1960s. These were the journals respectively of the Canadian Association of Social Workers and the Canadian Welfare Council. *Canadian Welfare* made only passing, non-committal comments on working mothers and their childcare arrangements before 1967. Until an article in November 1968 broke *The Social Worker's* silence, this journal did not broach the subject of whether married women's paid work was desirable and whether the state should aid in funding childcare for women who wished to work for various reasons.

As the 1960s dawned however, a shift in the social discourse on childcare became evident. The insistence of women's organizations in the 1950s on women's right to work opened the door to discussion of whether women with young children could be reasonably excluded from this right. The publication of Betty Friedan's *The Feminine Mystique* in 1963 gave a focus to a growing uneasiness among educated professional women with the notion that a woman's career ended with the birth or adoption of her first baby. As middle-class women began to question publicly the limited lives society expected them to lead, working-class women, many of whom had always worked outside the home, lost some of their inhibitions against complaining about lack of quality affordable childcare.

By the end of the 1960s there were many voices that challenged the dominant view that it was best for children if their mothers were home. Initially however childcare advocates limited themselves to educating the public to accept that increasing numbers of women were entering the paid labour force and that industry clearly could not do without them. In such circumstances, went the argument, the focus ought to be on insuring the best childcare for the children of working mothers rather than attempting to devise means of keeping the mothers home. A 1960 Toronto Social Planning Council document summed up the argument that most daycare advocates believed was most likely to gain public acceptance for action: "The real issue, then, is not whether mothers should work but rather the need to ensure that children are cared for adequately while mothers are at work."<sup>84</sup>

The emphasis on educating the public about the reality of working mothers was widely shared by welfare councils. The Welfare Council of Greater Winnipeg, for example, undertaking a study of childcare needs for working mothers in 1959 involving a random sample of 1500 Winnipeg families, had decided in advance that the main value of the study would be educational. Joyce Rogers, division secretary of the Community Welfare Planning Council of Greater Winnipeg, explained to a CWC official that:

We hope that the fact that we have counted (using sampling techniques) the number of married women with children who are working, will help to overcome the common attitude

<sup>84</sup>Mentioned in AO, F 837, Ontario Welfare Council Papers, Box 48, "Day Care Papers, 1965," Address of Freda Manson, Ontario Welfare Council, to federal Women's Bureau consultation meeting on daycare, 17 February 1965.

— it is socially unsound for mothers to work, therefore, no services should be provided. We want to point out that, whether we like it or not, x % of mothers are working and “Y” children are affected by this phenomenon. These children are not to be forced to suffer from inadequate care because mothers are working.

The emotional reaction to our preliminary discussions of services to these children was such that we felt that we had to know in indisputable, scientific terms how extensive is the problem of the working mother.<sup>85</sup>

The eventual study suggested that at least one in five children of working mothers needed improved care.<sup>86</sup> Similar studies were undertaken by social welfare and women’s organizations across the country, and by the federal and Ontario Women’s Bureaus of the Department of Labour throughout the 1960s and all revealed a desperate need for rapid expansion of licensed daycares with subsidies for low-income households.<sup>87</sup> A report on daycare needs prepared by the Community Chest and Councils of the Greater Vancouver area in June 1965 studied 32,000 children with working mothers and concluded that 11,500 of these children needed improved care, with 6000 of them receiving no care or care from older siblings kept home from school or from infirm or alcoholic sitters.<sup>88</sup> What that meant for one family was revealed by Vancouver School Board Trustee Carmella Allevato, speaking to a House of Commons Special Committee on Child Care in 1985, and recounting her family’s experience twenty years earlier:

... I came to Canada when I was 12 and I was the oldest of four children. We came in November and my mother went to work immediately. I remember that my mother was working nights and at one point they changed her shift from midnight to noon, for whatever reason, and my three-year-old sister had to be left at home alone in the mornings. My mother worked about a block away. That is 20 years ago and I am sure that kind of situation is continuing today.<sup>89</sup>

<sup>85</sup>NAC, MG 28, Vol. 77, File 564, Joyce Rogers, Division Secretary, Welfare Council of Greater Winnipeg, to Kate G. Macdonnell, Assistant Executive Secretary, Welfare Council of Ottawa, n.d. —copied to Canadian Welfare Council 22 August 1961, with a notation “probably 1959” (the year the study was planned).

