

“Talkin’ Day Care Blues”:
Motherhood, Work, and Child Care
in Twentieth-Century British Columbia

by

Lisa Pasolli
B.A., University of Lethbridge, 2005
M.A., University of New Brunswick, 2007

A Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

in the Department of History

© Lisa Pasolli, 2012
University of Victoria

All rights reserved. This dissertation may not be reproduced in whole or in part, by
photocopy or other means, without the permission of the author.

Supervisory Committee

“Talkin’ Day Care Blues”:
Motherhood, Work, and Child Care
in Twentieth-Century British Columbia

by

Lisa Pasolli
B.A., University of Lethbridge, 2005
M.A., University of New Brunswick, 2007

Supervisory Committee

Dr. Penny E. Bryden, Department of History
Supervisor

Dr. Lynne S. Marks, Department of History
Departmental Member

Dr. Eric Sager, Department of History
Departmental Member

Dr. Helga Hallgrimsdottir, Department of Sociology
Outside Member

Abstract

Supervisory Committee

Dr. Penny E. Bryden, Department of History

Supervisor

Dr. Lynne S. Marks, Department of History

Departmental Member

Dr. Eric Sager, Department of History

Departmental Member

Dr. Helga Hallgrimsdottir, Department of Sociology

Outside Member

Today, advocates argue that a universal child care system is necessary for mothers to be able to take part equally in the wage-earning that is the hallmark of citizenship. Why has such a system never been a serious political possibility in twentieth-century British Columbia? In seeking to answer this question, this study looks to important moments in the province's history of child care politics and, in doing so, untangles the historical understandings of work, motherhood, and social citizenship that have precluded the existence of universal child care in British Columbia's welfare state.

Throughout the twentieth century, British Columbia's child care politics hinged on debates about whether mothers should work, what kinds of mothers should work, what kinds of work they should do, and what the state's role was in regulating their relationship to their family and the labour force. As these debates played out across the century, several themes were relatively consistent. The belief that women's social rights derived from their mothering work was one, and this notion achieved political expression in the passage of mothers' pensions legislation in 1920. At several moments during the twentieth century, and gaining prominence especially in the 1970s, advocates and

activists argued that all women should have the right to work, and that a universal child care system was their right as wage-earning citizens.

In terms of policy-making and program provision, however, the story of child care politics in British Columbia is largely one of failure for working mothers. In their relationship to the state, working mothers had two main options, both of which left them limited access to a version of social citizenship constrained by gender and class. On the one hand, gender and class norms translated into welfare policies that encouraged stay-at-home motherhood and precluded the possibility of publicly-provided child care. On the other hand, when a mother was in the labour force, her paid work was assumed to signal some kind of family failure, with “failure” measured against the ideal of a male-breadwinner, female-homemaker family. In those cases, public child care (and to some extent mothers’ pensions) was considered an appropriate welfare service for “needy families” because mothers’ wage work fulfilled important welfare goals: the preservation of the work ethic, guarding against chronic dependency, and meeting the demand for female labourers in marginal occupations. Yet even though mothers’ work was an obligation of their welfare benefits, they were still considered second-class workers and their wage-earning was not a positive source of social rights. Gendered and classed understandings of paid work, in other words, was the source of an uneasy relationship between working mothers and the state. Neither dominant welfare paradigm included room for a child care system that recognized mothers’ rights as paid workers. The result was an unrealized version of social citizenship for working mothers and for all women in twentieth-century British Columbia.

Table of Contents

Supervisory Committee	ii
Abstract	iii
Table of Contents	v
List of Tables	vi
List of Figures	vii
Acknowledgments	viii
Chapter 1: Introduction: Work, Motherhood, Child Care Policy, and Social Citizenship .	1
Chapter 2: "A Proper Independent Spirit": The Vancouver City Crèche, 1909-1920	29
Chapter 3: Working Mothers and the State in the Interwar Years.....	68
Chapter 4: "It takes real mothers and real homes to make real children": Child Care Debates During and After the Second World War	111
Chapter 5: "The working mother is here to stay": The Making of Provincial Child Care Policy in the 1960s.....	150
Chapter 6: From Welfare to Women's Rights: Day Care Battles in the 1970s.....	194
Chapter 7: The Aftermath: Federal and Provincial Child Care Policy since the 1970s .	235
Conclusion	244
Bibliography	249

List of Tables

Table 1: Number of Mothers' Pensions Recipients, by category, 1922-44.....	81
Table 2: Total Spending on Pensions, in dollars, 1923-44	101
Table 3: Married Women in BC Labour Force, as a percentage of all female workers in "female industries," 1935-46	113
Table 4: Number of Children Receiving Subsidized Child Care in BC, all types of care, 1971-80	233
Table 5: Number of Licensed Group Day Care Centres in BC, 1970-79	233

List of Figures

Figure 1: Geographic Distribution of Crèche Mothers, 1913	58
---	----

Acknowledgments

It is a pleasure to be able to thank the many people whose support and assistance has made the completion of this dissertation possible. First on the list is my supervisor, Dr. Penny Bryden, who has been patient, supportive, and perceptive, and who always seemed to know what to say to keep me on the right track. Through her questions and comments about my work, Penny challenged me to think and write more clearly, and I am grateful for all I have learned from her.

I would also like to thank my committee members: Dr. Lynne Marks, Dr. Eric Sager, and Dr. Helga Hallgrimsdottir. They were all generous with their time and advice, and their incisive comments have made my dissertation better. It was during my comprehensive field work with Dr. Marks that I began to think about studying gender and social policy, and so I would like to offer particular thanks to her for always showing an interest in my work. Thanks also to my external examiner, Dr. James Struthers, who offered thought-provoking comments and questions.

I would not be on this path today if not for Dr. Heidi MacDonald, who offered timely advice during my undergrad years at the University of Lethbridge and who continues to be supportive of my academic career. Thanks also go to Dr. Margaret Conrad, my MA supervisor at the University of New Brunswick, who made me into a better researcher, writer, and historian.

Several people have read parts of this dissertation and generously offered comments and questions. I would especially like to extend my thanks to Dr. Shirley Tillotson and Dr. Richard Mackie. Thank you to Lee Blanding, Stephen Harrison, and

Catherine Ulmer who in our colloquium sessions offered their perspectives on chapters in progress. In addition, my research was made easier by helpful archivists at repositories throughout Victoria and Vancouver. I would like to thank the staff of the BC Archives, and especially Mac Culham for patiently seeing me through the sometimes tricky process of gaining access to archival documents. Staff at the City of Vancouver Archives, the Simon Fraser University Archives, the University of British Columbia Rare Books and Special Collections, the BC Legislative Library, and the University of Victoria Archives were similarly accommodating.

I would like to acknowledge the financial support of the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada, as well as the University of Victoria History Department. In addition, between September 2010 and August 2011 I was fortunate to hold a graduate research fellowship from UVic's Centre for Co-operative and Community-Based Economy, a position that provided financial resources as well as a supportive intellectual environment. Dr. Anna Maria Peredo, the centre's director, provided me with many opportunities from conference presentations to publications, for which I am very appreciative.

I feel very lucky to have been able to spend the past five years at the University of Victoria and to be a member of the UVic history department. The faculty and staff have never failed to be generous, encouraging, and helpful. Most of all, thanks to my fellow grad students (and a special shout-out to The Footnotes), who have made this journey fun. Thank you to Sarah Lebel Van Vugt, Meleisa Ono, and Laura Ishiguro for many long chats and supportive words. I am fortunate to call them not only colleagues, but also friends.

There are a few people in particular that have made the west coast feel like home. Megan Harvey, Christa Hunfeld Murray, Margaret Robbins, Lianne Charlie, and Kaitlyn Charlie saw me through many ups and downs. Through hours of conversation, bottles of wine, and island adventures we solidified friendships that will last long after I have left Victoria. Derek Murray has been along for the ride, and so has Michael Thessel, and I am grateful for their friendships.

Finally, I would like to thank my family: my mom and dad, my sisters, and Grandma Helen and Grandpa Sev. Their support has had many dimensions, from financial, to moral, to emotional. My parents unfailingly supported the paths I chose to take, and in the examples they set in their own lives I am reminded that it is important to work hard, remain humble, and keep my priorities straight. Lastly, thank you to James, who over the past five years has demonstrated more patience than I thought possible. I cannot begin to list all of the ways that he has supported me through this adventure. I'm looking forward to the next one.

Chapter 1

Introduction: Work, Motherhood, Child Care Policy, and Social Citizenship

This project began with a simple question: why has there never been a universal child care program in Canada? For at least forty years, ever since the Royal Commission on the Status of Women called for a national day care program in 1970, child care advocates have pointed to a long list of reasons why a universal, high-quality child care system is good for children, for the economy, for families, and for society. Of central importance to this study is the fact that universal, state-supported child care is also a crucial component of women's social citizenship. For better or worse, as Judith Shklar has observed, today we are considered "citizens only if we 'earn.'"¹ The notion of social citizenship assumes that if this earning capacity is interrupted or prevented, the state should step in to protect and facilitate economic security and independence. For women to be able to take part equally in the wage-earning that is the hallmark of citizenship, their social rights must take into account their motherhood. Universal child care is, ideally, one such social right.

Explaining the absence of such a policy, then, suggests a need to examine the history of child care within the dimensions of work, motherhood, and social citizenship. *Talkin' Day Care Blues* tells a story of the uneven relationship between working mothers and the state in one particular provincial jurisdiction: British Columbia. What has the

¹ Judith Shklar, *American Citizenship: The Quest for Inclusion* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1991), 98-99. Shklar, obviously, is speaking of the American concept of citizenship, but her insight applies to the Canadian experience as well.

public provision of child care actually looked like in BC? On what basis was government-sponsored child care provided or not provided, and what policies were offered as alternatives? What kinds of cultural assumptions -- about the family, the labour market, and welfare -- explain the origins of those policies? To what extent were those cultural expectations invested with ideologies of gender, class, and possibly race, ideologies that were in turn reinforced by policy?²

What emerges from this study is a story of deeply-rooted uneasiness about working motherhood. Through the century of BC history under study, debates about child care policy and the provision of public programs took place on a number of terrains: at the level of municipal government, in the context of wartime federal shared-cost programs, as part of provincial welfare policy, and against the background of one of the century's most important social movements, second-wave feminism. In all these moments, concern for children's welfare was not the principal factor that influenced child care policy, as much of the existing literature on child care in Canada suggests. From the Vancouver City Crèche, to day care battles of the 1960s and 1970s, to unrealized plans for national and provincial day care programs at the end of the century, the contours of child care policy (and its absence) have depended on debates about whether mothers should work, what kinds of mothers should work, what kinds of work they should do, and what the state's role was in regulating their relationship to their family and the labour force. The same was true of mothers' pensions, another major early-twentieth-century social policy with implications for work and motherhood that is given significant attention in this study.

² Throughout this study, "work" is used as shorthand for work done outside of the home for pay. Using "work" in this sense is not meant to suggest that unpaid maternal, caregiving, and domestic labour should not be considered work.

In untangling the story of work, motherhood, and child care politics in BC, this study reveals several intertwined – and often competing – threads that run throughout the entire twentieth century. At different moments, some threads were more prominent than others. At certain points we can see a particularly strong articulation of the idea that mothers, regardless of their social and economic location, should have the choice and the right to enter the labour force, and that they were therefore entitled to public child care programs as a component of their social citizenship. Though most obviously present in the feminist-inspired day care campaigns of the 1960s and 1970s, this position had been expressed, however faintly, since at least the 1910s. During the 1920s, another analytical vein around work and motherhood had relative influence: that maternal and domestic work validated women's relationship to the state, and that programs like mothers' pensions should take priority over public day care systems. A modified version of this line of thinking appeared in the 'Wages for Housework' campaigns in the late 1970s. To a lesser extent, discourses about child care as an educational service and as citizenship training were present throughout the century, and especially in the post-Second World War enthusiasm for kindergartens and preschools.

By far the most prominent themes that defined child care politics in twentieth-century BC, however, come down to policy failures, inadequate day care programs, and a partial and conditional version of social citizenship for working mothers. These outcomes stemmed from the same source: the belief that a working mother was a "problem." On the one hand, this explains the consistent opposition to public day care programs and the absence of meaningful child care policy. Over and over, statements and actions by politicians, policy-makers, welfare officials, and concerned citizens revealed and

reinforced the attitude that a mother should not be in the paid labour force. According to entrenched gender ideologies, a mother's natural role and responsibility was in the home. Despite the realities of working motherhood, governments were reluctant to develop social policy that challenged the ideal middle-class family model in which women were mothers and homemakers and men were breadwinners. Within this framework, child care was a private responsibility more properly dealt with in the sphere of mothers' unpaid work. In theory, mothers' pensions were part of the same gendered framework. Pension supporters argued that they were necessary to protect women's connection to home and motherhood.

On the other hand, a working mother was also a "problem" in the sense that a mother's paid labour signalled family breakdown. In these cases, government-sponsored child care services (and to some extent mothers' pensions) were considered appropriate -- albeit only as marginal, welfare-oriented programs for "needy" families -- because mothers' wage work fulfilled more important welfare goals: it helped meet the demand for labourers in traditionally feminine jobs, it allowed for some measure of financial independence among families that had otherwise "failed," and it protected the work ethic and guarded against chronic dependency in working-class and working poor families. For mothers in those families, in other words, wage work was not discouraged but required, though their gender followed them into the workforce and confined them to low-wage and low-status jobs. Their participation in the paid work force, however, was of central importance in determining their access to social benefits.

In tracing all of these threads, *Talkin' Day Care Blues* shows the extent to which tension and ambivalence about work, motherhood, and child care pervaded BC social

politics throughout the twentieth century. The same questions that framed the creation of the Vancouver City Crèche in the 1910s were still being hotly debated in the 1970s: What was the public responsibility with respect to the child care needs of working mothers? Should the state create social programs to support women's equal participation in the labour force? To compensate caregiving work? Which mothers were entitled to support, and on what basis? Working mothers and their advocates had their own answers to these questions, which ranged from financial support for stay-at-home mothers to a universal, rights-based child care program. In reality, however, working mothers were continually caught between pressures -- and desires -- to be stay-at-home mothers, the economic realities of needing to support their families, and the choice to participate in the workforce for reasons of personal fulfillment and opportunity. When it came to child care policy-making and the actual provision of government-sponsored day care programs, working mothers' options were severely limited because of yet another set of gendered and classed expectations: their relationship to the state was predicated upon work, yet women's work was not a positive source of social rights. Mothers could be dependants, or they could be second-class workers; neither of these dominant welfare paradigms included the possibility for a universally accessible child care system.³ The result was an unrealized version of social citizenship for working mothers and for all women.

³ For a discussion of this welfare paradigm in the American context, see Linda Gordon, "The New Feminist Scholarship on the Welfare State," in *Women, the State, and Welfare*, ed. Linda Gordon (Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1990), 28. Gordon is commenting on the idea of the "feminization of poverty," a phrase coined by Diana Pearce.

**The “Working” in “Working Motherhood”⁴:
Caring, Earning, and the Welfare State**

Writing in the 1940s, British political theorist T.H. Marshall conceived the notion of social citizenship, which he described as “the right to a modicum of economic welfare and security,” along with “the right to share to the full in the social heritage and to live the life of a civilized being according to the standards prevailing in the society.”⁵

Marshall certainly did not envision child care as part of social citizenship. As scholars of gender and welfare have pointed out, Marshall’s analysis cast that “civilized being” as an independent, white, male, family head; he did not consider the “sorts of resources a *female* worker might need to achieve equality.”⁶

Feminist critiques of Marshall, however, have not completely undermined the usefulness of the concept of social citizenship. Instead, these scholars and activists have articulated a more inclusive notion of social rights and benefits that takes into account the unequal relations of gender.⁷ This imagined version of full social citizenship for all must include, they argue, welfare programs to “neutralize the discriminatory effect of

⁴ Eileen Boris, “What About the Working of the Working Mother?” *Journal of Women’s History* 5, 2 (Fall 1993): 104-109.

⁵ T. H. Marshall, “Citizenship and Social Class,” in *Class, Citizenship, and Social Development: Essays by T. H. Marshall* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1964), 72.

⁶ Sonya Michel, *Children’s Interests/Mothers’ Rights: The Shaping of America’s Child Care Policy* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1999), 2. Emphasis in original. Critiques of Marshall include Nancy Fraser and Linda Gordon, “Contract Versus Charity: Why Is There No Social Citizenship in the United States?” *Socialist Review* 22, 3 (July-September 1992): 45-67; Barbara Hobson, “Feminist Strategies and Gendered Discourses in Welfare States: Married Women’s Right to Work in the United States and Sweden,” in *Mothers of a New World: Maternalist Politics and the Origins of Welfare States*, ed. Seth Koven and Sonya Michel (New York: Routledge, 1993), 396-429; Carol Pateman, “The Patriarchal Welfare State,” in *Democracy and the Welfare State*, ed. Amy Gutman (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1988), 231-260.

⁷ See Ann Shola Orloff, “Gendering the Comparative Analysis of Welfare States: An Unfinished Agenda,” *Sociological Theory* 27, 3 (September 2009): 318-319, 334.

motherhood on women” in the labour force.⁸ Universal child care, political theorists Jane Jenson and Alexandra Dobrowolsky write, is the “cornerstone for women’s full social citizenship, economic autonomy, and well-being.” In conjunction with other work and family policies, child care would “enabl[e] women to advance their right to economic equality,” as well as to “access forums” of economic and political decision-making.⁹ Indeed, this is the argument that feminist child care advocates in BC made beginning in the late 1960s, and it is what they continue to argue today.¹⁰

Based on the arguments put forward by these feminist political theorists, it seems easy to conclude that the absence of universal child care denotes completely unrealized social citizenship for women. But these and other historical studies also suggest that social citizenship was not an all-or-nothing proposition. Instead, social citizenship is more usefully considered a fluid and conditional “marker of boundaries,” to borrow a phrase from Lara Campbell, that helps us to understand the uneven development of welfare state policy.¹¹ Inclusion within the boundaries entitled a citizen to the protection

⁸ Michel, *Children’s Interests/Mothers’ Rights*, 1.

⁹ Alexandra Z. Dobrowolsky and Jane Jenson, “Shifting Representations of Citizenship: Canadian Politics of “Women” and “Children,” *Social Politics: International Studies in Gender, State and Society* 11, 2 (Summer 2004), 158. These work-family policies might include: “individually based income taxes, social benefits based not on marital status but on individual records, and mortgage credit for single parents,” as well as “equalizing parent responsibility for children’s financial and social well-being, and eliminating discriminatory gendered protections in the realms of employment, education, and political participation.” See: Alice Kessler-Harris, *In Pursuit of Equity: Women, Men, and the Quest for Economic Citizenship in 20th-Century America* (Madison, NY: Oxford University Press, 2001), 13-14.

¹⁰ See, for example, Coalition of Child Care Advocates of British Columbia, “Child Care is a Women’s Issue,” position paper, February 2009, accessed 12 March 2012, <http://www.cccabc.bc.ca/cccabcdocs/papers.html>. See also Martha Friendly and Susan Prentice, *About Canada: Childcare* (Black Point, NS: Fernwood Publishing, 2009).