<sup>86</sup>NAC, RG 33/89, Canada, Royal Commission on the Status of Women in Canada, *Briefs*, Vol 16, Brief 318, Manitoba Volunteer Committee on the Status of Women, 29-31 May 1968.

<sup>87</sup>Welfare Council of Ontario Papers, Box 48, includes studies done in Ottawa, Calgary, Edmonton, Guelph, Hamilton, Montréal, Scarborough, Vancouver, Windsor, Winnipeg, Chicoutimi and Québec City between 1964 and 1968.

<sup>88</sup>RG 33/89, Vol. 12, *Briefs*, Brief 105, United Community Services of the Greater Vancouver Area, 18 April 1968.

<sup>89</sup>Canada, House of Commons, Special Committee on Child Care, 9, 25-26 March 1986.

For another Vancouver family unable to afford a sitter for their two pre-schoolers and one school-age boy, the choice was to leave two small children to play unattended in the yard for a brief period when both parents were at work or to have no yard at all. The president of the Kingcrest Business and Professional Women's Club, who had watched the two and learned that they were locked out of their house each day, spoke to their mother afterwards:

... I was told that the two children were locked out only for a very short time; that the husband left for work at 3:00 p.m. and that the oldest boy came home shortly afterward to unlock the house. The mother said: I consider the two children being safer locked outside than they would be locked in. I come home shortly after 5:00 p.m. I have to work until the second mortgage is paid off as it was the borrowed money that paid the initial down payment on the house. My husband is making the first mortgage payments. She went on to say that this arrangement was a family project, that even the little children cooperated to make it work. They never had a house before — not a yard to play in or a tree to climb — said the mother.<sup>90</sup>

In many cases, older children became the sitters for their younger siblings. Italo Costa, a social worker on the staff of the Italian consulate in Toronto, told *Chatelaine* that she was often asked by school attendance officers to determine why certain school-age Italian girls were truant. "The fact is they're at home looking after their younger brothers and sisters and missing out on their education."<sup>91</sup> The Women's Bureau of the federal Department of Labour conducted the major national study of working mothers in the 1960s: *Working Mothers and Their Child-Care Arrangements*, prepared in 1969 and published a year later.<sup>92</sup> This study reported that 1,075,000 children under fourteen had working mothers. While only 17 per cent of mothers of pre-schoolers were in the workforce, 28 per cent of mothers with all kids in school held a job. "There are no regular care arrangements for one in ten children of working mothers," reported the study, noting that this was true for one child in twenty under the age of three. The study indicated that another 73 per cent of the children were in care arrangements "for which the mother presumably does not pay."

<sup>90</sup>Royal Commission on the Status of Women, Brief 261, "The Business and Professional Women's Clubs of British Columbia and Yukon: Brief on Need for Starting Grants of Child Day Care Centres," 21 February 1968. The club president who had spoken to the mother commented: "With great anguish in my heart, I walked away but those words never left me. "Even the little children cooperate," why couldn't our government, I thought?"

<sup>91</sup>Margaret Kesslering, "Canada's Backward Thinking on Day Nurseries," *Chatelaine*, April 1966, 67-74.

<sup>92</sup>Canada, Department of Labour, Women's Bureau, *Working Mothers and Their Child-Care Arrangements* (Ottawa 1970). A summary of the report's recommendations is found in Canada, *Report of the Royal Commission on the Status of Women in Canada* (Ottawa 1970), 263-4.

Social workers increasingly defended a woman's decision to seek paid work as good for both mother and children. Veteran social worker Barbara Chisholm, executive director of Toronto's Victoria Day Nursery, commented: "Sentencing a mother to 24-hour duty, seven days a week, every day of the year can do the children the very harm we wished to prevent."<sup>93</sup> But working mothers were more likely to argue that they would stay home if finances permitted. Typical was a working mom who wrote *The Globe and Mail* in 1966 that she worked out of "dire necessity:"

It goes without saying that there are instances of women who could and should be at home with their children, yet who persist in leaving the house five days a week from before 9 to after 5 o'clock — women who are bent on 'fulfilling themselves' at the expense of the physical and emotional well-being of their children; women intent on earning extra money for unnecessary luxuries — but I challenge the experts to show that this group is anything but an insignificant minority.<sup>94</sup>

If daycare had once been attacked as the culprit in juvenile delinquency, it now came to be seen as a preventative measure for those most likely to become social outlaws. The Department of Social Welfare in British Columbia, which began a modest daycare program in 1966,<sup>95</sup> sharing costs with the federal government, reported confidently: "As day care is extended, particularly to children whose homes have limited opportunities, it is foreseen that fewer children will encounter major problems in adjustment to school and in their homes and communities."<sup>96</sup> Social agencies began to see potential in daycares for identification and correction of children's problems, sometimes using a discourse that smacked of social engineering. The Ontario Welfare Council, calling in 1973 for universal availability of daycare with geared-to-income fees, suggested that daycare settings provided "excellent opportunities for early identification of and assistance in relation to special needs and problems in the areas of health, family relations, and learning skills." The Council wanted health, education and psychological testing to become

<sup>93</sup>NAC, MG 31 K24, June Callwood Papers, File 10-23, newspaper clipping, "Motherhood Oversold, Social Workers Find."

<sup>94</sup>"Letters to the Editor," Letter from Mrs. M.C. Perinchief, *The Globe and Mail*, 1 June 1966.

<sup>95</sup>In British Columbia 2,600 children received subsidized daycare in September 1972 just as an NDP administration took over from Social Credit; by the end of 1973, there were 9,500 children receiving subsidized care. Province of British Columbia, *Services for People: Annual Report of the Department of Human Resources, 1973*. Yet, the national picture for low-income people requiring daycare services was bleak. S. June Menzies reported in 1976 that single mothers continued to lack access to a variety of crucial support services, of which one was daycare. Canadian Advisory Committee on the Status of Women, *New Directions for Public Policy: A Position Paper on the One-Parent Family* (Ottawa, 1976).

<sup>96</sup>Province of British Columbia, *Annual Report of the Department of Social Welfare for the Year Ended 31 March 1967* (Victoria 1968), 17.

part of a daycare program with follow-up services available when problems were uncovered.<sup>97</sup>

While such intrusive notions of daycare were rarely proposed by working mothers, the desire of the latter for organized daycare in the 1960s was clear. Forty-six of fifty-six mothers with preschoolers who worked at GWG, a clothing manufacturer, in Edmonton, and returned questionnaires regarding their childcare arrangements, indicated that if a daycare centre were to open near the plant and establish a low fee, they would place their preschoolers in the centre. Among the 56 women, care for children while mother was at work was being provided as follows: 24 by husbands, 13 by babysitters, 11 by relatives, two by older siblings, and 6 through arrangements not indicated.<sup>98</sup> Studies by the Women's Bureau of the Ontario Department of Labour also suggested that working mothers would generally welcome affordable institutional daycare.<sup>99</sup> The defensiveness noted by Marion Royce regarding childcare arrangements had given way, at least in part, to a willingness to assert that society had to help working women with their childcare needs. There were now so many women with children in the workforce that they could assert their right to work. Their argument was generally that their families needed the money; while many, perhaps most, would prefer to stay home with their children, it was not a realistic possibility financially. So the issue was not whether they should work outside the home but how their children could best be cared for while they worked. Many working mothers were no longer willing to see their family's strategy for economic survival and their decisions regarding care of their children divorced from the concerns of the state.