¹¹ Lara Campbell, *Respectable Citizens: Gender, Family, and Unemployment in Ontario’s Great Depression* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2009), 11. For a discussion of the uses of citizenship as a conceptual tool with increasingly broad parameters, see Maria Bucur, “Gender and Citizenship: Difference and Power in the Modern State,” *Journal of Women’s History* 20, 4 (2008): 160-170. Bucur argues that citizenship goes beyond “specific legal obligations and rights of individuals who are citizens of a state” -- it “encompasses extra-legal parameters defined by policy, custom, and overall human behavior -- both as sanctioned overtly by state institutions and also as accepted informally in society.” (160-1)

and support of the state, but neither inclusion nor exclusion were static categories. The boundaries of social citizenship, in other words, were not rigid and fixed, but flexible and permeable, often opened only temporarily, and subject to expansion and contraction based on specific economic, political, and social contexts. One's inclusion within social citizenship's boundaries was contingent upon class, race, gender, and other factors, and often granted only on a limited or partial basis, which may have included the assumption that social benefits were granted as a privilege rather than as a right. The meaning of inclusion could also vary according to different scales of citizenship; for some, citizenship could be more relevant at the level of community rather than nation.¹²

Historical studies of Canadian and American social welfare policy have examined this dynamic and provisional nature of social citizenship in the twentieth century. *Talkin' Day Care Blues* relies in particular on the significant (and growing) body of literature that reveals how state welfare programs served to "constitute and reinforce" unequal relations of gender in different historical contexts.¹³ Gender-conscious analyses of the welfare state have shown that policy development centred on the protection of the independent male-breadwinner family in which women were dependent wives and mothers. Based on the dominance of this white, middle-class family model, women's social entitlements were

¹² See Janine Brodie, "The Social in Social Citizenship," in *Recasting the Social in Citizenship*, ed. Engin F. Isin (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2008), 20-43; and the articles in the collection *Contesting Canadian Citizenship: Historical Readings*, ed. Robert Adamoski, Dorothy E. Chunn, and Robert Menzies (Peterborough, ON: Broadview Press, 2002).

¹³ Jane Jenson, "Representations of Gender: Policies to "Protect" Women Workers and Infants in France and the United States," in *Women, the State, and Welfare*, 152. Gender analyses are among the most recent approaches to studying the welfare state. Previously, studies of the welfare state have argued that the origins of welfare states can be found in functionalist explanations, in state- and bureaucracy-centred analyses, in comparative studies of political culture, or in analyses of class conflict. For a useful overview of these approaches, see James Struthers, *The Limits of Affluence: Welfare in Ontario* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press and Ontario Historical Studies Series, 1994), 3-18; and Alvin Finkel, *Social Policy and Practice in Canada: A History* (Waterloo: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 2006), 1-14. Studies of women and the welfare state began to emerge in the 1980s as a reaction to these "gender-blind" historical analyses. See Alvin Finkel, "Changing the Story: Gender Enters the History of the Welfare State," *Tijdschrift Voor Sociale Geschiedenis* 22, 1 (1996): 67-81.

subordinated to men's, both in the home and the workplace.¹⁴ Historians have demonstrated how gender ideologies explain the broad acceptance of policies like mothers' allowances, which were premised, at least in theory, on the preservation and protection of women's roles as mothers.¹⁵ Other studies point to the ways that the state "regulated" gender roles, including the ideals around femininity, domesticity, and dependency, as well as those around masculinity and wage-earning.¹⁶ Still others challenge the gender-blind approaches to workmen's compensation,¹⁷ pay legislation,¹⁸ and unemployment insurance,¹⁹ or highlight women's difficulty in claiming health benefits, pensions, and other social programs that depended on "regular" (i.e. male) labour force participation.²⁰

¹⁴ In the Canadian literature, one of the most significant works on gender and the welfare state is Nancy Christie's *Engendering the State*, which brings together analyses of mothers' pensions, unemployment insurance, and family allowances. Christie's key argument is about protection of male-breadwinner family. Nancy Christie, *Engendering the State: Family, Work, and Welfare in Canada* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2000). For important studies in other national contexts, see Linda Gordon's body of work in the United States, and in Britain and Europe, the work of Jane Lewis.

¹⁵ Finkel "Changing the Story," 71; Barbara Nelson, "The Origins of the Two-Channel Welfare State: Workmen's Compensation and Mothers' Aid," in *Women, the State, and Welfare*, 123-51; Margaret Jane Hillyard Little, *No Car, No Radio, No Liquor Permit: The Moral Regulation of Single Mothers in Ontario, 1920-1997* (Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1998); James Struthers, "'In the Interests of the Children': Mothers' Allowances and the Origins of Income Security in Ontario, 1917-1930," in *Social Fabric or Patchwork Quilt: The Development of Social Policy in Canada*, ed. Raymond Blake and Jeffrey A. Keshen (Peterborough: Broadview Press, 2006), 59-87; Veronica Strong-Boag, "'Wages for Housework': Mothers' Allowances and the Beginnings of Social Security in Canada" *Journal of Canadian Studies* 14, 1 (Spring 1979): 24-34; Joanne Goodwin, *Gender and the Politics of Welfare Reform: Mothers' Pensions in Chicago* (Chicago: The University Chicago Press, 1997). Some analyses of Family Allowances also fit into this category: see Christie *Engendering the State*, chap. 6 and chap. 7.

¹⁶ Mimi Abramovitz, *Regulating the Lives of Women: Social Welfare Policy from Colonial Times to the Present* (Boston: South End Press, 1996). As Christie points out in *Engendering the State*, welfare regulated masculinity as well, particularly in men's responsibility to family independence and work ethic.

¹⁷ Nelson, "The Origins of the Two-Channel Welfare State."

¹⁸ Gillian Creese, "Sexuality Equality and the Minimum Wage in British Columbia," *Journal of Canadian Studies* 26, 4 (Winter 1991-92): 120-140.

¹⁹ Ruth Roach Pierson, "Gender and the Unemployment Insurance Debates in Canada, 1934-1940," *Labour/Le Travail* 25 (Spring 1990): 77-103.

²⁰ Ann Porter, *Gendered States: Women, Unemployment Insurance, and the Political Economy of the Welfare State in Canada, 1945-1997* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2003).

The history of child care is not well-represented in the body of literature on women, gender, and welfare in twentieth-century Canada. Partly this is because child care policies and programs themselves were limited. For the most part, the provision of child care was left to private and charitable social agencies and public services operated at the margins of welfare policy, where they have not attracted as much attention from historians interested in the origins of major welfare state programs like medicare, old age pensions, unemployment insurance, mothers' allowances, and family allowances.²¹ Furthermore, the history of working mothers' child care arrangements is often "subsumed" in the literature on child welfare and "child-saving," as Sonya Michel suggests, especially in the pre-Second World War decades.²² This is true of studies of crèches, day nurseries, and orphanages in early-twentieth century Canada (many of which were used as child care facilities by working parents²³), including the publicly-funded Vancouver City Crèche, which have been examined with respect to their implications for children but rarely for mothers.²⁴

²¹ James Struthers, *No Fault of Their Own: Unemployment and the Canadian Welfare State* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1983); P.E. Bryden, *Planners and Politicians: Liberal Politics and Social Policy, 1957-1968* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1997); Raymond Blake, *From Rights to Needs: A History of Family Allowances in Canada* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2009); Little, *No Car, No Radio*. Or from historians interested in a broader view in the connections between policies, like Christie (*Engendering the State*), Struthers (*Limits of Affluence*).

²² Michel, *Children's Interests/Mothers' Rights*, 3, 8.

²³ Diane Barbara Purvey, "Alexandra Orphanage and Families in Crisis in Vancouver, 1892-1928," in *Child and Family Welfare in British Columbia: A History*, ed. Diane Purvey and Christopher Walmsley (Calgary: Detselig Enterprises, 2007), 53-75.

²⁴ See, for example, Larry Prochner, "A History of Early Education and Child Care in Canada, 1820-1966," in *Early Childhood Care and Education in Canada*, ed. Larry Prochner and Nina Howe (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2000), 45-51; Alvin Finkel, *Social Policy and Practice in Canada*, 70-76; and articles in the collection *Child and Family Welfare in British Columbia: A History*, ed. Diane Purvey and Christopher Walmsley (Calgary: Detselig Enterprises, 2005). Day nurseries and crèches were located in most major urban centres in Canada by the 1910s, including Toronto, Halifax, Montreal, Winnipeg, Hamilton, and Victoria. More focused studies of some of these institutions include Larry W. Prochner, "Themes in the History of Day Care: A Case Study of the West End Crèche, Toronto, 1909-1939" (PhD diss., University of Toronto, 1994); Wendy J. Atkin, "Playing Together as Canadians: Historical Lessons from the West End Crèche," in *Changing Child Care: Five Decades of Child Care Advocacy and Policy in Canada*, ed. Susan

Studies of child care policy in the postwar period are somewhat more common, reflecting the higher profile of working mothers and their child care arrangements on the public and political agenda during those years. Alvin Finkel has provided a brief but useful overview of pan-Canadian child care politics since WWII, and Susan Prentice, Rianne Mahon, Suzanne Morton, and Tom Langford have offered more focused provincial studies for Ontario, Nova Scotia, and Alberta.²⁵ Much of the work on Canadian child care remains in the domain of political scientists, political economists, and sociologists; indeed, Prentice, Mahon, and Langford's work emerges from these disciplines, and one of the most detailed analyses of national approaches to child care and employment policy is political economist Annis May Timpson's *Driven Apart*.²⁶ These studies help to paint a more complete picture of child care policy, politics, and advocacy

Prentice (Halifax: Fernwood Publishing, 2001); and Christina Simmons, "'Helping the Poorer Sisters': The Women of the Jost Mission, Halifax, 1905-1945," *Acadiensis* 14, 1 (Autumn 1994): 3-27. General histories of day care in Canada include Donna Varga, *Constructing the Child: A History of Canadian Day Care* (Toronto: James Lorimer, 1997); and the collection *Good Day Care: Fighting for It, Getting It, Keeping It*, ed. Kathleen Gallagher Ross (Toronto: Women's Press, 1978).

²⁵ Alvin Finkel, "Even the Little Children Cooperated: Family Strategies, Childcare Discourse, and Social Welfare Debates 1945-1975," *Labour/Le Travail* 36 (Fall 1995): 91-118; Susan Prentice, "Workers, Mothers, Reds: Toronto's Postwar Day Care Fight," *Studies in Political Economy* 30 (Autumn 1989): 115-141; Rianne Mahon, "The Never-Ending Story: The Struggle for Universal Child Care Policy in the 1970s," *The Canadian Historical Review* 81, 4 (December 2000): 582-622; Suzanne Morton, "From Infant Homes to Day Care: Child Care in Halifax," in *Mothers of the Municipality: Women, Work, and Social Policy in Post-1945 Halifax*, ed. Judith Fingard and Janet Guildford (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2005), 169-188; Tom Langford, *Alberta's Day Care Controversy: From 1908 to 2009 and Beyond* (Edmonton: Athabasca University Press, 2010).

²⁶ Annis May Timpson, *Driven Apart: Women's Employment Equality and Child Care in Canadian Public Policy* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2001). Other works on Canadian child care that emerge from political economy, law, and sociology – most of them relatively contemporary -- include: Cheryl Collier, "Governments and Women's Movements: Explaining Child Care and Anti-Violence Policy in Ontario and British Columbia, 1970-2000" (PhD diss., University of Toronto, 2006); Dobrowolsky and Jenson, "Shifting Representations of Citizenship"; Lene Madsen, "Citizen, Worker, Mother: Canadian Women's Claims to Parental Leave and Childcare," *Canadian Journal of Family Law* 11 (2002): 11-74; and the articles in *Changing Child Care: Five Decades of Child Care Advocacy and Policy in Canada*, ed. Susan Prentice (Halifax: Fernwood Publishing, 2001). There is no Canadian study that offers the equivalent of Sonya Michel's *Children's Interests/Mothers Rights*, nor, for the postwar period, Emilie Stoltzfus's *Citizen, Mother, Worker: Debating Public Responsibility for Child Care After the Second World War* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2003). For an example of a comparative analysis, see Kimberly J. Morgan, *Working Mothers and the Welfare State: Religion and the Politics of Work-Family Policies in Western Europe and the United States* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2006). Comparative studies of child care rarely include Canada.

in postwar Canada, but they are rarely oriented towards understanding historical patterns of work, motherhood, and social citizenship. *Talkin' Day Care Blues* offers this long-term perspective for BC, a province about which very little has been known with respect to child care until now.

In focusing on child care policy and programs, then, this study helps to fill in the picture of twentieth-century social welfare in Canada. More specifically, because child care operates at the very nexus of work and motherhood, a clearer understanding of those policies contributes to one important historiographical discussion in particular: the relative value of caregiving and paid work in relation to the gendered welfare state. This debate is evident in studies of the “woman-friendliness” of contemporary welfare regimes and the social organization of care, especially those undertaken by sociologists and political economists. The question of “who is a citizen in the welfare state,” as Ruth Lister explains, is fundamentally linked to “which activities should attract social citizenship rights” -- wage work, mothering, or some combination of both.²⁷ There is a widespread consensus among feminist scholars and activists that women’s inequality stems from the unrecognized value of feminized care work. The appropriate role for the state in ensuring women’s equality is much more contested. For some, true equality -- and thus full citizenship -- requires validation and support of caregiving and mothering. But as Lister cautions, the “problem is how to provide this recognition without locking women further into a caring role which serves to exclude them from...power and influence.”²⁸ For others, then, the solution is programs that allow women more equitable

²⁷ Ruth Lister, “Dilemmas in Engendering Citizenship,” in *Gender and Citizenship in Transition*, ed. Barbara Hobson (New York: Routledge, 2000), 49.

participation in paid work, including public child care. Others advance policy solutions that break down the barrier between the gendered public and private to ensure the “universalization of care.”²⁹

This debate also plays out in historical interpretations of welfare states. For political scientist Barbara Nelson and others, the passage of mothers’ pensions legislation in early twentieth-century United States signified an acceptance that citizenship benefits accrued from caring and mothering. Maternally-based welfare may not have been invested with the same level of entitlement as that for male breadwinners, but at least according to Nelson’s typology mothers’ pensions operated in their own “channel” of welfare and therefore represented public validation of caregiving work.³⁰ This interpretation is closely linked to Nancy Fraser and Linda Gordon’s “genealogy of dependency.” Rooted in gendered family norms and expectations about the family wage system, Fraser and Gordon argue, in the early twentieth-century there still existed the possibility that women’s (and children’s) ties to the household were considered “good

²⁸ Lister, “Dilemmas,” 53. Sonya Michel calls this the “limits of maternalism.” Sonya Michel, “The Limits of Maternalism: Policies Toward American Wage-Earning Mothers During the Progressive Era,” in *Mothers of New World: Maternalist Politics and the Origins of Welfare States*, ed. Seth Koven and Sonya Michel (New York and London: Routledge, 1993), 277-320.

²⁹ Rianne Mahon, “Gender and Welfare State Restructuring: Through the Lens of Child Care,” introduction to *Child Care Policy at the Crossroads: Gender and Welfare State Restructuring*, ed. Sonya Michel and Rianne Mahon (New York: Routledge, 2002), 4. For an introduction to this debate in the sociological literature, see Mary Daly and Katherine Rake, *Gender and the Welfare State: Care, Work and Welfare in Europe and the US* (Cambridge, UK: Polity Press, 2003); Helga Maria Hernes, *Welfare State and Women Power: Essays in State Feminism* (Oslo: Norwegian University Press, 1987); Jane Lewis, “Gender and the Development of Welfare Regimes,” *Journal of European Social Policy* 2, 3 (1992): 159-173; Orloff, “Gendering the Comparative Analysis of Welfare States,” 317-343.

³⁰ Nelson, “The Origins of the Two-Channel Welfare State.” Nelson argues that mothers’ pensions were privilege-based, discretionary, and second-tier in status compared to the rational, entitlement-based programs with male recipients, like workmen’s compensation.

dependency.” Programs like mothers’ pensions, therefore, were not shrouded in the stigma that would come to characterize welfare dependency later in the century.³¹

Historians of the BC and Canadian welfare state have also offered interpretations of mothers’ social citizenship within the channel of welfare designed around maternalism, caregiving, and dependency. As in the United States, the period around 1920, especially, was characterized by the presence of strong discourses about state recognition of caregiving work. Margaret Little argues that BC mothers’ pensions were particularly rights-based and embedded in a cultural acceptance of the value of mothers’ “service to the state.”³² The absence of virtually any public discussion about child care provision during the interwar years was part of this trend; instead of programs for working mothers, government support for women prioritized stay-at-home caregiving. The woman-as-dependant model of welfare, furthermore, was not just an early-twentieth-century phenomenon. Even in the postwar years, policy makers “favoured social security measures that would make it possible for most households to function without mothers having to seek paid employment,” according to Alvin Finkel. The prevailing attitudes towards women, work, and welfare throughout the 1940s, 1950s, and 1960s, Finkel continues, “confirmed the traditional perspective that society worked best when married men and women performed gender-typed roles.”³³ The blanket absence of good child care policy throughout the twentieth century was certainly part of this tendency.

³¹ Nancy Fraser and Linda Gordon, “A Genealogy of Dependency: Tracing a Keyword of the U.S. Welfare State,” *Signs* 19, 2 (Winter 1994), 320-323. See also Orloff, “Gendering the Comparative Analysis of Welfare States,” 334.

³² Little, “Claiming a Unique Place.”

³³ Finkel, *Social Policy and Practice*, 203.

Yet the story of BC child care politics was not just one of a policy vacuum. Several public child care programs existed in BC, from the Vancouver City Crèche to the provincial subsidy program of the 1960s. Close examination of those programs -- as well as of the administration of mothers' pensions -- reveals a more complex relationship between mothers and the state, one in which paid work was centrally important. Expectations about work, work ethic, and economic participation primarily determined mothers' access to the benefits of social citizenship. In their genealogy, Fraser and Gordon mark a shift in more recent years towards the measurement of citizenship rights against the ideal of economic independence throughout wage labour.³⁴ While the dominance of worker-citizenship in the postwar years is clearly evident, this history of BC child care policy shows that even in the 1910s and 1920s policy-makers were less interested in mothers' maternal "service to the state," and more interested in their workforce participation and their economic behaviour.

These findings follow on the work of scholars like Eileen Boris, who cautions that we should not overlook the importance of the "working" in "working motherhood."³⁵ Boris, along with S.J. Kleinberg, Gwendolyn Mink, Joanne Goodwin and others have shown that maternal dependency was not necessarily considered "good" for all mothers -- especially mothers marginalized by class and race. Policy-makers expected that "poor women, often the racial or ethnic "other"" should participate in waged labour for reasons of "uplift," to sustain some measure of family independence, and to maintain the work ethic. This was as true for the recipients of mothers' pensions in the 1920s as it was for

³⁴ Fraser and Gordon, "A Genealogy of Dependency."

³⁵ Boris, "What About the Working of the Working Mother?"

those targeted for “activation” through their receipt of social assistance in the 1960s.³⁶ A small number of Canadian studies have begun to unpack these class- and race-based “hierarchies of motherhood that maternalism reflected and reinforced.”³⁷ Working-class and working poor mothers’ deservedness for mothers’ pensions, for example, was assessed according to their moral fitness and their capacity to be “mothers of the race.”³⁸ Expectations about wage-earning, “less eligibility,” and the work ethic operated alongside these classed and racialized objectives. It was considered much more acceptable for working-class, immigrant, and non-white women to be members of the workforce and therefore ineligible for maternal benefits.³⁹ But even for Anglo-Saxon widowed mothers, deservedness was a vulnerable category mediated by assumptions about labour force participation. Ontario’s superintendent of labour, as James Struthers shows, advocated excluding widows with one child from pensions legislation; he suggested those mothers could find live-in help as housekeepers.⁴⁰

Using child care politics as the primary lens, *Talkin’ Day Care Blues* makes a case for reconsidering the importance of waged work in mothers’ lives. The primary

³⁶ Boris and Kleinberg, “Mothers and Other Workers,” 104; Gwendolyn Mink, “The Lady and the Tramp: Gender, Race, and the Origins of the American Welfare State,” in *Women, The State, and Welfare*, 92-122; Goodwin, *Gender and the Politics of Welfare Reform*; Annaleise Orleck, *Storming Caesar’s Palace: How Black Mothers Fought Their Own War on Poverty* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2005); Gwendolyn Mink, *Welfare’s End* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2002).

³⁷ For example, see Jeanne Fay, “The ‘Right Kind’ of Single Mothers: Nova Scotia’s Regulation of Women on Social Assistance, 1956-77,” in *Mothers of the Municipality: Women, Work, and Social Policy in Post-1945 Halifax*, ed. Judith Fingard and Janet Guildford (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2005), 141.

³⁸ In “Claiming a Unique Place,” Little points out that Asian and Indigenous women were explicitly excluded from mothers’ pensions legislation. For a discussion of African Canadian women’s encounters with welfare administration, see Fay, “The ‘Right Kind’ of Single Mothers,” 141-168. For the best study of the moral regulation of recipients of mothers’ pensions, see Little, *No Car, No Radio*.

³⁹ Joan Sangster, for example, documents how state policies channeled Aboriginal women in domestic service placements – see Joan Sangster, *Transforming Labour: Women and Work in Postwar Canada* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2010), 221.

⁴⁰ Struthers, “In the Interests of the Children,” 68. For a further discussion on the class-based origins of the welfare state, see Alvin Finkel, “The State of Writing on the Welfare State: What’s Class Got to Do With It?” *Labour/Le Travail* 54 (Fall 2004): 151-74.

focus of this study is on the gendered and classed dimensions of working-class and working poor mothers' social inclusion (and exclusion).⁴¹ The centrality of work in mothers' relationship to the state has important implications for the way we think about the history of work, policy, and citizenship in Canada. The boundaries of worker-citizenship, as studies like Nancy Christie's *Engendering the State* have shown, were invested with certain gendered expectations, chief among them the protection of work ethic and the prevention of chronic welfare dependency among male breadwinners, the rightful earners of a family wage.⁴² Yet many of the workers that came into contact with the welfare state were also mothers. Where do these working mothers fit into our broader understanding of work and welfare? In BC, when mothers encountered the state through the crèche, through mothers' pensions, and through postwar provincial child care programs, they were also subject to certain expectations of worker-citizenship that, in a sense, overrode their gender: they were expected to act as the family breadwinners in order to preserve the moral imperative of the work ethic, and to strive for family economic self-reliance that did not require long-term welfare dependency. The provision of child care policy, in this respect, was at least partly enmeshed in the "fundamental goal" of welfare legislation that Christie identifies: the "fostering of self-sufficient and independent families," particularly working-class families.⁴³

⁴¹ Racist attitudes were certainly present in the formation and application of social policy throughout twentieth-century BC, but, with the exception of a few glimpses, they are not brought to the forefront in this study. More work remains to be done with respect to the way that race conditioned the boundaries of social citizenship in BC. Future studies could examine, for instance, the racial implications of the 1916 female minimum wage law that specifically excluded fruit-pickers, farm labourers, and domestic workers, or, in the postwar period, the racialized contours of anti-poverty strategies. British Columbia, *Annual Report of the Department of Labour, 1923*.

⁴² Struthers, *No Fault of Their Own*; Christie, *Engendering the State*.

⁴³ Christie, *Engendering the State*, 4.

Yet the “gender of breadwinners,” to borrow Joy Parr’s phrase, remained crucially important.⁴⁴ For one, as discussed above, the normative independent family was one in which “the male was the breadwinner,” the condition that forms the second part of Christie’s description of welfare’s fundamental goal.⁴⁵ More important to the dimensions of working mothers’ social citizenship vis-à-vis child care, however, was the extent to which the unequal relations of gender and class followed breadwinning mothers into the workforce. Work-based social rights were never offered to women on the same terms as men.⁴⁶ No matter the reason or rationale behind their labour force participation, mothers could not escape their subordinate status as second-class workers. Working-class mothers were considered a labour reserve that could be put to work as much-needed female domestics, as was the case in Vancouver during the 1910s, in which case municipal policy-makers were willing to provide public support for child care.⁴⁷ Obligated to work to prove their deservedness for mothers’ pensions in the 1920s and 1930s and welfare-linked day care subsidies in the 1960s, mothers were nonetheless denied equal pay, protection, or any of the rights that were assumed inherent to the work of male breadwinners. From the perspective of policy-makers and much of the public, working motherhood was a “problem,” understood within the prevailing notions of work, family,

⁴⁴ Joy Parr, *The Gender of Breadwinners: Women, Men, and Change in Two Industrial Towns, 1880-1950* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1998).

⁴⁵ Christie, *Engendering the State*, 4.

⁴⁶ And served to reinforce inequality between women as well, especially women of different races and ethnicities. protective labour legislation for women, meant to safeguard femininity and reproductive capacity, often excluded non-white women. For example, New Deal female work protections in the United States excluded work done in canneries, farms, and private households, labour “predominantly performed by women of color. Stoltzfus, *Citizen, Mother, Worker*, 6.

⁴⁷ See Ruth K. Abbott and R.A. Young, “Cynical and Deliberate Manipulation? Child Care and the Reserve Army of Female Labour in Canada,” *Journal of Canadian Studies* 24, 2 (1989), pp. 22-38. Abbott and Young challenge the simple “reserve army” thesis, instead arguing that mothers represent a “latent” labour reserve – that is, their presence in the labour force (encouraged through child care provision) is better explained by the fact that they are considered *cheap* labour, not just their simple presence or absence in certain jobs.

and welfare. Public support -- either in the form of child care or mothers' pensions -- was ideally just a temporary measure (one preferable to direct relief, which just encouraged welfare dependency) on the road to a "resolution": the restoration of a male-breadwinner, female mother/homemaker family.

The limitations of the gendered notion of work-based social rights became especially apparent in the 1960s, when something of a perfect storm marked the beginning of what Rianne Mahon calls the "never-ending story" in the quest for universal child care.⁴⁸ For one, the federal government's willingness to fund social programs through the Canada Assistance Plan provided provinces the opportunity to offer public day care programs for the first time, but within the context of the "discovery" of feminized poverty and the strict confines of means-tested welfare. For another, mothers came to constitute a significant part of the labour force in BC as elsewhere in Canada, the implications of which policy-makers could not ignore. Amidst these changing social realities, however, the gendered prescriptions of work and motherhood remained relatively unchanged, and in fact the masculinity of worker-citizenship had been even more firmly established in the aftermath of the Depression's male unemployment crisis and concern about men's jobs after the Second World War. BC's welfare paradigm offered two separate and irreconcilable categories for women: dependent mother, or second-class worker. These were the conditions from which feminist-inspired child care advocacy emerged in the late 1960s. Frustrated with the pervasive notion that working motherhood was a "problem," feminist child care advocates in BC sought to recast mothers' work outside the home as a positive, liberating experience. As such, they

⁴⁸ Mahon, "The Never-Ending Story."

argued, social rights for female workers had to take into account their motherhood and caregiving responsibilities. State-sponsored child care was foremost among those social rights.

It is telling that the same kinds of arguments are being made today. Advocates did not have much luck changing deeply-rooted beliefs about work, family, and welfare in the 1970s, and even today child care politics reveals a fundamental ambivalence about working motherhood and the nature of public responsibility for the care of working mothers' children – if any. Social citizenship continues to hinge on unequally gendered and classed notions about work, precluding any serious discussion of a universal child care policy, except from advocates who urge universal child care as one of the crucial social rights required for mothers to ensure their equality as workers – or even, as some advocates suggest, to ensure equality and social inclusion for all citizens “*irrespective of the parents' labour force status.*”⁴⁹ But the boundaries of social citizenship, both in the sense of rights and obligations, remain conditioned by gendered and classed assumptions about women, work, and welfare. Mothers' partial and conditional inclusion with the boundaries of social citizenship was and is keyed to their waged work, yet their waged work was – and often still is – understood as a problem. This tension helps to explain the absence of universal child care system, as well as the fact that the provision of child care support is treated as a marginal welfare issue. *Talkin' Day Care Blues* reveals that those attitudes have a long history in British Columbia.

⁴⁹ Mahon, “Gender and Welfare State Restructuring,” 4. Emphasis in the original.

Overview

This study consists of five main chapters, each of which highlights a particular moment when child care policy and the politics of mothers' employment occupied a prominent place on BC's political and public agenda. In doing so, *Talkin' Day Care Blues* provides the first in-depth study of child care policy and politics in British Columbia. Vancouver-based events, people, and policy are often at the centre of the story. The concentration of working mothers in the city was one reason for this, and so too was the fact that Vancouver was a hub for much of the feminist-inspired child care advocacy in the postwar years. Whenever possible, the experiences of working mothers, child care providers, and policymakers in Victoria, other urban centres, and rural parts of the provinces are brought into the story. This study spans almost a century, opening in the 1910s and concluding with a summary of provincial and national child care politics into the new millennium. This long view of child care politics bridges a divide often seen in welfare state scholarship between pre- and post-Second World War developments. *Talkin' Day Care Blues* is able to trace similarities, differences, and tensions in attitudes towards work, motherhood, and social citizenship across the century. It also offers perspective on how those attitudes changed (or did not change) according to different historical contexts.

The focus of the chapters that follow is on the policies themselves: the internal workings of government, the administration of those policies when they were put into practice, and the policies' implications for social citizenship's boundaries. Throughout, those policies are rooted firmly in an analysis of the prevailing gendered and classed discourses about family, work, and welfare. This study suggests, furthermore, that policymaking and citizenship construction were not just matters for modern national and

provincial welfare states. Throughout the twentieth century, provincial and municipal planners and politicians, local welfare workers, social agencies, women's groups, parent and community organizations, child welfare advocates, and the client mothers and families all had a vested interest in child care policy and programs. They all contributed to discourses about women, work, and social welfare that helped to determine the extent of public support for working mothers and their children, and many also undertook to provide child care services with varying degrees of state support. All of these "little state" interests, as Warren Magnusson suggests, played a role in conditioning the parameters of social citizenship in early twentieth-century BC.⁵⁰

The secondary focus of this study is on challenges to government policy and resistance to the limited constructions of working mothers' citizenship. The ways in which people expressed their "needs, as well as duties and responsibilities," Lara Campbell argues, needs to be considered "central to the development" of social citizenship's boundaries.⁵¹ In terms of child care policy advances, activists had little impact in BC, though not for lack of trying. Their contribution, however, was to help change the conversation about the rights of working women, especially in the 1960s and 1970s. The mothers who were welfare recipients also weighed in on the inadequacies of government policy, and their voices are often heard in this story. *Talkin' Day Care Blues* provides a solid foundation upon which future studies could more closely investigate

⁵⁰ Warren Magnusson, "The local state in Canada: theoretical perspectives," *Canadian Public Administration* 28, no. 4 (Winter 1985): 575-99.

⁵¹ Campbell, *Respectable Citizens*, 18. Shirley Tillotson's work on women's resistance to tax regulations is another interesting example of "women's political and economic agency that allowed them to cope in an unfair world that, from their disadvantaged world, they could not change." Shirley Tillotson, "Relations of Extraction: Taxation and Women's Citizenship in the Maritimes," *Making Up the State: Women in 20th-Century Atlantic Canada*, ed. Janet Guildford and Suzanne Morton (Fredericton: Acadiensis Press, 2010), 109. See also Shirley Tillotson, "Citizen Participation in the Welfare State: An Experiment," *The Canadian Historical Review* 75, 4 (1994): 511-542;

working mothers' agency as welfare recipients -- the extent to which their receipt of public assistance had an "emancipatory" or a "regulatory" function.⁵² The questions are especially important to explore in BC since there is some indication that women, and particularly those in the labour movement, wielded a significant degree of influence in their interactions with the state.⁵³

In the details of child care and mothers' pensions policy-making, program development, and alternative versions of citizenship, several themes are woven throughout the twentieth century. One of the most important is evident in chapter one: that the provision of public child care must be understood as part of the gendered and classed notions of paid work that configured social welfare in BC. The subject of this chapter is the Vancouver City Crèche, Canada's first publicly-funded child care institution that was also an employment bureau for mothers. Established in 1909, its founding was largely a response to the domestic servant shortages causing anxiety among middle-class women, as well as the racial agitation infusing the city that created demand

⁵² Ann Shola Orloff, "Gender and the Social Rights of Citizenship: The Comparative Analysis of Gender Relations and Welfare States," *American Sociological Review* 58, 3 (June 1993), 305. The need for this kind of analysis is indicated by a vibrant arm of the literature on women, gender, and the welfare state that puts women's agency front and centre. Rather than casting women as the victims of a patriarchal state, these studies emphasize the ways in which women used welfare to their advantage. Linda Gordon's work on single mothers and the victims of domestic violence in the United States, for example, shows that women often made use of programs in ways that enhanced their autonomy and independence. This was true not only of welfare recipients, but of the female social workers employed by the state. Linda Gordon, *Pitied But Not Entitled: Single Mothers and the History of Welfare, 1890-1935* (New York: Free Press, 1994); Linda Gordon, *Heroes of Their Own Lives: The Politics and History of Family Violence, 1880-1960* (New York: Viking, 1988). In another case, Emily Abel shows that working-class women in Progressive-Era United States fought, using "the language of emotion and intimacy" to remain home with their children, and resisted the idea that work was somehow liberating. Emily Abel, "Valuing Care: Turn-of-the-Century Conflicts between Charity Workers and Women Clients," *Journal of Women's History* 10, 3 (Autumn 1998): 32-52.

⁵³ Irene Howard, "The Mothers' Council of Vancouver: Holding the Fort for the Unemployed, 1935-1938," *Vancouver Past: Essays in Social History*, ed. Robert A.J. McDonald and Jean Barman (Vancouver: UBC Press, 1986), 249-87; Gillian Creese, "The Politics of Dependence: Women, Work and Unemployment in the Vancouver Labour Movement Before World War II," in *British Columbia Reconsidered: Essays on Women*, ed. Gillian Creese and Veronica Strong-Boag (Vancouver: Press Gang Publishers, 1992), 364-390; Benjamin Isitt, *Militant Minority: British Columbia Workers and the Rise of a New Left, 1948-1972* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2011).

for white female employees. Though the crèche had its roots in private welfare, it was soon absorbed into Vancouver's modernizing municipal welfare bureaucracy. Debates about public responsibility for working mothers were at the heart of the crèche's status as a city institution. Ultimately, its utility as a work-for-relief project for working-class and poor mothers justified the city's investment in the crèche. Caring for mothers' children so that they could go to work lessened the city's direct relief burden, and it also ensured that the work ethic was preserved among mothers' families.

In the development of one of the first major initiatives of the provincial welfare state -- mothers' pensions legislation -- the crèche was often referenced as the "wrong" way to provide public support to mothers. Instead, pensions advocates argued that widowed and, in some cases, deserted and divorced mothers should be compensated for their maternal "service to the state," and encouraged to give up their paid labour. The notion of care-based welfare entitlement, which to some degree ran throughout the century, was especially evident in the interwar years. Chapter two highlights the tension between caregiving and paid work as legitimate sources of social rights for women during this period. The passage of pensions legislation, along with the relatively generous and inclusive provision of pensions to BC mothers, suggests that to some degree at least caring work acted as the basis for citizenship claims in the 1920s. Even in this maternalist framework, however, expectations about wage work continued to exist. Especially by the late 1920s and into the 1930s, the administration of mothers' pensions operated much differently than maternalist-inspired advocates imagined. Rather than removing the need for mothers' wage work, pensions administrators actually closely policed the boundaries of social citizenship based on their expectations that welfare recipients should work.

During the Great Depression's panic about unemployment and masculinity, the claims and protections of male breadwinners became the top priority for social welfare policymakers. Working mothers, under pressure to become self-sufficient, were given few resources to do so amidst the preoccupation with the rights of male worker-citizens. In this context, given the tension between the expectations and realities of the relationship between working mothers and the state, publicly-funded child care was never a serious political issue during the interwar years.

In stark contrast, government-sponsored child care for working mothers became a prime concern of policymakers and concerned citizens during the Second World War – the subject of chapter three. Yet the gendered and classed welfare imperatives established in the 1920s and 1930s persisted, even as mothers entered the wartime labour force in ever greater numbers. BC rejected the federal government's offer to share costs for wartime day care, a decision that welfare officials chalked up to lack of need for such a service. For one thing, however, this decision ignored the significant (and increasingly vocal) numbers of working mothers across the province, employed in war jobs or otherwise, asking for child care support. For another, even as the government offered this official reasoning, they did not try to disguise the ideological grounds for the decision: the belief that the best place for mothers was not in the workforce, but in the home. During the war and in the years immediately following, public officials demonstrated an increasing willingness to get involved in citizen-shaping kindergartens and playschools for middle-class families, but were content to let private agencies look after welfare-oriented child care services for poverty-stricken mothers whose work was a necessity.

By the mid-1960s, in BC as well as nationally, it was clear that public officials could no longer ignore the need to consider the child care arrangements of working mothers. Chapter four examines the provincial government's first foray into public child care: the provision of day care subsidies to working mothers. At first glance, this provincial child care program seems to represent a significant shift in the boundaries of social citizenship for working mothers. For the first time since the crèche, mothers were entitled to public support for child care services. Yet the partial and limited nature of the subsidy program, as well as its location in the "war on poverty," revealed that little had actually changed in the contours of working mothers' social citizenship. Day care subsidies were available only to social assistance recipients and low-income mothers, and were therefore contingent upon certain mothers' relationship to paid work. Public assistance for child care, in other words, was linked to family crisis and poverty prevention -- not unlike the Vancouver City Crèche. Despite their increasing numbers, working mothers still occupied a tenuous place in BC society, and their relationship to the state was fraught with contradictions and inadequacies. The dimensions of those inadequacies are explored in close detail through chapter four's analysis of the Marpole Day Care Centre in Vancouver.