For supporters of an enlarged state role in daycare, the hearings and eventual report of the Royal Commission on the Status of Women provided their best opportunity in the 1960s to publicize their cause. Traditionalists regarding gender roles certainly made their views known to the Commission and their numbers included large and influential groups such as the 165,000 member Catholic Women's League of Canada<sup>100</sup> and the 45,000 member Cercles de fermières du

<sup>97</sup> AO, F 837, Ontario Welfare Council Papers, Box 50, "Presentation to the Task Force on Community and Social Services Action Committee on Day Care, Ontario Welfare Council," April 1973.

<sup>98</sup> Family Service Association of Edmonton, *Day Care Study*, 1 March 1966.

<sup>99</sup> Archives of Ontario, F 207, File 5-5-9, Business and Professional Women's Clubs of Ontario Papers, File 5-5-9, "What do Women Think About Working? A survey conducted by the Women's Bureau-Ontario Department of Labour," August 1964.

<sup>100</sup> Royal Commission on the Status of Women, *Briefs*, Vol. 11, Brief 56, 4 June 1968. The League brief stated that "the rights of individuals must be subordinate to the good of the entire family" and maintained "generally speaking, married women make their best contribution to society in their traditional role as wives and mothers, maintaining a wholesome home environment for husband and children, and that woman by her natural endowments is the logical homemaker. It therefore follows that men should be given consideration in the work force consistent with their role as father and breadwinner of the family."



Québec.<sup>101</sup> The former group, whose national conventions studiously ignored the issues of working wives and their needs for childcare,<sup>102</sup> did however suggest that municipalities and industries should be "encouraged" to provide daycare with a sliding scale of fees and flexible hours.

A host of groups encouraged the Commission to recommend, as it eventually did,<sup>103</sup> that each province establish a network of approved daycare centres and dayhomes with the federal government contributing most of the capital costs and a large share of the operating costs.

The Commission, like most of its pro-daycare participants, favoured a sliding scale of fees for daycare based on family incomes as opposed to a free service. Women's groups that twenty years earlier had encouraged mothers to stay home with their children now recognized that the formal equality of women with men that they professed required that mothers have as much right to earn incomes as anyone else. The National Council of Women of Canada,<sup>104</sup> the United<sup>105</sup> and Anglican Churches,<sup>106</sup> trade union<sup>107</sup> and social worker organizations<sup>108</sup> all joined in calling for daycare for all children of working parents who desired the service, regardless of income. So did most Québec organizations that appeared before the commission. While some Catholic organizations restated traditional arguments against working mothers, they were countered by groups such as the Fédération des Femmes du Québec, formed in 1966, who not only defended a woman's right

<sup>101</sup>Royal Commission on the Status of Women, Brief 102, January 1968. A nuanced discussion of this organization that places its politics in the framework of "social Catholic feminism" is Gail Cuthbert Brandt and Naomi Black, "Il en faut un peu": Farm Women and Feminism in Quebec and France Since 1945," *Journal of the Canadian Historical Association*, New Series, 1 (1990), 73-96.

<sup>102</sup>Judging by national convention minutes from 1945 to 1975 in NAC, MG 28 E 345, Catholic Women's League Papers, Vols. 1 and 2.

<sup>103</sup>*Report of the Royal Commission on the Status of Women*, 271-2.

<sup>104</sup>NAC, MG 28 I 25, Vol. 143, File 89, "Brief from the National Council of Women of Canada to the Royal Commission on the Status of Women in Canada"; and Royal Commission on the Status of Women, *Briefs*, Vol. 12, Brief 131, 1 October 1968.

<sup>105</sup>Royal Commission on the Status of Women, *Briefs*, Vol. 15, Brief 304, February 1968.