Frustration with government inaction on child care reached a head in the late 1960s and 1970s, against the backdrop of second-wave feminism. During these years, another strand of child care politics came to the forefront: pressure for universal child care as women's right. Chapter five tells the story of feminist-inspired child care advocacy in BC, from university campuses to sit-ins in government offices. Welfare rights feminists were among the most vocal and active critics of government policy;

working alongside other feminist groups, these advocates insisted that a universal child care system was a necessary prerequisite for women's liberation. Work, they argued, was a powerful – and necessary – source of fulfillment, independence, and equality in all women's lives, even women who were mothers, and women had a right to social programs that would help reconcile their wage-earning and caregiving responsibilities. Ultimately, this advocacy had little impact on policy-making. The efforts of advocates, however, helped to reframe working motherhood not as a problem, but as a choice and a right – and they ensured that a universal child care program was given a place on the political agenda. It remains there today.

Talkin' Day Care Blues begins with the question of why universal child care has remained an “elusive social good,” and ends up tracing the repeated failures to provide meaningful social inclusion for working mothers.⁵⁴ At the root of those failures was – and is – ambivalence about working motherhood. For mothers, work conditioned the boundaries of social citizenship in often contradictory ways. Adherence to middle-class expectations about the gendered division of labour precluded social rights for some mothers; for others, their working-class or low-income standing created a situation where wage work in a marginal job was an obligation of their relationship with the state. Either way, *Talkin' Day Care Blues* emphasizes the importance of understanding gendered work in the construction of social citizenship's boundaries. After all, as Alice Kessler-Harris suggests, wage work is and has been the “passport” to social rights, as well as to economic citizenship and access to forums of political and economic decision-making.⁵⁵

⁵⁴ Michel, *Children's Interests/Mothers' Rights*, 1.

⁵⁵ Kessler-Harris, *In Pursuit of Equity*, 11.

“[F]eminists,” Susan Prentice argues, “are still struggling with the vexing meaning and politics of motherhood.”⁵⁶ Is a fully-realized version of citizenship for women one that facilitates full and equal participation in the labour market through social rights like universal child care? Or is the model represented by the “wages for housework” campaign or those that argue for the “universalization of care” more appropriate?⁵⁷ This study does not presume to provide a definitive answer to these questions. In bringing to light the importance of work to mothers’ social citizenship, however, *Talkin’ Day Care Blues* reveals the source of working mothers’ uneasy relationship to the state.

⁵⁶ Susan Prentice, “Changing Child Care: Looking Back, Moving Forward,” introduction to *Changing Child Care*, 20.

⁵⁷ Mahon, “Gender and Welfare State Restructuring, 4; Nancy Fraser, “After the Family Wage: Gender Equity and the Welfare State,” *Political Theory* 22, 4 (November 1994): 591-618; Susan Prentice, “‘Kids are Not for Profit’: The Politics of Childcare,” in *Social Movements/Social Change: The Politics and Practice of Organizing*, ed. Frank Cunningham et.al (Toronto: Between the Lines, 1988), 98-128.

Chapter 2

“A Proper Independent Spirit”: The Vancouver City Crèche, 1909-1920

Vancouver was a rapidly growing and industrializing city during the first two decades of the twentieth century. By 1901 Vancouver had surpassed Victoria as the province’s largest urban centre, its economy fuelled by lumber, mining, and the business opportunities that arose from its position as the west coast terminus of the Canadian Pacific Railroad.¹ Between 1901 and 1911, Vancouver’s population grew by 350 percent, from 27,196 residents to 123,902.² This growth brought with it a range of social problems, which were exacerbated by the province’s economic collapse in 1913 and the country’s entry into war.³ Unemployment and poverty were rampant through the middle years of the decade. It became clear to both private and public welfare officials that the city’s “piecemeal, voluntary” approach to relief was no longer adequate.⁴ Dealing with these social pressures required a more coordinated approach. As a result, the 1910s were marked by the expansion and centralization of municipal government-sponsored welfare, including “missions” for unemployed single men, homes for neglected children, deserted

¹ Robert A.J. McDonald, *Making Vancouver: Class, Status, and Social Boundaries, 1863-1913* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 1996), xii-xv.

² *Census of Canada 1901* (Table I); *Census of Canada 1911* (Table VII).

³ For works that address cycles of economic boom and bust in 1910s BC and effects on the labour market, see Jean Barman, *The West Beyond the West: A History of British Columbia* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2007), 189-251; Patricia Roy and John Herd Thompson, *British Columbia: Land of Promises* (Don Mills: Oxford University Press, 2005), 102-111; Robert A.J. McDonald, “Working Class Vancouver, 1886-1914: Urbanism and Class in British Columbia,” in *Vancouver Past: Essays in Social History*, ed. Robert A.J. McDonald and Jean Barman (Vancouver: UBC Press, 1986), 33-69; Robert A.J. McDonald, “Victoria, Vancouver, and the Economic Development of British Columbia, 1886-1914,” in *British Columbia: Historical Readings*, ed. W. Peter Ward and Robert A.J. McDonald (Vancouver: Douglas and McIntyre Ltd, 1981), 369-95.

⁴ See Diane L. Matters, “Public Welfare Vancouver Style,” *Journal of Canadian Studies* 14, 1 (Spring 1979), 3.

wives, and unwed mothers, and services for the “elderly infirm” and the “sick and convalescent.”⁵ Included among this network of services was the City Crèche, a child care centre that also served as an employment bureau for working mothers.

In a history of working mothers and the welfare state, it is perhaps easy to overlook the crèche. Similar institutions of the time, as Sonya Michel points out, are often “subsumed” in the literature around child-saving.⁶ But as Canada’s first public child care institution and mothers’ employment bureau, the crèche demands a closer look for what it can tell us about the construction of social citizenship for working mothers.⁷ This chapter shows that the fate of the crèche was most clearly tied up not in the currents of child welfare, but in the politics of mothers’ employment and in attitudes about women, work, and welfare. The crèche complicates the common interpretation of the early twentieth century as a period in which caring and mothering were a source of social rights for women.⁸ For many women, that was not the case. The operation of the city crèche through the mid-1910s reveals that women’s social entitlements could depend on much more than their maternal service to the state. For the working poor and working-class mothers who used the crèche, their claims to public assistance were based on wage-earning and their roles as family breadwinners. In this first sustained intersection of

⁵ Matters, “Public Welfare Vancouver Style” provides a nice overview of this proliferation of services.

⁶ Sonya Michel, *Children’s Interests/Mothers’ Rights: The Shaping of America’s Child Care Policy* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1999), 8. In Canada, this is apparent in studies such as Larry Prochner, “A History of Early Education and Child Care in Canada, 1820-1966,” in *Early Childhood Care and Education in Canada*, ed. Larry Prochner and Nina Howe (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2000), 45-51; and Alvin Finkel, *Social Policy and Practice in Canada: A History* (Waterloo: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 2006), 70-76.

⁷ Loren Lind and Susan Prentice confirm that the Vancouver crèche represented the first formal state involvement in an ongoing child care operation in Canada. Loren Lind and Susan Prentice, *Their Rightful Place: An essay on children, families and childcare in Canada* (Toronto: Our Schools/Our Selves Education Foundation, 1992), 91.

⁸ See Seth Koven and Sonya Michel, “Introduction: “Mother Worlds,”” in *Mothers of a New World: Maternalist Politics and the Origins of Welfare States*, ed. Seth Koven and Sonya Michel (New York: Routledge, 1993), 1-42.

working mothers and the welfare state in BC, in other words, the boundaries of social citizenship were contingent upon women's economic behaviour.

Even though the crèche was a distinctly Vancouver phenomenon, it was embedded in, and worked to recreate, the same cultural assumptions that shaped the passage of provincial welfare legislation during the same period. The first two decades of the century saw acts for the protection of children (1901), workmen's compensation (1916), a female minimum wage (1918), and mothers' pensions (1920).⁹ We know from studies by Robert Adamoski, Gillian Creese, Margaret Little, and others that BC's social welfare policy, as elsewhere in Canada, served to protect and reinforce the gendered ideals of the middle-class, Anglo-Saxon family – one defined by the independence of the male breadwinner and the dependence of the homemaking mother.¹⁰ Especially pertinent for an analysis of the crèche is Adamoski's work on the Vancouver Children's Aid Society. Adamoski shows, not surprisingly, that child rescuers "operated with clear assumptions of how social class, race, and gender affected 'the most desirable material,

⁹ Allan Irving, "The Development of a Provincial Welfare State: British Columbia 1900-1939," in *The "Benevolent" State: The Growth of Welfare in Canada*, ed. Allan Moscovitch and Jim Albert (Toronto: Garamond Press, 1987), 155-174.

¹⁰ Nancy Fraser and Linda Gordon, "A Genealogy of Dependency: Tracing a Keyword of the U.S. Welfare State," *Signs* 19, 2 (Winter 1994): 309-336; Robert Adamoski, "Their Duties Towards the Children: Citizenship and the Practice of Child Rescue in Early Twentieth Century British Columbia," (Ph.D. diss., Simon Fraser University, 1995); Gillian Creese, "The Politics of Dependence: Women, Work and Unemployment in the Vancouver Labour Movement Before World War II," in *British Columbia Reconsidered: Essays on Women*, ed. Gillian Creese and Veronica Strong-Boag (Vancouver: Press Gang Publishers, 1992), 364-390; Margaret Hillyard Little, "Claiming a Unique Place: The Introduction of Mothers' Pensions in B. C.," *BC Studies* 105-106 (Spring/Summer 1995): 80-102; Megan Davies, "'Services Rendered, Rearing Children for the State': Mothers' Pensions in British Columbia," in *Not Just Pin Money: Selected Essays on the History of Women's Work in British Columbia*, ed. B. Latham and R. Pazdro (Victoria: Camosun College Press, 1984), 249-63; Kenneth A. Venables, "The Making of Protective Labour Legislation in British Columbia: The 1912 Royal Commission on Labour and its Aftermath," (M.A. thesis, Simon Fraser University, 1996). For a broader Canadian study on the gendered character of early social welfare, see Mariana Valverde, *The Age of Light, Soap, and Water: Moral Reform in English Canada, 1885-1925* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2008).

out of which to manufacture the best Canadian citizenship.”¹¹ More importantly, he also demonstrates that services designed to protect children were inextricable from gendered assumptions about their parents. Adamoski’s investigations reveal that wage-earning single fathers were able to board their children at the CAS Home and retain their claims to independence, yet women’s use of the home was “interpreted as an inability to meet the demands of [their] ‘natural’ roles as spouse and mother,” and thus signalled and reinforced their dependent status.¹²

The Vancouver City Crèche adds another dimension to the complex array of gendered, classed, and racialized regulatory objectives behind BC’s early social welfare programs. This chapter examines the administrative evolution of the crèche through the 1910s as well as debates about its purpose and meaning as both a private and public welfare institution. The origins of the crèche lie in the middle-class women’s sphere of social reform that took for granted the preservation of class inequalities and, more specifically, a steady supply of white female domestic workers. That female reformers were primarily interested in mothers’ labour was recreated in the city’s interest in the crèche, which heightened in the context of labour market needs and pressure on the city relief budget. By the middle of the decade, the crèche as a public institution worked to condition the boundaries of local social citizenship according to gendered, classed, and racialized expectations about mothers’ work.

¹¹ Robert Adamoski, “The Child-The Citizen-The Nation: The Rhetoric and Experience of Wardship in Early Twentieth-Century British Columbia,” in *Contesting Canadian Citizenship: Historical Readings*, ed. Robert Adamoski, Dorothy E. Chunn, and Robert Menzies (Peterborough, ON: Broadview Press, 2002), 316. See Patricia T. Rooke and R.L. Schnell, *Discarding the Asylum: From Child Welfare to the Welfare State in English Canada, 1800-1950* (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1983).

¹² Adamoski, “Their Duties Towards the Children,” 352-3. See also Robert Adamoski, “Persistence and Privilege: Boarding and Single Fathers in the Practice of Child Rescue: 1901-1930,” in *Child and Family Welfare in British Columbia: A History*, ed. Diane Purvey and Christopher Walmsley (Calgary: Detselig Ent., 2005), 29-52.

The crèche, in essence, was a work-for-relief project for mothers that fulfilled the fundamental goal of welfare provision identified by James Struthers and Nancy Christie: to promote the work ethic and to prevent the welfare dependency of poor and working-class families.¹³ Yet these culturally-entrenched attitudes about work and welfare were cut through with deeply-held gender ideologies. Though women were expected to give up their mothering for breadwinning, from the perspective of welfare officials those gender roles should only be suspended temporarily, until mothers and families were ‘rehabilitated’ through their contact with the state. Furthermore, mothers were expected to confine their wage earning to appropriately feminine jobs like domestic service, or other typically female industries where they did not represent a threat to male labour or wages. The version of social citizenship represented by the crèche, in other words, still assumed the subordination of women workers and, correspondingly, that the ideal social citizen was a male worker. In this context, it is perhaps no surprise that by the end of the decade, mothers’ pensions supplanted the crèche as the preferred approach for bringing mothers within the boundaries of social citizenship.

“Founding Mothers” and “Well-trained Women”: The Origins of the Crèche

The Vancouver crèche began as the private undertaking of women from Vancouver’s small but influential network of social reformers and suffragists. Its “founding mothers” included Helen Gregory MacGill, Mary Ellen Smith, Mrs. T.E.

¹³ James Struthers, *No Fault of Their Own: Unemployment and the Canadian Welfare State, 1914-1941* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1983); Nancy Christie, *Engendering the State: Family, Work, and Welfare in Canada* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2000).

Aikins, and Mrs. J.O. Perry.¹⁴ MacGill, a member of the University Women's Club, the Women's Christian Temperance Union (WCTU), and the Local Council of Women, was an outspoken advocate for women and children's legal rights and the province's first female Juvenile Court Judge.¹⁵ Smith, a former schoolteacher, was a prominent suffragist and a member of assorted women's organizations including the WCTU and the Imperial Order Daughters of the Empire (IODE). When her husband Ralph died in 1917, Smith was elected to his seat in the BC Legislature and she became the province's first female MLA.¹⁶ Mrs. J.O. Perry did not occupy such a prominent political position, though she was certainly part of the middle- and upper-class social strata from which female reformers were drawn; her husband John was a businessman who manufactured and sold bank and office supplies.¹⁷ Less is known about Mrs. Aikins, though it is likely that her position was similar to Perry's.¹⁸

Like other crèches and day nurseries across the United States and Canada, the Vancouver crèche was very much a product of women's charitable activities. The first North American crèche was established in 1798 in the Philadelphia House of Industry and, like its predecessors in France, was designed to serve the "good of the nation" through intervention in the care of the children of morally corrupt working-class

¹⁴ Elsie Gregory MacGill, *My Mother the Judge: A Biography of Judge Helen Gregory MacGill* (Toronto: Ryerson Press, 1955), 130. There is no indication of the location of the crèche in its initial years, though it is likely that it was located in the West End, near the homes that employed mothers.

¹⁵ MacGill, *My Mother the Judge*.

¹⁶ Elizabeth Norcross, "Mary Ellen Smith: The Right Woman in the Right Place at the Right Time," in *Not Just Pin Money: Selected Essays on the History of Women's Work in British Columbia*, ed. B. Latham and R. Pazdro (Victoria: Camosun College Press, 1984), 357-364.

¹⁷ *Henderson's City of Vancouver Directory* (Vancouver: Henderson's Publishing Company Ltd, 1909).

¹⁸ T.E. Aikins does not appear in City Directories around 1909.

families.¹⁹ By the mid-19th century, a number of day nurseries had been established throughout the northeastern United States, each differing slightly in management style but having in common the combination of “noblesse oblige, pity, and sense of women's particular responsibility for children” that prompted middle- and upper-class philanthropic women to establish them.²⁰

Crèches and day nurseries in Canada also originated from the acts of benevolent individuals and groups, usually women, who acted out of a sense of pity for the plight of poor families.²¹ Religious motivations also played an important role. Charitable and church-based organizations were behind virtually all of the approximately one dozen centres that existed in Canada's largest urban centres by 1911.²² The Methodist Jost Mission in Halifax, for example, established a day nursery in 1910 as part of its larger community service functions that included motherhood education and relief work for the “poorer sisters.”²³ The origin of the West End Crèche in Toronto began with a young Anglican woman named Penelope Harvey who, in 1908, was motivated by a desire to engage in community charity work.²⁴ In Ottawa, Winnipeg, Montreal, and elsewhere,

¹⁹ Larry W. Prochner, “Themes in the History of Day Care: A Case Study of the West End Crèche, Toronto, 1909-1939” (PhD diss., University of Toronto, 1994), 31-37.

²⁰ Michel, *Children's Interests/Mothers' Rights*, 12-14.

²¹ For a general discussion of women's reform organizations in Canada, see Wendy Mitchinson, “Early Women's Organizations and Social Reform: Prelude to the Welfare State,” in *The “Benevolent” State: The Growth of Welfare in Canada*, ed. Allan Moscovitch and Jim Albert (Toronto: Garamond Press, 1987), 77-92.

²² The first centres in Canada were located in Montreal in the 1850s, when Roman Catholic nuns operated both crèches (custodial care only) and Salles d'Asile (which also focused on education). See Patricia Vandebelt Schulz, “Day Care in Canada: 1850-1962,” in *Good Day Care: Fighting For It, Getting It, Keeping It* (Toronto: The Women's Press, 1978), 139-40, for a description of other crèches and day nurseries in Canada in this era.

²³ Christina Simmons, “‘Helping the Poorer Sisters’: The Women of the Jost Mission, Halifax, 1905-1945,” *Acadiensis* 14, 1 (Autumn 1994): 3-27.

²⁴ Prochner, “Themes in the History of Day Care”; Wendy J. Atkin, “Playing Together as Canadians: Historical Lessons from the West End Crèche,” in *Changing Child Care: Five Decades of Child Care Advocacy and Policy in Canada*, ed. Susan Prentice (Halifax: Fernwood Publishing, 2001).

crèches were located in the city's poorest districts, their purpose being to provide charity to families struggling to ensure basic survival and to provide care to otherwise "neglected" children.²⁵

In BC, the Vancouver crèche, as well as the Victoria Day Nursery, originated from the same charitable impulses, albeit with less religious influence.²⁶ Helen MacGill and her colleagues founded the first iteration of the crèche alongside their work in a range of activities aimed at improving the lot of indigent mothers and children. Like the orphanages, Children's Aid Homes, and hospitals that dotted the city by the early part of the 20th century, the crèche served as a place where working-class children could be fed and clothed, and where mothers could have access to both material and moral help with child-rearing.²⁷ In Victoria, women of the Imperial Order Daughters of the Empire (IODE) spearheaded the creation of the Day Nursery at 739 King's Road, which opened in October 1913 amidst much self-congratulations about how many poor children would be helped.²⁸

The founding mothers of the Vancouver crèche, however, realized that it could also serve another purpose. Foreshadowing the city's interest in the crèche, MacGill's

²⁵ Donna Varga, *Constructing the Child: A History of Canadian Day Care* (Toronto: James Lorimer & Company Ltd., 1997), 20. Emphasis in original.

²⁶ Gillian Weiss, in her thorough study of Vancouver's clubwomen, argues: "The activities of the churches at this time no doubt served to enhance the climate of social reform within which women's clubs operated and no doubt some women were strongly influenced by their own personal religious convictions but there is no evidence that the women's clubs studied were one of the major media through which they worked." See Gillian Weiss, "As Women and As Citizens': Clubwomen in Vancouver, 1910-1928" (PhD diss., University of British Columbia, 1983), 255. For insight into BC's "irreligiosity," see Lynne Marks, "Leaving God Behind When They Crossed the Rocky Mountains': Exploring Unbelief in Turn-of-the-Century British Columbia," in *Household Counts: Canadian Households and Families in 1901*, ed. Peter Baskerville and Eric W. Sager (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2007), 371-404.

²⁷ MacGill, *My Mother the Judge*, 130-4; Adamoski, "Their Duties Towards the Children," especially chapter 3.

²⁸ *Victoria Daily Colonist*, 25 October 1913, 7; *Victoria Daily Colonist*, 18 October 1913, 5; *Victoria Daily Colonist*, 17 October 1913, 10.

cohort envisioned a child care institution that also provided a specialized employment bureau that allowed them to employ working-class mothers as domestic servants. This logic made sense for MacGill and her colleagues, whose reform efforts were infused with maternal feminist ideology.²⁹ Though these maternal feminists never questioned that a woman's natural role and responsibility was as a mother in the home, this idealized version of motherhood did not extend across class boundaries. Like their contemporaries across the country, Vancouver's maternal feminists were "firmly rooted in the middle-class experience and expectations," and their campaigns rarely included calls for class equality.³⁰ As Gillian Weiss observes, the city's clubwomen assumed that working-class women would work for their entire lives, and their charitable projects – including the crèche – were designed to help working women carry out their duties, not to challenge entrenched class norms.³¹

The preservation of this status quo among middle-class Vancouver families required, critically, a steady supply of domestic servants. But in the years immediately before the crèche's establishment, suitable household help was proving harder to find. The Provincial Council of Women declared in 1907 that shortages of domestic workers

²⁹ Weiss, "As Women and As Citizens." Weiss argues that MacGill, Smith, and their colleagues believed that women, as 'mothers of the nation,' were best equipped to preserve and strengthen a society threatened by the challenges of rapid immigration, urbanization, and industrialization. Though historians have debated the distinction between "maternalism" and "feminism," Weiss argues that rationale behind Vancouver's clubwomen's activities is best described as maternal feminism. On this issue, see Molly Ladd-Taylor, *Mother-Work: Women, Child Welfare, and the State, 1890-1930* (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1994).

³⁰ Margaret Jane Hillyard Little, *No Car, No Radio, No Liquor Permit: The Moral Regulation of Single Mothers in Ontario, 1920-1997* (Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1998), 26.

³¹ Weiss, "As Women and As Citizens" 142-144. Women's support for the 1916 Minimum Wage Act, for example, was based not on a belief in women's rights to a fair wage, but on the fear of potential "moral degradations" of young female workers, who without a suitable wage would be tempted to turn to prostitution to make a living. A minimum wage for women would also protect higher male family wages. See Creese, "The Politics of Dependence," 364-390.

had reached “crisis proportions in BC.”³² At the National Council of Women’s annual meeting during the same year, Vancouver’s clubwomen called for the creation of a committee to investigate “the impossibility of procuring women to help in housekeeping,” which they characterized as “a situation that threatens to annihilate our homes.”³³ The uneven demographics of the province and the city explained this dearth of domestic help: in 1911, women represented only 36 percent of BC’s population, a proportion which increased to only 39 percent in urban centres.³⁴ The shortage was exacerbated by the fact that “well-trained women” were quickly “snapped up as wives” and thereby removed from the labour market.³⁵

Vancouver’s domestic help crisis was also complicated by the racism that permeated every aspect of city life. Without a readily available supply of female domestics, many families hired Chinese men as household workers. This state of affairs troubled many high-status city residents who were invested in efforts to protect British Columbia as a “white man’s province.” As Patricia Roy has documented, this anti-Asian prejudice stemmed from the “threat they allegedly posed as ‘cheap labour’ and the fear that ‘hordes’ of Asians could overwhelm a white British Columbia.”³⁶ At the height of

³² *Victoria Daily Colonist*, 14 November 1907.

³³ National Council of Women of Canada, *Annual Report* (Toronto, 1907), 66 – quoted in Robin John Anderson, “Domestic Service: The YWCA and Women’s Employment Agencies in Vancouver, 1898-1915,” *Histoire Sociale/Social History* XXV, 50 (November 1992), 313. See also Lorraine Brown, “Domestic Service in British Columbia, 1850-1914,” (MA thesis, University of Victoria, 1995); and McDonald, *Making Vancouver*, 99.

³⁴ Statistics Canada, *Rural and Urban Population of Canada, by province and sex, 1911*, http://www65.statcan.gc.ca/acyb02/1917/acyb02_191700849a-eng.htm (accessed 25 February 2011).

³⁵ Lilian Nelson, “Vancouver’s Early Days and the Development of Her Social Services,” paper given at the annual meeting of the Social Workers’ Club, 18 May 1934, page 20, City of Vancouver Archives (hereafter COVA), PAM 1935-53.

³⁶ Patricia Roy and John Herd Thompson, *British Columbia: Land of Promises* (Don Mills: Oxford University Press, 2005), 91; Patricia Roy, *A White Man’s Province: British Columbia Politicians and Chinese and Japanese Immigrants, 1858-1914* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 1989), 185-226.

clubwomen's domestic crisis, the city was in the midst of violent anti-Asian agitation, including a riot through Chinatown and Little Tokyo in September 1907 fuelled by the newly-formed Asiatic Exclusion League. In this milieu, it is not surprising that the popular press deplored the employment of "Oriental" men in respectable white, middle- and upper-class homes.³⁷ As Lorraine Brown's study suggests, opposition to Chinese domestics was linked partly to fears that they were "sexual deviants" and would coerce children into lives of "immorality."³⁸ Yet the employment of Asian men as domestic workers was more complex than it was in traditionally male industries. Vancouver's middle-class women were horrified at the "exorbitant" wages that in-demand white domestic servants charged, and in some cases appeared to prefer Chinese "houseboys" because they could be employed at a much cheaper rate. This was the case for a group of IODE women who circulated a petition calling for a reduction in the Chinese Head Tax, which they believed would help "increase the supply of household servants."³⁹ Even Ralph Smith, speaking of his wife Mary Ellen, privately deplored "his fate that his gallant wife should have to roast her comely face over the kitchen fire every day because the Chinese Head Tax makes it impossible for him to get a Chinese cook."⁴⁰ The desperate position of households like the Smith's, however, could not entirely override deeply-held anti-Asian views, and there remained an ongoing concern that "good white help was

³⁷ *Vancouver Daily World*, 3 February 1913, 9; Nelson, "Vancouver's Early Days," 20.

³⁸ Brown, "Domestic Service," 75-77.

³⁹ Anderson, "Domestic Service," 313.

⁴⁰ Roy, *A White Man's Province*, 180. One popular history account also notes that Helen MacGill relied on a "Chinese cook," to run her household and help care for her children. Jean Mann et.al, *Women Lead the Way: A History of the University Women's Club of Vancouver, 1907-2007* (Vancouver: Ray Hignell Services Inc., 2007), 12.

rare.”⁴¹ As Roy explains, “[i]n the minds of many electors, it was better to go without help than to hire Asians.”⁴²

The establishment of the crèche in 1909 offered a solution to these intertwined labour problems. For clubwomen, white working-class mothers represented a reserve of domestic labour that was not being used to its full potential. The crèche’s employment bureau was designed specifically to meet the needs of its middle-class clients: women, most of them from the prosperous West End, would place a request for a domestic worker, who would be supplied from the ranks of the crèche’s working mothers. Working mothers, for their part, were much more likely to take on waged work if they could be assured of reliable child care. After all, as future matron Lilian Nelson later reflected, mothers were often all too “glad to return as a day worker to bring grist to the mill, if their little ones could be well cared for in their absence.”⁴³

In this respect, the crèche actually had more in common with the employment bureaus proliferating throughout the city than it did with child welfare institutions. As Robin John Anderson has documented, well over one hundred employment agencies operated in Vancouver between 1898 and 1915, most of them designed to place workers in specialized sections of a labour market segregated by race and sex. Women’s bureaus that facilitated domestic placements were particularly prolific, as Anderson shows, due to the “almost insatiable demand for household servants.”⁴⁴ This demand remained steady even through economic downturns (such as that of 1907-08), but was especially high during the boom years of Premier Richard McBride between 1908 and 1913 – the years

⁴¹ Nelson, “Vancouver’s Early Days,” 20.

⁴² Roy, *A White Man’s Province*, 180.

⁴³ Nelson, “Vancouver’s Early Days,” 20.

⁴⁴ Anderson, “Domestic Service,” 310.

during which the crèche was established. As the economy expanded, so too did employment opportunities for women in stores, offices, restaurants, and hotels. 1911 data show, for example, that two-thirds of Vancouver's female labour force (which comprised 12.7 percent of the total labour force) worked as stenographers, teachers, nurses, and in retail and service industries.⁴⁵ The mothers employed through the crèche helped to fill the gaps left by younger, single women who left domestic work in favour of these service occupations.⁴⁶

From “Founding Mothers” to “City Fathers”: The Vancouver City Crèche as Public Welfare

Until 1911 the crèche operated privately, during which time its day-to-day activities are largely invisible in the historical record. In late 1911, however, the crèche appeared on the city's agenda when a motion was raised during a November council meeting to “erect, establish, and equip” a “Day Nursery.”⁴⁷ Soon after, council decided that instead of opening a new crèche, the city would take over the existing one being operated by the clubwomen. This decision took place in the context of the “rationaliz[ation]” of Vancouver's municipal welfare administration, which was evolving quickly to keep up with the challenges of a growing population.⁴⁸

⁴⁵ McDonald, “Working Class Vancouver,” 42-43; Venables, “The Making of Protective Labour Legislation,” 36-38. Women comprised 9.6 percent of Vancouver's manufacturing work force.

⁴⁶ Anderson, “Domestic Service,” 311.

⁴⁷ Vancouver City Council, Minutes, Meeting of the Finance Committee, 3 November 1911, COVA, City Council and Office of the City Clerks fonds, series 33, volume 18, 376. This motion also included plans for an Old People's Home and a Free Dispensary.

⁴⁸ Matters, “Public Welfare, Vancouver Style,” 3. The city population grew from 27,196 in 1901 to 123,902 in 1911. See *Census of Canada 1901* (Table I); *Census of Canada 1911* (Table VII).

One important component in the spate of reforms to city welfare was the increasing consolidation of voluntary organizations with the municipal bureaucracy. The Associated Charities was the most important of these organizations. The roots of the Associated Charities lay in the Friendly Aid Society, which was established in 1895. Its purpose was to provide volunteer investigators to act in concert with city health officials, and through the first decade of the 20th century, it was increasingly absorbed into the official channels of the city. The Friendly Aid Society became the Friendly Help Society in 1906, by which time its welfare investigators handled all of the city relief cases. In 1909 the Friendly Help Society evolved into the Associated Charities, a “more widely based operation of concerned citizens and societies.”⁴⁹ Funded primarily through city grants (with the difference made up through public subscriptions), the Associated Charities had an even closer relationship with the City Health Department that included a joint Board of Management.⁵⁰ Through the Associated Charities, city relief was meted out in the form of food and meals, rent assistance, clothing, and coal. In some cases, welfare visitors even bought train tickets for men to leave town in search of work.⁵¹

Yet even as the Associated Charities was being consolidated with the city’s welfare administration, the relief work it provided was still very much the domain of middle-class women. The crèche was located in this overlap between private and public welfare. While the city assumed financial responsibility for the crèche, its day-to-day operations remained largely in the purview of the women’s social reform sphere. In

⁴⁹ COVA, City Social Service Department fonds, Associated Charities of Vancouver, PR 447, (Finding Aid).

⁵⁰ The Board of Management consisted of the Associated Charities executive, the aldermen on the City Health Committee, the city Medical Health Officer, and assorted other Associated Charities members. Associated Charities, Minutes of Annual Meeting, 5 February 1912, Minute Book 1912-14, COVA, PR 447, 106-A-1 file 6.

⁵¹ Associated Charities, Case Book 1909, COVA, PR 447, 106-A-1, file 3.

January 1912 city council passed a by-law earmarking \$7500 to be put towards renovating and equipping a space for the crèche.⁵² Shortly after this, the management and oversight of the crèche was assigned to the Associated Charities, and more specifically to two of its female members, Lillian Forbes MacDonald and Desiré Unsworth.⁵³ Both women, not surprisingly, were well established in reform circles. Unsworth was the wife of a United Church minister and an eventual president of the Local Council of Women and co-founder of the Women's Employment League.⁵⁴ MacDonald, a doctor's wife, was deeply involved in women's employment issues in Vancouver, including wages and working conditions in stores and factories.⁵⁵ Along with Unsworth, MacDonald was also a founding member of the Richard McBride Chapter of the IODE.⁵⁶ In fact, the two women drew on their IODE chapter to populate the twelve-member Associated Charities subcommittee given responsibility for fleshing out the details of the crèche's establishment.⁵⁷

⁵² Vancouver City Council, Minutes, 19 January 1912, COVA, City Council and Office of the City Clerks fonds, series 31, volume 18, 478.

⁵³ Associated Charities, Minutes of 29 February 1912 meeting, COVA, PR 447, Minutes 1912-14, 106-A-1, file 6.

⁵⁴ *Vancouver Province*, 17 December 1938 (Rev. J.K. Unsworth Obituary); Irene Howard, *The Struggle For Social Justice in British Columbia: Helena Gutteridge, the Unknown Reformer* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 1992), 108.

⁵⁵ MacDonald, for example, testified extensively before the Royal Commission on Labour in 1913. See BCA, GR 0684, Box 2, File 1, BC Royal Commission on Labour, Vancouver, 12 March 1913.

⁵⁶ *Henderson's City of Vancouver Directory* (Vancouver: Henderson's Publishing Company Ltd, 1912).

⁵⁷ The crèche committee consisted of: Mrs. Lillian Forbes Macdonald (Regent of IODE Richard McBride Chapter), Mrs. J.K. Unsworth (First Vice-Regent), Mrs. McAlpine (the wife of a doctor), Mrs. F.C. Wade, Mrs. P. Donnelly (whose husband was the President and Manager of Canadian Financiers Ltd), Mrs. N.C. Kydd, Mrs. M. McBeath (the wife of alderman and future mayor Malcolm McBeath), Mrs. William. M. Barnard (whose husband was a jewelry manufacturer at Henry Birk and Sons), Mrs. C.F. Campbell (whose husband was a partner in the law firm Campbell and Singer), Mrs. H.W. Baker (wife of the president of Northern Securities Ltd.), Mrs. A.E. Short (whose husband owned a real estate and insurance firm), and Mrs. R. Charles Stoddard. Information taken from Membership Lists 1912-13, Richard McBride/Valcartier Camp Chapter IODE, COVA, Add. Mss. 556, 566-A-6 file 4; and *Henderson's City of Vancouver Directory*, 1912. Members of the City Health Board also had voting privileges on the crèche committee: Vancouver City Council, Minutes, Meeting of the Health Committee, 9 February 1912, COVA, City Council and Office of the City Clerk fonds, series 31, volume 18, 522.

Under MacDonald's guidance, the committee decided that the best location for the crèche was in the Vancouver Women's Building at 752 Thurlow Street. The Women's Building itself was the brainchild of Helen MacGill, who felt that the city's clubwomen deserved a dedicated space for their activities. Though their ultimate goal was to erect a building suited perfectly for their purposes (which they would achieve in 1926), in 1911 the Women's Building organization compromised by buying the "Tait House" on Thurlow Street.⁵⁸ In early 1912, they leased the annex of the Tait House to the crèche. In the Women's Building, the crèche committee would have access to the resources and support of the rich collection of women's organizations. Furthermore, the location was convenient for the mothers who had to drop off their children before heading to day work in the city's prosperous West End.⁵⁹

After a series of renovations, the grand opening of the crèche was held on 4 April 1912. Guests included the mayor, representatives from philanthropic societies and women's groups, and several clergymen. As they toured the "pretty and restful" quarters, visitors were encouraged to take note of the child-sized chairs and tables, the numbers of cots available for napping, and the variety of educational toys, games, and books with which the playroom was equipped. Next to the playroom was a dining room, where the children would receive a "good plain meal properly cooked" at noon, and another meal at 5 pm.⁶⁰ Upstairs were two "tastefully furnished" rooms for the matron, Miss Ada McLean, and her assistant, Miss Needle. McLean was a well-travelled graduate of the

⁵⁸ MacGill, *My Mother the Judge*, 129-130; Vancouver Women's Building Ltd., *Diary and Directory*, COVA, PAM 1938-16.

⁵⁹ Chuck Davis, *The Greater Vancouver Book: An Urban Encyclopedia* (Surrey, BC: The Linkman Press, 1997).

⁶⁰ *Vancouver Sun*, 4 April 1912, 12; *Vancouver Sun*, 26 April 1912, 6.

Long Island College Hospital in Brooklyn, NY, and had “wide experience” as a nurse throughout the United States as well as in Persia and Turkey. Miss Needle (whose first name was never given) was a nurse who had received her training at St. Mary’s Hospital in Manchester.⁶¹ McLean and Needle performed the bulk of the daily work at the crèche: they greeted the mothers and children when they arrived at the crèche at 7 am, at which point mothers were assigned their day’s domestic work and the children were changed into the “blue striped rompers” designed to maintain a sanitary environment. Mothers returned in the evening -- they could expect to earn \$2 for an eight-hour day, which included a noon meal -- paid the 10 cent per child fee (or 25 cents for 3 children), and returned home with their children. To accommodate mothers who had to travel long distances, the crèche’s 6 pm closing time was later extended to 7 pm.⁶²

For all the congratulations that surrounded the grand opening, however, the establishment of the crèche under the auspices of the city was marked with a certain degree of controversy.⁶³ Criticism of the crèche was not about the care of children; the press provided glowing accounts of the matrons’ work in “making proper citizens” of otherwise neglected children, and praised the “generous-hearted women” who volunteered to lead arts and crafts and even kindergarten classes. By all accounts, the children were “healthy and happy.”⁶⁴ Rather, critics worried that the crèche represented a potential misuse of public funds because it encouraged mothers’ employment. Indeed, the

⁶¹ *Vancouver Sun*, 4 April 1912, 12; *Vancouver Province*, 10 July 1914, 8.

⁶² *Vancouver Daily World*, 5 February 1913, 9. In addition, the mothers had to pay a \$1 yearly membership fee to use the crèche. The crèche also employed a secretary and a housekeeper. Associated Charities, Minutes of 6 January 1913 meeting, COVA, PR 447, Minutes 1912-14, 106-A-1, file 6.

⁶³ *Vancouver Sun*, 26 April 1912, 6.

⁶⁴ *Vancouver Sun*, 12 October 1912, 7; *Vancouver Daily World*, 5 February 1913, 9. The latter article noted that members of the St. Andrew’s Circle of King’s Daughters provided volunteer kindergarten teachers.

terms of welfare provision to working mothers were at the centre of debates about the purpose and meaning of the crèche, and would be for the next several years. Did working mothers “deserve” public assistance? On what basis? What were their obligations to the city in return?