<sup>106</sup>Royal Commission on the Status of Women, *Briefs*, Vol. 11, Brief 52, Anglican Church of Canada Brief presented by the Commission on Women's Work, an interim body appointed by General Synod and including leaders of the women's organizations of the Church.

<sup>107</sup>Including the Canadian Labour Congress, Vol. 17, Brief 440, 1 October 1968; Confédération des syndicats nationaux, Vol. 17, Brief 347, June 1968; Quebec Federation of Labour, Vol. 17, Brief 393, June 1968.

<sup>108</sup>Including a brief exclusively devoted to daycare and entitled "Day Care Services for Working Mothers," Royal Commission, *Briefs*, Vol. 11, Brief 105, United Community Services of the Greater Vancouver Area.

to work but called for a reorganization of community services to reduce the workload of women in individual households.<sup>109</sup>

Common to the briefs presented by organizations proposing more public childcare services was support for a change in the definition of women's gender roles to value both mothering and contributions to the community via paid work. In an attempt to present this changing gender role in a conservative guise, good daycare was presented as a means of enhancing the efficiency of women workers at home and in the workplace.<sup>110</sup> As the Ontario Association of Social Workers, Western Branch, put it:

Greatly expanded day care service is an urgent need. They should be organized and operated as a utility service — available to the total community with service readily available. Working women cannot be expected to operate at their most effective level when the day care facility is inadequate or non-existent. Emotional conflict for the woman can and does enter, resulting in a reduced level of proficiency in both her homemaking and work in the community. Well organized, licensed and economical day care centres could ensure the mother that her children are being well cared for and she will then be able to fill more adequately her various roles.<sup>111</sup>

But even as the Commission deliberated, unemployment began a climb that would persist throughout the 1970s, raising questions about how 'necessary' the paid labour of married women was to the economic system. Indeed, as the economy stagnated, the consensus supporting the welfare state began to crack. For the corporate elite, whose attachment to welfare reforms is a subject of some historical disagreement, "reforms" were never acceptable if they had the effect of redistributing income.<sup>112</sup> Cost became the major public argument of elites against a national

<sup>109</sup>The organization recommended: "que des services communautaires, tels que garderies, restaurants, services domestiques, services de dépannage en électricité et plomberie soient mis à la disposition des femmes, non seulement au niveau des municipalités, mais aussi au niveau des quartiers et des centres d'habitation." Royal Commission on the Status of Women, *Briefs*, Vol. 13, Brief 155, "Memoire Présenté à la Commission Royale d'Enquête sur la Situation de la Femme au Canada," par la Fédération des Femmes du Québec, mars 1968.

<sup>110</sup>A typical argument promoting the view that workplace efficiency would result from women having access to good daycare came from the Ontario Federation of Labour: "It would be in the best interests of employers to promote and organize day care centres. It would encourage more married women to enter the labour force. It would also cut down the man hours [sic] lost due to absenteeism of married employees if the mother knew that her children were well taken care of while she is at work." Royal Commission on the Status of Women, *Briefs*, Vol. 11, Brief 69, Brief of Ontario Federation of Labour.

<sup>111</sup>Royal Commission on the Status of Women, *Briefs*, Vol. 14, Brief 243, 20 March 1968.

<sup>112</sup>See Alvin Finkel, *Business and Social Reform in the Thirties* (Toronto 1979).

daycare program,<sup>113</sup> though the notion of childcare as entirely a private, family matter remained an important sub-text.

Nonetheless the functionalist perspective that equates economic decline and the fate of daycare does not fully capture the complex realities of what was occurring. In Ontario, for example, cutbacks in provincial spending on daycare in the mid-1970s, which could have had the effect of forcing some mothers out of the labour force, were coupled with relaxed standards for licensing of private daycares. The government wanted to reduce its own spending while aiding a private-sector industry and maintaining daycare spaces at old levels.<sup>114</sup> This perhaps demonstrated little concern for the quality of care of children,<sup>115</sup> but that can hardly be equated with attempting to squeeze women out of the labour force.