As the crèche was folded into the city’s spectrum of modern and rationalized public welfare delivery, it brought out debates about the gendered and classed conditions of social citizenship’s boundaries. Critics were suspicious of any welfare scheme which was at variance with women’s maternal and domestic roles. At least two outspoken aldermen, Malcolm McBeath (who would be elected mayor in December 1915) and Frank E. Woodside, warned that the crèche would be misused by “selfish” West End mothers who needed someone to look after their children “when they went to bridge parties.”⁶⁵ For McBeath and Woodside, who would consistently voice their criticisms of the crèche over the next several years, government-supported welfare provision should be designed to reinforce the middle-class gender order, not challenge it.

Yet even McBeath and Woodside could admit that welfare delivery could achieve class-based imperatives as well. Woodside suggested that perhaps the crèche was better off located “somewhere nearer Main Street,” in closer proximity to the working-class mothers who *needed* to work.⁶⁶ Indeed, the chorus of support for the crèche -- from other city councillors, sympathetic members of the press, welfare officials, and of course MacDonald and Unsworth -- made it clear that “self-respecting,” working-class, breadwinning mothers were suitable candidates for public support.⁶⁷ The crèche, in other

⁶⁵ *Vancouver Province*, 25 April 1912, 25.

⁶⁶ *Vancouver Province*, 25 April 1912, 25.

⁶⁷ *Vancouver Sun*, 12 October 1912, 7.

words, fulfilled the overriding aim of social welfare provision: to preserve and promote the independence, self-sufficiency, and work ethic of working-class families. As MacDonald declared, the crèche was designed to make families “self-supporting” and to ensure that “no woman need go without work who is willing and able.”⁶⁸ Of course, many defenders trotted out familiar refrains to justify the crèche, including the steady supply of white domestic help and charitable assistance to “bereaved” widows and their pitiable families.⁶⁹ Increasingly, however, the labour and character of working mothers were at the crux of the crèche’s place in the city’s expanding network of social services.

These questions took on new urgency by the end of 1912, only a few months after the crèche moved into the Women’s Building. The crèche was outgrowing its quarters: daily attendance had grown from an average of 3 children per day in April 1912 to 30 per day by the end of the year.⁷⁰ Furthermore, the lease on the Women’s Building was due to expire in the spring. The crèche committee recognized the opportunity – and the need – for expansion.

MacDonald again championed a proposal for increased public responsibility for the crèche. Her committee recommended the purchase of a lot on Haro Street and the erection of a completely new crèche building, designed specifically for the purposes of an employment bureau and day nursery. MacDonald also recommended that the crèche become a completely public institution, entirely under the financial and administrative control of the city instead of the arms-length Associated Charities. From the city’s end, this meant a substantial commitment, since MacDonald’s Haro Street proposal was

⁶⁸ *Vancouver Daily World*, 5 February 1913, 9.

⁶⁹ *Vancouver Sun*, 26 April 1912, 6.

⁷⁰ *Vancouver Province*, 27 November 1912, 6; Vancouver City Crèche, Register Book 1912-19, COVA, Add MSS 124, 511-G-3, file 1.

estimated to cost \$70,000. Alderman McBeath was firmly opposed to the plan. He accused McDonald's committee of "extravagant" spending and mismanagement of the Thurlow Street crèche, and questioned why the city should take on even more responsibility for such a project.⁷¹ McBeath's protests, however, were largely in vain. Not only did the attendance rates prove its usefulness, but the crèche also enjoyed a high degree of public support. Both the *Sun* and the *Province* published editorials praising the "invaluable" service that the crèche provided to the city's working mothers.⁷² On the basis of this support, council passed a by-law in December 1912 that allocated \$70,000 for the purchase of the Haro Street lot and construction costs, and a subcommittee of council called the Associated Charities and Relief committee was given responsibility for overseeing crèche construction.⁷³

Although a seemingly endless stream of contract disputes and construction problems delayed the crèche's completion, it finally opened on July 1914 to wide public accolade – and as a wholly public institution "entirely under the control of the city fathers."⁷⁴ The facilities were modern and functional, having been designed with input from the staff. The lower level housed a separate office for the employment bureau, which could be accessed with a "sloping cement way for buggies," if needed. As with the old crèche, the employment service was designed specifically to place mothers in domestic service positions, and the ten-cent daily fee remained the same. Across the hall

⁷¹ Associated Charities, Minutes of 28 November 1912 meeting, COVA, PR 447, Minutes 1912-14, 106-A-1, file 6. He also accused them of pocketing donated money, a claim that both the Associated Charities and the press dismissed as a "cock-and-bull story."

⁷² *Vancouver Province*, 27 November 1912, 6; *Vancouver Sun*, 4 December 1912, 6.

⁷³ Vancouver City Council, Minutes, 2 December 1912, COVA, City Council and Office of the City Clerk fonds, series 31, volume 19, 185, 248. This committee was made up of five aldermen, the mayor, Relief Officer Godson, and three representatives of the Associated Charities.

⁷⁴ *Vancouver Province*, 10 July 1914, 8.

from the employment office was the “culinary department” complete with electric dumbwaiter and a laundry room. The two main floors contained numerous “spacious and sunny rooms” in which the children would play, nap, dine, and attend kindergarten classes. A room was also reserved for doctor’s visits.

The top level of the crèche housed a small apartment for Miss Ada Paul, who replaced McLean sometime in 1913 and was soon replaced herself by Lilian M. Nelson, the former matron of the City Hospital on Cambie Street.⁷⁵ Nelson’s long experience in various projects would lead to her appointment, in 1916, as the city’s first female welfare officer.⁷⁶ As matron, Nelson ushered the Vancouver City Crèche through several significant years when its purpose was largely defined by its importance as a relief institution.

Key to understanding Nelson’s tenure as matron, as well as the crèche’s new administrative home in the Health Department, was the economic context of the middle years of the decade. The crèche opened in July 1914 in the midst of very different economic circumstances than had shaped its earlier years. Vancouver was no longer flush with the financial health that had allowed the city to designate \$70,000 towards the crèche in 1912. The boom years under Premier McBride came to an end in 1913, and recession conditions put an unprecedented strain on both public and private welfare services.⁷⁷

⁷⁵ Ada Paul was a British-trained nurse who had worked in various international settings. She also had experience in “maternity and massage work,” and was familiar with management of large institutions, having served as matron of the Senior House University School in Victoria. *Vancouver Province*, 10 July 1914, 8. Paul earned \$60/month, and she had two assistants who each earned \$35 per month.

⁷⁶ *Vancouver Province*, 17 September 1960, 42 (Lilian Nelson obituary). Nelson was a native of England who moved to Vancouver in 1901.

⁷⁷ Roy and Thompson, *Land of Promises*, 102-111.

Skyrocketing rates of male unemployment caused widespread panic among social agencies. The Vancouver Trades and Labour Council (VTLC) painted a picture of “thousands” of out-of-work men “walking the streets lacking food and shelter, and thousands more silently starving.”⁷⁸ Yet Helena Gutteridge, a committed activist for working women’s rights and the only female executive of the VTLC, sought to keep the plight of unemployed women at the forefront of public consciousness as well. In some female-dominated professions (including tailors, dressmakers, and milliners) unemployment rates reached as high as 75 percent by the summer of 1914.⁷⁹ The situation was just as dire among stenographers and clerical workers laid off by downsizing business firms.⁸⁰ In an attempt to deal with a situation “unusual in its severity,” Gutteridge, along with Desiré Unsworth, spearheaded the creation of the Women’s Employment League as a job placement and make-work project for unemployed women. Even that made only a small dent in the problem: of the 1189 women who registered with the League between October 1914 and February 1915, only 483 found work.⁸¹ Even more worrying, according to Gutteridge, was the rising number of married women and mothers seeking jobs. With their husbands out of work, more women were “seeking employment to help keep the family.”⁸² Of the women registered

⁷⁸ *British Columbia Federationist*, 10 April 1914, 2.

⁷⁹ *The Labour Gazette* (Ottawa, August 1914), 190. Gutteridge wrote *The Labour Gazette’s* Vancouver entry.

⁸⁰ *British Columbia Federationist*, 25 September 1914, 1.

⁸¹ *British Columbia Federationist*, 19 February 1915, 1. The WEL is well documented Howard, *The Struggle for Social Justice*.

⁸² *The Labour Gazette* (Ottawa, November 1914), 577. It is worth noting that for the VTLC, the solution to the female unemployment problem was considered to be full male employment: “The married women with children to keep were very much in need. The solution to this problem being to see that men were provided with employment – this being the problem that needs solving as soon as possible.” Vancouver Trades and Labour Council (VTLC), Minutes, 15 October 1914, University of British Columbia Rare Books and Special Collections (hereafter UBCRBSC), VTLC fonds, box 16.4, Minutes of Regular Meetings, 1912-16.

with the Women's Employment League in October 1914, for example, one-third of them had children to support.⁸³

The unemployment crisis translated into a relief crisis. Not even the outbreak of war improved employment prospects -- BC's war economy would not reverse the recession until 1916. In fact, the war resulted in added pressure on relief agencies through 1914 and 1915. Growing numbers of working-class families were left without breadwinners as husbands signed up to serve overseas or travelled to Britain to take jobs in munitions factories. The Canadian Patriotic Fund, a pension for soldiers' wives established in 1914, provided only a limited scope of assistance.⁸⁴ The bulk of family relief work was left to private agencies and to the city. The VTLC reported in February 1915 that it had so far spent "\$14,000 on the destitute," half of those families;⁸⁵ the Women's Employment League resorted to giving out meal tickets to the mothers who could not find work,⁸⁶ other relief agencies stretched their resources as thin as possible in order to ensure that children were fed and warm.⁸⁷ City relief rolls showed that by mid-1915 families represented one-third of relief recipients.⁸⁸ The creation of a permanent

⁸³ *British Columbia Federationist*, 30 October 1914, 4.

⁸⁴ Desmond Morton, *Fight or Pay: Soldiers' Families in the Great War* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2004), 190-191. "Some soldiers' families were so desperately poor," Morton writes of Vancouver, "that fourteen wives had applied for relief funds before their husband's signature was dry on the enlistment roll." Morton's statement is based on an anecdote from VLTC president J.H. McVety.

⁸⁵ VTLC, Minutes, 18 February 1915, UBCRBSC, VTLC fonds, box 16.4, Minutes of Regular Meetings, 1912-16.

⁸⁶ *British Columbia Federationist*, 19 February 1915, 1; *British Columbia Federationist*, 16 October 1914, 1.

⁸⁷ Gutteridge, *The Struggle for Social Justice*, 105.

⁸⁸ See "Analysis of Families Receiving Relief," 1915 Relief Officer, COVA, PR 20, 13-C-2, file 1. In March 1915 *The Labour Gazette* reported that 600-700 of approximately 1900 relief listings was families (p. 1062).

City Relief Department in 1915 reflected the need for a coordinated response to an urgent situation.⁸⁹

Faced with these pressures, the crèche represented an opportunity for the city: it could serve as relief project for working-class mothers and their families. By 1914, the logic of the crèche was no longer about the household needs of upper- and middle-class women. Instead, the crèche served the interests of city welfare officials concerned with mounting relief rolls. The crèche provided an opportunity for the city to transfer financial responsibility for families to working mothers; it turned mothers into breadwinners so that the family did not have to collect relief. Welfare officials in Victoria offered similar justifications for the establishment of the Day Nursery there in late 1913. A committee made up of city representatives as well as members of the IODE, Social Service Commission, the Children's Aid Society, the Friendly Help Society, and the Local Council of Women determined that the crèche was a desirable service for working poor families; without providing mothers with the means to an income, "a great deal of charity will of necessity have to be dispensed by the city during the coming Winter."⁹⁰

In Vancouver, the crèche benefited from -- and capitalized on -- the fact that domestic service was the one sector of the female labour market that remained relatively stable throughout the economic recession. Indeed, many of Vancouver's commercial female employment agencies had given up placing stenographers, office workers, cooks, waitresses, clerks, hospital workers and the like, and confined their business solely to

⁸⁹ The Employment and Relief Association operated through 1914 (an organization that included representatives from city council, Relief Officer George Ireland, the Trades and Labour Council, the Board of Trade, Clergymen, the Victorian Order of Nurses, and various benevolent organizations), along with the City Council Relief Committee, both of which had relied on the management of Relief Officer George Ireland. With the creation of a new department, relief structures were consolidated. Matters, "Public Welfare, Vancouver Style," 3.

⁹⁰ *Victoria Daily Colonist*, 17 October 1913, 10.

domestic placements. As Robin John Anderson explains, this reflected that “[d]omestic service was the only work available for women after the summer of 1913.”⁹¹ The Women’s Employment League faced a similar reality. Half of their successful job placements were in domestic work, since those types of positions were easiest to find.⁹²

Of course, with the wages that mothers earned supporting a family of dependants was not easy. Even before the recession women could expect to earn 40 to 50 percent less than (white) men, and with the economic crunch women workers reported that their wages were being cut another 25 to 50 percent.⁹³ But these wages could at least partially offset the amount that the city (or another private agency) would otherwise have to pay in direct relief to families. The weighing of these financial considerations frequently appeared in discussions about the crèche. Critics wondered whether the crèche was “serving its purpose...considering the investment it represented” – whether it was, in other words, a financially prudent relief strategy.⁹⁴ During the worst of the depression, at least, the crèche offered the chance to lessen the load on the City Relief Department.

But the expanded need for charity and unemployment relief was not just a financial hardship on the city – it was morally distasteful as well. Even more importantly, then, the crèche fulfilled a “fundamental goal” of relief provision: the promotion of the

⁹¹ Anderson, “Domestic Service,” 330.

⁹² *British Columbia Federationist*, 19 February 1915, 1. The remaining placements were for stenographers, dressmakers, office workers, clerks, waitresses, chambermaids, and a few teachers and nurses. Working women’s advocates in the VTLC sought to capitalize on anti-Asian sentiment to improve female job prospects: “There were still a great many [women] out of employment who could do much of the work now being done about hotels by Orientals; as chambermaids, cooks, workers in the kitchens and as housekeepers. A good many people talked about a “white British Columbia” and a good place to make a start was in domestic service. The duty of a community was towards its[sic] own subjects first.” *British Columbia Federationist*, 16 April 1915, 1.

⁹³ McDonald, “Working Class Vancouver,” 42; *British Columbia Federationist*, 25 September 1914, 1.

⁹⁴ *Vancouver Sun*, 31 October 1916, 10.

work ethic and the prevention of dependency.⁹⁵ Matron Lilian Nelson called this the “moral effect of the crèche system” which “fully justified its existence.”⁹⁶ As city welfare officials grappled with the nature of expanding public welfare provision in the turbulent mid-1910s, the need to stimulate work was pervasive in their discussions and actions. Relief measures were undertaken cautiously so as not to encourage dependency on welfare. In 1914, for example, the city established a work camp for 2000 unemployed men, which the Relief Officer called “a work test...to prevent the creation of a ‘chronic crowd of dependents.’”⁹⁷ Crèche mothers were subject to the same standards; they were essentially treated as the objects of a work-for-relief project distinct only in the recognition that care for their children determined their capacity to work.⁹⁸

Over and over, city welfare officials and concerned observers claimed the prevention of a “class of dependents” as the crèche’s most important function. Indeed, it was usually the crèche’s role in preserving women’s (and their families’) work ethic that allowed its opponents to reconcile themselves to its existence, and to the city’s increased responsibility for working mothers. Alderman McBeath insisted that if the city was going to invest in the crèche, the client mothers had to “establish their bona fides by going out to work by the day.”⁹⁹ Others lauded the crèche mothers who, “by their own hard work,” were “supporting two or three little children and doing it without a murmur,” and thus deserved some measure of public support.¹⁰⁰ Even the crèche’s most ardent supporters

⁹⁵ Christie, *Engendering the State*, 4.

⁹⁶ *Vancouver Province*, 26 March 1917, 8.

⁹⁷ Matters, “Public Welfare, Vancouver Style,” 5.

⁹⁸ I would like to thank Shirley Tillotson for her input regarding these ideas.

⁹⁹ *Vancouver Daily World*, 22 January 1917, 10.

¹⁰⁰ *Vancouver Daily World*, 2 June 1917, 15.

did not think mothers should receive something for nothing. Working mothers had to earn their access to public welfare by proving that they were humble, hard working, and did not desire to become dependent on the charity of others. It was these independent and self-reliant mothers – who would “indignantly refuse” direct charity because of its “pauperizing” and “stigmatizing” effects -- who made the crèche a worthwhile investment for the city.¹⁰¹ “There was no doubt,” Nelson declared, “that being enabled to go to honest work kept a proper independent spirit among the women.”¹⁰²

The crèche’s importance as a relief measure for working-class families was borne out by the numbers and characteristics of mothers and children who used it on a daily basis. Through the middle years of the decade, the crèche operated at or above capacity. Annual Reports of the City Health Department show steadily climbing numbers of children served. In 1913, the department reported that 7322 children were left at the crèche (although that number likely represented days of care rather than the total numbers of children). That number climbed to 9032 in 1915 and 9140 in 1916.¹⁰³

The vast majority of the crèche’s client mothers were from the working-class industrial neighbourhoods of the city. The crèche register books list clusters of addresses around Hastings and Main, and otherwise to the east of the downtown core (See Figure 1).¹⁰⁴ These were the areas of the city hardest-hit by male unemployment, and wives in these neighbourhoods often took on breadwinning responsibility. And, indeed, the women using the crèche were much more likely to be married than single. While the

¹⁰¹ *Vancouver Daily World*, 22 January 1917, 10.

¹⁰² *Vancouver Province*, 26 March 1917, 8.

¹⁰³ City of Vancouver, *Annual Report of the Medical Health Officer*, 1913-16. There were no crèche statistics in the 1914 report.

¹⁰⁴ Vancouver City Crèche, Register Book 1912-19, COVA, Add MSS 124, 511-G-3, file 1.

press was eager to play up the plight of bereaved and noble single mothers, records show that the typical crèche mother was married and that her husband was unemployed or unable to work due to illness, injury, or otherwise. This was especially true in the years of economic depression -- though single mothers averaged only about 20 percent of the crèche clientele through the mid-1910s, entries for married women were even more common after 1912.¹⁰⁵ Mrs. Cheadle's husband, for example, was an out-of-work painter and she left her son and infant daughter in the crèche while she was at her job. Mrs. Ross's husband was "unable to find work," Mrs. Charles's husband was "not working" for unspecified reasons. Several mothers reported their husband "idle," and others that their husbands were "looking for work," "out of work," or, as in the case of the Frost family, had left town in search of employment.¹⁰⁶

In most cases, then, crèche mothers were serving as their families' sole breadwinner. In a few rare instances both parents were employed, yet the family was considered sufficiently "needy" enough to warrant the use of the crèche. The McGrath family, for example, new immigrants from the United Kingdom, used the crèche so that both parents could work to save money for a new home. In the Bernetti family, the six children stayed at the crèche during the day so that Mrs. Bernetti could "help" her husband at the store they owned.¹⁰⁷ As the Bernetti's situation suggests, not all mothers relied on the crèche's employment bureau to help them find work. Among the entries were a woman who worked as a cashier in the Vancouver Hotel, another as a cleaner in

¹⁰⁵ Vancouver City Crèche, Register Book 1912-19, COVA, Add MSS 124, 511-G-3, file 1.