As feminist commentators observed, an unwritten tenet of neo-conservatism's attack on the welfare state was that state programs could be replaced by having women's unpaid caring in the home, already the major source of welfare in Canada, increased even more. There was however no clear effort to recreate the idealized 1950s with mother at home all day; the needs of certain employers and the insistence of many women that they had every right to be in the workforce made a frontal assault on working mothers politically untenable. Instead the unstated assumption was that "supermoms" would continue to work inside and outside the home, to find suitable childcare on their own, and find additional time for caring for family members (such as elderly parents, mentally or physically challenged children, or family members with medical problems) affected by cutbacks in social services.<sup>116</sup>

The debate over childcare after 1945 had many twists and turns but the assumption that women should have primary responsibility for care of children was a constant.<sup>117</sup> Several competing discourses vied in public policy debates: the most

<sup>113</sup>Reflected, for example, in *Report of the Royal Commission on the Economic Union and Development Prospects for Canada*, Vol. 2 (Ottawa 1985), 813.

<sup>114</sup>Ronnie Leah, "Women's Labour Force Participation," 40. Leah supports the reserve army of labour thesis though her own evidence in this instance suggests some modification of this thesis is required.

<sup>115</sup>There was pressure on the Ontario government for a relaxation of daycare standards from the Bureau of Municipal Research, a research agency supported by various business and professional organizations, which claimed that rigid standards were preventing private operators from opening daycares. *The Telegram*, Toronto, 7 May 1971. But complaints about the costs imposed by the regulations were also voiced by some participants in co-operative daycares, for example, Lorenne M.G. Smith, "Letters to the Editor," *The Telegram*, 17 August 1970.

<sup>116</sup>See the essays in Carol Baines, Patricia Evans and Sheila Neysmith, eds., *Women's Caring: Feminist Perspectives on Social Welfare* (Toronto 1991), especially Evelyn Ferguson, "The Child-Care Crisis: Realities of Women's Caring," 73-105.

<sup>117</sup>In a 1983 Goldfarb poll, half of those surveyed agreed that "mothers working outside the home contribute as much to social development as women who stay at home to raise their

successful suggested that it was now all right for mothers to be in the paid labour force but that it was their personal choice and they must handle the consequences including the finding of suitable childcare. But an alternative discourse espoused by the women's movement, social welfare organizations, and trade unions, among others, argued that an attack on the poverty of women and children and movement towards real equality of the sexes required public policies that attacked the systemic subordination of women both in the home and in the workplace.<sup>118</sup> The struggles of these feminist forces had forced the state to subsidize a substantial, yet woefully inadequate and uneven daycare system in the 1970s. The partial successes of past struggles to make quality childcare for working parents a universally recognized right suggests that it would be deterministic to suppose that the movement will make no further gains before labour shortages replace current mass unemployment. While employers' needs or lack thereof of women's labour should not be discounted as a factor in childcare policy, the extent of mobilization and militancy of pro-public-daycare advocates will be, if past experience is a guide, a far more important factor.

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family." Yet a Decima poll the same year, a year where the official rate of unemployment in Canada — a rate deflated by its exclusion of "discouraged workers" — averaged over 12 per cent, found that 51 per cent of men and 45 per cent of women thought that during a recession married men should be given priority in employment over married women. Sandra Best, "Women's Issues and the Women's Movement in Canada Since 1970," in Alan Cairns and Cynthia Williams, eds., *The Politics of Gender, Ethnicity and Language in Canada* (Toronto 1985), 124-32

<sup>118</sup>On the politics and discourse of the childcare movement in the 1980s, see Susan Prentice, "Kids Are Not for Profit: The Politics of Childcare," in Frank Cunningham, Sue Findlay, Marlene Kadar, Alan Lennon, and Ed Silva, eds., *Social Movements, Social Change: The Politics and Practice of Organizing* (Toronto 1988).