¹⁰⁶ Vancouver City Crèche, Register Book 1912-19, COVA, Add MSS 124, 511-G-3, file 1. These are from 1912. A more systematic analysis is not possible because the entries are quite inconsistent, and in some cases left almost entirely blank. By far the majority of cases must be classified as "unknown." As per the City of Vancouver Archive's Confidentiality Agreement, the names of these families have been changed.

¹⁰⁷ Vancouver City Crèche, Register Book 1912-19, COVA, Add MSS 124, 511-G-3, file 1.

the Empress Theatre, one who was a piano player in cafes, and others who were employed as store clerks, chambermaids, stenographers, waitresses, and of course, as domestic workers in jobs they acquired independently of the crèche employment bureau.¹⁰⁸ Many of these women were no doubt new immigrants without networks of family and friends on which to rely for child care. For them, the crèche was invaluable not only because it allowed them to work, but because it prevented them from resorting to other, less desirable child care options like placing their children in homes or orphanages. Diane Purvey has shown, for example, that the majority of children at the Alexandra Orphanage came from working-class families headed by a deserted parent, most often the mother. Fifty-three percent of those mothers declared an occupation, and had chosen or been forced to use the orphanage as a place for child care.¹⁰⁹

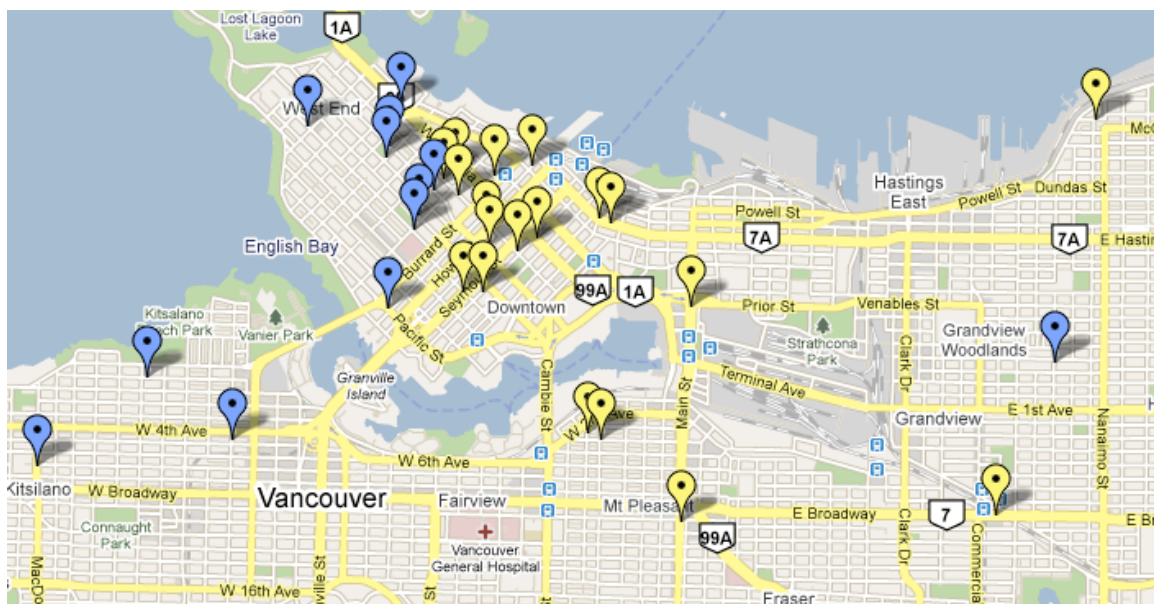
Whether mothers were single or married, they (and the three single fathers listed in the register) considered it essential that the use of the crèche did not render them “charity cases.” Just as city welfare officials wanted the crèche to promote independent families, so too did the mothers who used its services want to be perceived as hard-working and self-reliant. As Helena Gutteridge explained, these “self-respect[ing]” women “shrink from charity” -- they “did not want charity, but employment.”¹¹⁰ The payment of the daily ten cent fee was one important site at which mothers laid claim to

¹⁰⁸ Vancouver City Crèche, Register Book 1912-19, COVA, Add MSS 124, 511-G-3, file 1. The diminished importance of the domestic employment bureau for middle-class homes is reflected in the declining numbers of mothers “sent out” by the crèche between 1913 and 1916. City of Vancouver, *Annual Report of the Medical Health Officer*, 1913-16.

¹⁰⁹ Diane Barbara Purvey, “Alexandra Orphanage and Families in Crisis in Vancouver, 1892-1928,” in *Child and Family Welfare in British Columbia: A History*, ed. Diane Purvey and Christopher Walmsley (Calgary: Detselig Enterprises, 2007), 53-75.

¹¹⁰ *British Columbia Federationist*, 9 October 1914, 1; *British Columbia Federationist*, 25 September 1914, 1.

Figure 1: Geographic Distribution of Crèche Mothers, 1913



This map shows the geographical distribution of crèche mothers and their employers from a sample in February 1913. The yellow markers represent the homes of crèche client mothers; the blue the homes of middle- and upper-class families in which the crèche mothers worked. Note that most employers lived in the prosperous West End, as well as a small selection around Kitsilano and Shaughnessy Heights, the up-and-coming neighbourhoods for wealthy citizens in the 1910s. Source: Vancouver City Crèche, Register Book 1912-19, COVA, Add MSS 124, 511-G-3, file 1.

their independence from charity. Though sometimes immediate circumstances of “destitution” prevented that day’s payment, mothers often returned days later to repay debts.¹¹¹ During the worst of the economic slump in 1915 the city actually suspended the fee thinking that mothers deserved a break, but mothers’ insistence on paying prompted the city, only a month later, to authorize the matron to “collect fees from persons using the Crèche, who are desirous to pay for services rendered.”¹¹² Though the fee was admittedly “nominal,” it was still “sufficient to remove the stigma of charity from the

¹¹¹ Vancouver City Crèche, Register Book 1912-19, COVA, Add MSS 124, 511-G-3, file 1. There is an example of this occurring in April 1913.

¹¹² Vancouver City Council, Minutes of the Relief Committee, 12 July 1915, COVA, City Council and Office of the City Clerk fonds, series 33, volume 20, 662.

minds of the mothers.”¹¹³ The freedom from welfare dependency was a key part of mothers’ own conceptions of their social citizenship.

“A mother cannot support her children and look after them properly at the same time”: Maternalist Reform and the Decline of the Crèche

In 1916 the BC wartime economy kicked in, and employment prospects for both men and women improved.¹¹⁴ The re-established labour market brought new questions about women and work. In industrial occupations (including munitions work), campaigns for equal pay for women gained steam, though advocates were more concerned, as Gillian Creese argues, to protect male wages and ensure jobs for returning soldiers.¹¹⁵ Cordoned off in predominantly female sectors of the labour market, crèche mothers were largely immune (at least in theory) from these debates about women’s wages and working conditions. But the fate of the crèche was tied up in the larger discussions about women, work, and family that preoccupied city planners as the end of the war approached, and as the rebounding economy alleviated the urgency around relief provision.

For one, the cost effectiveness of the crèche was called into question. A report commissioned by city council suggested that it would actually be cheaper for the city to board children year-round, orphanage-style, than it was to provide daytime child care and employment services through the crèche.¹¹⁶ Though no one seriously proposed a city-run orphanage, one alderman suggested that rather than “keep up the crèche,” it would be

¹¹³ *Vancouver Sun*, 12 October 1912, 7.

¹¹⁴ Roy and Thompson, *Land of Promises*, 107-08.

¹¹⁵ Creese, *The Politics of Dependence*, 374-5. Women were first employed as munitions workers in 1917 for Vancouver Engineering Co. See *British Columbia Federationist*, 26 January 1917, 1.

¹¹⁶ *Vancouver Daily World*, 13 January 1917, 23.

“more economical for the city to maintain the mothers at home” through providing them with direct relief.¹¹⁷ Some councillors, including Alderman Woodside, wanted to see the city give up its responsibility to the crèche entirely. Woodside insisted that several of the crèche mothers were “under no obligation to go out [to work] at all,” and were simply (and selfishly) using up public resources.¹¹⁸

A compromise was reached: the crèche would move into the ‘Old Hospital Building’ on Pender and Cambie, and the almost-new building on Haro Street would become the city’s new Infant’s Hospital. The majority of council agreed that the crèche was doing “necessary” work, but by early 1917, as the economy recovered and as responsibility for rebuilding a postwar society loomed, the crèche’s utility was framed in concern for ensuring that children -- especially those of delinquent working-class families -- were trained to become productive and healthy citizens.¹¹⁹ But the crèche, in this context, became a last resort for the poorest families. The city’s priority became the establishment of the Infant’s Hospital, due in large part to the persistent lobbying of the medical health officer Dr. Frederick T. Underhill who insisted that the Haro Street crèche be repurposed to allow “a wider scope for more important work.”¹²⁰ In spring 1917, after a series of debates about how much money the city should invest in renovations for the new crèche quarters, its operations moved into the Old Hospital Building.¹²¹ This physical

¹¹⁷ *Vancouver Province*, 26 October 1916, 8.

¹¹⁸ *Vancouver Province*, 6 February 1917, 11; *Vancouver Daily World*, 6 February 1917, 8. Woodside’s information was based on what he heard from a delegation of seven unnamed women.

¹¹⁹ *Vancouver Province*, 6 February 1917, 11.

¹²⁰ *Vancouver Sun*, 31 October 1916, 10.

¹²¹ *Vancouver Daily World*, 25 January 1917, 9; *Vancouver Province*, 6 February 1917, 11; *Vancouver Daily World*, 6 February 1917, 8.

transfer coincided with an administrative shuffle that made the scaled-down crèche the responsibility of the City Relief Department.

The decline of the crèche's perceived importance was partly due to a growing distaste in child welfare circles for "institutional" care. These changing attitudes had a national context: J.J. Kelso, the founder of the Toronto Children's Aid Society whose views were influential across the country, argued that children in institutional care were in constant contact with other morally-suspect children and thus were much harder to "save."¹²² Charles South, the president of the Vancouver Children's Aid Society, echoed these sentiments, and began to advocate for a foster care system so that children could be rehabilitated in "real homes."¹²³ Victoria's Day Nursery was also caught up in the current of this trend, especially since it had gotten into the business, through its close relationship with the Children's Aid Society, of boarding children on a semi-permanent basis.¹²⁴

Intertwined with attitudes about institutional care was a rising tide of enthusiasm for maternalist social reform. This emphasis on care in "real homes" implied that the best thing for children was to be looked after by their mothers – and if necessary, those mothers should be compensated in order to provide full-time care. Vancouver city councillors began to suggest that this was a much preferable system to the crèche, not

¹²² Andrew Jones and Leonard Rutman, *In the Children's Aid: J.J. Kelso and Child Welfare in Ontario* (Toronto: UTP, 1981), 51.

¹²³ Adamoski, "Their Duties Towards the Children," 118-19.

¹²⁴ *Victoria Daily Colonist*, 4 March 1917, 8; *Victoria Daily Colonist*, 11 January 1918, 10; *Victoria Daily Colonist*, 18 January 1918, 7; *Victoria Daily Colonist*, 18 January 1918, 8; Victoria Children's Aid Society, Minutes, 8 July and 12 August 1914 meeting, "Records Book, 1912-1917," BCA, MS 0431, box 1. Soon after the Victoria Day Nursery's establishment, it began to board girls for whom there was not enough room at the Children's Aid Society Home. By 1917, that was essentially its main function, since "owing to the fact that there are few, if any...mothers who go out to work by the day" its day nursery functions had declined. At some point during late 1917, all of the children in the Victoria Day Nursery were placed in the Children's Aid Home, and by 1918 it appears as though there was no place in the city that provided day time child care for working mothers.

only because it was “cheaper,” but because it was “better...for mothers and children.”¹²⁵

Although supporters of the crèche pointed out that such an extensive provision of direct relief was “morally objectionable,” it was increasingly becoming even more objectionable to encourage mothers to give up their natural roles as mothers in the home.¹²⁶

Among the most outspoken critics of the crèche by 1917 were, somewhat ironically, middle-class women with a maternally-based reform agenda. For Helen Gregory MacGill, Mary Ellen Smith, and their peers, the crisis-level shortage of domestic servants was a thing of the past, and in their view the crèche’s continued existence only served to undermine the sanctity of home life. A delegation of women from the New Era League, one of Vancouver’s leading women’s groups, suggested to city council that:

[I]f the money that was spent in the maintenance of the crèche were given direct to the mothers under the administration of a board from the various women’s organizations, the crèche could be done away with and the mothers, through being able to look after their children personally, it would be better for them [sic].¹²⁷

As this delegation pointed out, mothers’ earnings were less than the city spent in providing child care, and thus it made more sense to “give that amount to the mothers in the way of a pension or a grant.”¹²⁸

This plan, of course, described mothers’ pensions almost exactly. By this time, a powerful female-led campaign for provincial mothers’ pensions taking shape across the

¹²⁵ *Vancouver Daily World*, 13 January 1917, 23.

¹²⁶ *Vancouver Daily World*, 25 January 1917, 9.

¹²⁷ *Vancouver Sun*, 30 January 1917, 12.

¹²⁸ *Vancouver Sun*, 30 January 1917, 12.

province, inspired by the international popularity of maternalist politics.¹²⁹ In social policy terms, mothers' pensions represented the epitome of maternalist ideology, and BC's social reformers were eager to see the province keep up with progressive welfare reform in the United States and Europe.¹³⁰ The overwhelming support for mothers' pensions, as Margaret Little shows, was rooted in the belief that mothers did not belong in the labour force but in the home, and that their maternal "service to the state" should be compensated. Since the pensions were cast as a mother's "right" they were not associated with the stigma of charity, and thus even those reluctant to endorse public handouts could support the idea of a mothers' pension.¹³¹

Not surprisingly, the crèche was a frequent target of mothers' pensions advocates. This was apparent in the public hearings on pensions legislation that crossed the province through 1919 and 1920. Several respondents invoked the crèche as an example of how not to provide public support to mothers and their children, who were stuffed together like a "lot of little chickens" for hours every day. "[I]t would be splendid thing," a Nelson WCTU member urged the hearing's commissioners after her visit to the crèche, "to have these mothers care for their children instead of having to send them to some

¹²⁹ Seth Koven and Sonya Michel, "Introduction: "Mother Worlds,"" in *Mothers of a New World: Maternalist Politics and the Origins of Welfare States*, ed. Seth Koven and Sonya Michel (New York: Routledge, 1993), 1-33. Maternalism will be discussed in more detail in chapter two.

¹³⁰ The Reverend Dr. Clay, for example, a social reformer in Victoria, cited mothers' pensions legislation in twenty-eight US States, France, Denmark, New Zealand, and Australia in his pitch on mothers' pensions to the Royal Commission on Labour in 1913. BCA, GR 0684, Box 3, File 4, BC Royal Commission on Labour, Victoria, 3 November 1913.

¹³¹ Little, "Claiming a Unique Place."

institution.”¹³² Another respondent declared simply that “a woman cannot support her children and look after them properly at the same time.”¹³³

Evidence also suggests that many of Vancouver’s working mothers were in favour of mothers’ pensions as an alternative to the crèche. The long hours and low pay of domestic work took its toll and many mothers, as Lilian Nelson observed, were eager for the chance to give up the double day and devote more time to their children. “It is no small matter,” she told the commissioners, “for these women to come out as they do every day at 8 o’clock in the morning with three or four children, [and] it is bad for the children having to get them up and take them out so early.”¹³⁴ A mothers’ pensions cheque was an attractive option, especially if their receipt of state assistance was considered an entitlement rather than charity. As Nancy Christie has shown of working-class mothers elsewhere in Canada at this time, often “women preferred government aid to outside work that compelled them to leave their children unattended,” and which allowed them to avoid “the double-burden of paid and unpaid work.”¹³⁵

As the widespread support for mothers’ pensions illustrated, it was ultimately considered more acceptable to extend social benefits to women based on their maternal role rather than on the basis of their waged labour, since this model more closely mirrored ideal middle-class gender relationships. The lead up to and passage of mothers’ pensions legislation in 1920 did not mean the end of the crèche, but it did mean that its

¹³² The mother’s pensions commission was known as the BC Commission on Health Insurance. “Report of the Hearing of the Health Insurance Commission, Nelson, BC,” 13 December 1919, British Columbia Archives (hereafter BCA), GR 0706.

¹³³ “Report of the Hearing of the Health Insurance Commission, Nelson, BC,” 13 December 1919, BCA, GR 0706.

¹³⁴ “Report of the Hearing of the Health Insurance Commission, Vancouver, BC,” 20 January 1920, BCA, GR 0706.

¹³⁵ Christie, *Engendering the State*, 145-7.

purpose and meaning shifted away from welfare for working mothers. Pensions were only available to widowed and deserted mothers, so working wives continued to use the crèche in high rates throughout the 1920s. Even by 1929, the average daily attendance remained at around 50 children per day.¹³⁶ But in 1919, the crèche stopped offering employment placement services for mothers, and throughout the next decade it was relegated to the margins of social welfare as a last resort for poor families and their otherwise neglected children.¹³⁷

Other elements of state intervention during this period of BC's history demonstrate the ideological importance of women's domestic dependency. Gillian Creese has shown that agitation for female minimum wage legislation (introduced by Mary Ellen Smith and passed in 1918) had less to do with women's rights to earn a fair wage, and much more to do with concern over their "health and morals." Minimum wage advocates wanted to ensure a high enough wage that women would not be tempted into prostitution, and to prevent cheaper women from providing unfair competition to men. Furthermore, the minimum wage level was set at the level of subsistence for one individual, not taking into account children or other dependants. It both reinforced their "natural" connection to domesticity and motherhood, and was based on the assumption that women were single, childless, and ultimately, temporary members of the labour force.¹³⁸ Labour activists like

¹³⁶ Relief Officer, "Crèche Report, January 2, 1929 to January 16, 1929," COVA, City Council and Office of the City Clerk fonds, series 20, 14-F-5, file 5.

¹³⁷ The city created an employment bureau for women in 1915, though it obviously did not include child care. By 1919, however, it was felt there was no longer a need for the crèche employment services. Matters, "Public Welfare Vancouver Style," 8. In 1932, the crèche's tenure as a city institution came to an end and its services were replaced by the private Vancouver Day Nursery Association, which provided home-based child care for the city's working mothers. Vancouver Day Nursery Association, *Annual Report, 1932-33*, UBCRBSC.

¹³⁸ Gillian Creese, "Sexual Equality and the Minimum Wage in British Columbia," *Journal of Canadian Studies* 26, no. 4 (Winter 1991-92), 125. Male minimum wage legislation was passed in 1926.

Helena Gutteridge, taken up with union organizing and wage disputes, based their work on the same assumptions.¹³⁹ Marie Campbell suggests that organized labour in Vancouver showed “no indication at all” of women workers’ need for child care services.¹⁴⁰ Like mothers’ pensions, then, protective labour legislation for women workers operated to discourage working motherhood. The diminished reputation of the crèche was not surprising given this context.

* * *

The first decade of the Vancouver City Crèche’s existence was marked by tumultuous economic conditions, unemployment and relief crises, and the development of a local and provincial welfare state. The decade was also marked by changing public opinion towards the crèche; established with the support of middle-class clubwomen, within ten years it was denounced as an inferior form of public welfare by many of those same women – and in between it enjoyed support from welfare officials as a useful relief institution. Whether concerned officials and citizens were expressing support of the crèche or opposition to its existence, however, their statements always reflected public attitudes towards the labour and moral character of the crèche’s working-class client mothers. While the history of child care institutions such as the crèche are often confined to the historical currents of child welfare, the Vancouver City Crèche’s evolution as a public institution is very clearly a story about the politics of mothers’ employment and about public responsibility to working mothers. The crèche enjoyed support when

¹³⁹ See Gutteridge, *The Struggle for Social Justice*, 104-35.

¹⁴⁰ Marie Campbell, “Sexism in British Columbia Trade Unions, 1900-1920,” in *In Her Own Right: Selected Essays on Women’s History in British Columbia*, ed. Cathy Kess and Barbara Latham (Victoria: Camosun College, 1980), 167-186.

working-class mothers were needed for domestic labour, or when the imperative to promote the work ethic and working-class family independence was foremost; its value as a public institution declined when planners and politicians did not want to be seen encouraging mothers' employment amidst the postwar preoccupation with women's domestic and maternal 'service to the state.'

Despite the far-reaching consensus about mothers' pensions, however, the issue of motherhood, work, and welfare was far from settled in British Columbia. Throughout the 1920s and the 1930s, as women across BC interacted with the provincial welfare state through the administration of mothers' pensions, new questions arose about working mothers' citizenship. Mothers' pensions seemed to offer social citizenship to mothers on an entirely different basis than the crèche; the nature of women's relationship with the state in the interwar years, however, suggests that the history of women, work, and welfare was one of continuity as well as change.

Chapter 3

Working Mothers and the State in the Interwar Years

During and after the First World War, British Columbia's women's organizations, labour groups, politicians, and welfare reformers were searching for ways to restore "normalcy" to society. After years of social upheaval due to wartime separations and dismal economic conditions -- as well as the 1918 influenza epidemic -- reformers drew attention to the plight of mothers working to keep their homes and families together. For many, the best way to support those mothers was through the establishment of a mothers' pensions program. The benefits of supporting mothers, pensions advocates argued, would extend to society at large. Besides wartime losses and family financial turmoil, BC's social and economic equilibrium had been upset by the dangerous working conditions (for men and women) and visible poverty created by rapid urbanization and industrialization, and through large-scale immigration that fuelled anxiety about "race suicide" of the white Anglo-Celtic population. Protecting (white) mothers, in other words, stemmed from "great fear that the family unit was being destroyed."¹ Providing widowed, deserted, and even unwed mothers with a pension would allow more BC families to more closely approximate a white middle-class family, the fundamental building block of a stable and prosperous society. As press reports from around BC

¹ Margaret Hillyard Little, "Claiming a Unique Place: The Introduction of Mothers' Pensions in B. C.," *BC Studies* 105-106 (Spring/Summer 1995), 167-169. The other study that focuses exclusively on BC mothers' pensions is Megan Davies, "'Services Rendered, Rearing Children for the State': Mothers' Pensions in British Columbia," in *Not Just Pin Money: Selected Essays on the History of Women's Work in British Columbia*, ed. B. Latham and R. Pazdro (Victoria: Camosun College Press, 1984), 249-63.

regularly declared, the child-rearing that mothers undertook in the home was “essential to the future of the nation.”²

The campaign for mothers’ pensions in BC during the late 1910s was part of a widespread maternalist impulse that extended across North America and throughout Europe and Australia. Maternalists “exalted women’s capacity to mother and applied to society as a whole the value they attached to that role,” including “caring, nurturance, and morality.”³ Their goal, as Seth Koven and Sonya Michel explain, was to transform motherhood from “*private* responsibility into *public* policy.”⁴ Furthermore, advocates urged the creation of policy that positioned mothers’ pensions as women’s right -- that mothers were entitled to state protection and support because of their “service to the state” in the form of care work. In Ontario, for example, James Struthers argues that mothers’ pensions represented “a new basis for thinking about welfare as entitlement rather than as charity,” and that entitlement was rooted in women’s reproductive work.⁵

Margaret Little suggests that the rights-based understanding of mothers’ pensions in BC was especially powerful. The influential lobby of women’s organizations helps explain the unique claims that BC mothers were able to make upon the state, Little

² *Victoria Daily Times*, 14 January 1919, 1; *Victoria Daily Times*, 15 January 1919, 18.

³ Seth Koven and Sonya Michel, “Introduction: ‘Mother Worlds,’” in *Mothers of a New World: Maternalist Politics and the Origins of Welfare States*, ed. Seth Koven and Sonya Michel (New York: Routledge, 1993), 4. *Mothers of a New World* contains articles that examine the dimensions of maternalism in the United States, Germany, France, Britain, and Australia. Major studies of mothers’ pensions in the United States include Joanne L. Goodwin, *Gender and the Politics of Welfare Reform: Mothers’ Pensions in Chicago* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1997); and Theda Skocpol, *Protecting Soldiers and Mothers: The Political Origins of Social Policy in the United States* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1992).

⁴ Koven and Michel, “Introduction,” 2. Emphasis in the original.

⁵ James Struthers, “‘In the Interests of the Children’: Mothers’ Allowances and the Origins of Income Security in Ontario, 1917-1930,” in *Social Fabric or Patchwork Quilt: The Development of Social Policy in Canada*, ed. Raymond B. Blake and Jeffrey A. Keshen (Peterborough, ON: Broadview Press, 2006), 81. See also Margaret Jane Hillyard Little, *No Car, No Radio, No Liquor Permit: The Moral Regulation of Single Mothers in Ontario, 1920-1997* (Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1998).

suggests, as does the desire to promote the strength of the province's White Anglo-Celtic population (non-white mothers were specifically excluded from pensions legislation).⁶ Little's analysis challenges Barbara Nelson's argument about the gendered two-channel welfare state. For Nelson, rights-based welfare was reserved for rationally-organized male breadwinner compensation, while mothers' pensions were slotted into charity-styled notions of privilege.⁷ In BC, Little argues, mothers' pensions were more of a "hybrid" of the two welfare tiers. Women were included in the boundaries of social citizenship based on their caregiving and mothering work. To use a phrase from Nancy Fraser and Linda Gordon, mothers were considered to have a "right to dependency," with dependency characterized within the prevailing gender order as "good."⁸

This maternally-focused orientation of social rights had important implications for child care. Mothers' pensions were explicitly touted as the "solution" to working motherhood, and therefore were considered to eliminate the need for the public provision of child care. The decline of the Vancouver City Crèche was tied up in these maternalist politics. Day nurseries were considered a poor second choice to a much more desirable alternative: mothers remaining home to care for their children. Municipal welfare officials distanced themselves from child care provision in the 1920s and 1930s. The Vancouver crèche remained in operation as a marginal relief institution until 1932, at which point the city handed over responsibility for child care for working mothers to the

⁶ Little, "Claiming a Unique Place," 99.

⁷ Barbara Nelson, "The Origins of the Two-Channel Welfare State: Workmen's Compensation and Mothers' Aid," in *Women, the State, and Welfare*, ed. Linda Gordon (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1990), 123-51.

⁸ Nancy Fraser and Linda Gordon, "A Genealogy of Dependency: Tracing a Keyword of the U.S. Welfare State," *Signs* 19, 2 (Winter 1994), 319-320.

privately-funded Vancouver Day Nursery Association, which provided home-based care.⁹

At the provincial level, too, any discussion of child care was virtually absent, though the interwar period marked the expansion of social programs into many other areas of society.¹⁰

The case of a struggle for a day nursery in Victoria is telling. In late 1921, a group of social reformers in the city -- including representatives from the Children's Aid Society (CAS), the YMCA, the Victorian Order of Nurses, the Victoria Trades and Labour Council, and even sympathetic city councillors -- launched a campaign for the re-establishment of a day nursery for the city's working mothers, who had been without such a service since 1916.¹¹ Editorials and letters to the editor hint at the extent of popular support for a day nursery. Mothers wrote in to tell of the "crying need" for a place where "working women could leave their babies while they are at work."¹² Another declared that a day nursery would be "a boon and a blessing to us mothers who have the whole burden of providing for a young family."¹³ Ultimately, however, the campaign went nowhere. The day nursery's development was impeded in part by the lack of a common vision among its supporters; for some, the day nursery should serve middle-class mothers' need for "relaxation" or baby-sitting services while they "d[id] their shopping or

⁹ Usage rates of the crèche remained high throughout the 1920s, however. By the end of the decade, around 40 to 50 children per day were cared for at the crèche. See Relief Officer, Crèche Reports, 1918-1929, COVA, City Council and Office of the City Clerk fonds, series 20.

¹⁰ Allan Irving, "The Development of a Provincial Welfare State: British Columbia 1900-1939," in *The "Benevolent" State: The Growth of Welfare in Canada*, ed. Allan Moscovitch and Jim Albert (Toronto: Garamond Press, 1987), 155-174.

¹¹ *Victoria Daily Colonist*, 9 December 1921, 4; *Victoria Daily Times*, 5 January 1922, 4; *Victoria Daily Colonist*, 10 January 1922, 6; *Victoria Daily Colonist*, 10 January 1922, 4. The Victoria Day Nursery was established in 1913, and was absorbed into the Children's Aid Society in 1916, where it effectively became an orphanage rather than a day nursery.

¹² *Victoria Daily Colonist*, 9 December 1921, 4.

¹³ *Victoria Daily Times*, 5 January 1922, 4. This was a letter from "Mother of Five."

t[ook] their recreations.”¹⁴ Most importantly, influential welfare officials insisted that social programs should encourage mothers to stay at home with their children. The “aim sought in the establishment of a Day Nursery,” according to the CAS, “should be attained through the operation, and if need be the extension of the principle of the Mother’s Pensions [sic].”¹⁵

This chapter examines the introduction and administration of mothers’ pensions legislation in BC. Though pensions were presented as the antithesis to the crèche, in the interwar years they represented, just as the crèche had in the 1910s, a key battleground for debates about welfare, motherhood, and work. There is evidence, as Little suggests, that BC mothers’ pensions were framed in particularly generous and inclusive terms.¹⁶ For one thing, while pensions in other jurisdictions were limited to widows, in BC even deserted, unwed, and divorced mothers could receive a pension.¹⁷ Furthermore, much to the frustration of senior provincial welfare officials -- and of Charlotte Whitton, who was called upon to investigate BC pensions in 1931 -- mothers and their advocates understood their domestic and mothering work as the basis for their access to social citizenship.

Yet the relationship between mothers’ pensions and wage-earning – and the expectation that the former would put an end to the latter – was not so straightforward. There was significant tension between the claims of mother-citizenship and worker-citizenship in the 1920s and 1930s. Even amidst the attention to maternal social rights, the administration of mothers’ pensions reveals a continued emphasis on paid work as the

¹⁴ *Victoria Daily Colonist*, 19 January 1922, 4. Lack of financial support from the city was also an issue.

¹⁵ Victoria Children’s Aid Society, Minutes, 11 January 1922, British Columbia Archives [hereafter BCA], MS 0431, box 1.

¹⁶ Little, “Claiming a Unique Place,” 91-93, 97-98.

¹⁷ Little, “Claiming a Unique Place,” 93.

gatekeeper of social benefits. Officials were reluctant, for example, to grant pensions to mothers who they viewed as having no reason not to participate in “productive” work, especially if a mother had “only” one child.¹⁸ Furthermore, pension amounts were low enough that it acted only as a supplement to earned income -- a situation with which administrators were satisfied, since it ensured that the work ethic and desire for self-sufficiency was maintained among pensioned mothers and their families. This link between public benefit and work was powerfully reaffirmed when Charlotte Whitton submitted her report on pensions to the Tolmie government in 1931.

Like the crèche mothers, pensioned mothers were encouraged and even obligated to enter the labour market, yet they were not, as Joanne Goodwin argues, given “the resources to do so.”¹⁹ When it came to child care, working mothers were expected to rely on their own resources, either by finding a job (such as domestic service) that would allow them to bring their child to work, or by depending on family, friends, and neighbours. This inattention to public responsibility for child care was just one element of women’s status as second-class workers in the interwar years. Throughout the 1920s and 1930s women continued to be confined to female occupation ghettos with low wages and limited opportunities.²⁰ As the province slid further into the Great Depression, working women, especially those who were married, were faced with increasing hostility amidst

¹⁸ BC mothers’ pensions were not unique in this respect; this was true of pensions in virtually every other jurisdictions as well. See Nancy Christie, *Engendering the State: Family, Work, and Welfare in Canada* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2000), chpt. 4; Little, *No Car, No Radio, No Liquor Permit*; Veronica Strong-Boag, “‘Wages for Housework’: Mothers’ Allowances and the Beginnings of Social Security in Canada,” *Journal of Canadian Studies* 14, 1 (Spring 1979): 24-34.

¹⁹ Goodwin, *Gender and the Politics of Welfare Reform*, 7.

²⁰ Eric W. Sager, “Women in the Industrial Labour Force: Evidence for British Columbia, 1921-53,” *BC Studies* 149 (Spring 2006): 39-62; Veronica Strong-Boag, “The Girl of the New Day: Canadian Working Women in the 1920s,” *Labour/Le Travail* 4 (1979): 131-164. Katrina Srigley reminds us that for many wage-earning women, gender intersected with race to compound their conditions of inequality. Katrina Srigley, “‘In Case You Hadn’t Noticed!’: Race, Ethnicity, and Women’s Wage-Earning in a Depression-Era City,” *Labour/Le Travail* 55 (Spring 2005): 69-105.

accusations that they were taking jobs that rightfully belonged to male breadwinners. Though the resentment was not based in reality, the corollary to this perceived undermining of male breadwinners was a renewed emphasis in social welfare policy-making towards the protection of masculine work. The economic crisis put “deep strain,” as Lara Campbell observes, on “the links between breadwinning, labour, respectability, and manliness,” and one important consequence of this was that “man as breadwinner was ultimately encoded into the social policies” of the welfare state, including federal Unemployment Insurance in 1940.²¹ In this context, not only was maternally-based social entitlement sidelined to the point of invisibility, so too were mothers’ claims on the state as workers.

The Mothers’ Pensions Lobby and Hearings

Many of the same women who were involved with the establishment of the crèche in 1909 were also involved in the mothers’ pensions lobby. Helen Gregory MacGill was one of the leaders in the pensions campaign, and Mary Ellen Smith, who by 1917 was sitting as the province’s first female MLA, acted as the government point person for the coalition of lobby groups, helping them to navigate access to senior politicians and

²¹ Lara Campbell, *Respectable Citizens: Gender, Family, and Unemployment in Ontario’s Great Depression* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2009), 58; Ruth Roach Pierson, “Gender and the Unemployment Insurance Debates in Canada, 1934-1940,” *Labour/Le Travail* 25 (Spring 1990): 77-103. Gender, work, family, and welfare in the Depression are also explored in the following studies: Margaret Hobbs, “Gendering Work and Welfare: Women’s Relationship to Wage-Work and Social Policy in Canada during the Great Depression,” (Ph.D. diss., University of Toronto, 1994); Joan Sangster, *Earning Respect: The Lives of Working Women in Small-Town Ontario, 1920-1960* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1995); James Struthers, *The Limits of Affluence: Welfare in Ontario, 1920-1970* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1994); Nancy Christie, *Engendering the State*; Denyse Baillargeon, *Making Do: Women, Family and Home in Montreal During the Great Depression* (Waterloo: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 1999); Katrina Srigley, *Breadwinning Daughters: Young Working Women in a Depression-Era City, 1929-1939* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2010).

ensuring that pensions remained on the government's agenda.²² Along with MacGill and Smith, an impressive collection of middle-class maternalists and suffragists imbued the pensions lobby with its strength. Susie Lane Clark, the president of the New Era League, one of the province's most prominent women's rights associations, coordinated and led delegations to government on behalf of pensions supporters. These Vancouver women were joined by representatives from Victoria's reform community, including Cecilia Spofford and Maria Grant. Spofford was on the executive of both the Children's Aid Society and the Women's Christian Temperance Union (WCTU); Grant was the WCTU president.²³

Maternal feminists were not the only ones pushing for mothers' pensions legislation in BC. Delegations to government also included religious, medical, and child welfare organizations, as well as labour representatives. In fact, the Vancouver Trades and Labour Council (VTLC) was one of the earliest supporters of mothers' pensions. Helena Gutteridge, the only female member of the VTLC, called for pensions legislation amidst the unemployment crisis of 1914, pointing to the desperate situation of many single mothers and those with unemployed husbands.²⁴ The VTLC's support for pensions was also, however, tied up in their concern for the protection of male jobs. Alongside their mothers' pensions resolutions were efforts to prevent women from working in -- and

²² Elizabeth Norcross, "Mary Ellen Smith: The Right Woman at the Right Place at the Right Time," in *Not Just Pin Money: Selected Essays on the History of Women's Work in British Columbia*, ed. B. Latham and R. Pazdro (Victoria: Camosun College Press, 1984), 357-64.

²³ Lyn Gough, *As Wise as Serpents: 1883-1939, Five Women and An Organization that Changed British Columbia* (Victoria, BC: Swan Lake Publishing, 1988).

²⁴ *British Columbia Federationist*, 30 October 1914, 4. The VTLC passed an official resolution calling for mothers' pensions in February 1915. VTLC, "Minutes of Regular Meetings, 1912-16," 8 February 1915, University of British Columbia Rare Books and Special Collections [hereafter UBCRBSC], VTLC fonds, Box 16.4.

undercutting the wages of – jobs that rightfully belonged to family men.²⁵ Like women's organizations, labour groups advocated a pension "adequate to support the mother and child without her having to go out to work."²⁶

A delegation of over fifty women's, labour, religious, medical, and welfare organizations, led by Susie Lane Clark, made presentations before the government in Victoria on two separate occasions in 1918 and 1919. Liberal Premier John Oliver called this group the "the most businesslike and representative delegation that had ever appeared before the Government."²⁷ He was particularly impressed by the second of the delegations, in January 1919, which saw 35 speeches by 35 women in just one hour. Oliver agree with Clark and her colleagues that the pensions were a "necessity," although he may have been thinking more in terms of his political fortunes than the needs of widowed mothers. The female voting bloc represented by the pensions lobby would make sure that mothers' pensions featured prominently in the 1920 election, and it was in Oliver's best interests to capture their support.²⁸ Citing the huge financial commitment that pensions entailed, however, he requested further study of the matter by the Royal Commission on Health Insurance and Maternity Benefits. He appointed E.S. Winn, the Chairman of the Workmen's Compensation Board and thus the chief administrator of the largest welfare program in the province, to head the commission. Victoria's Cecilia

²⁵ See, for example, their resolution of August 1913: "That we ask all trade unionists to unite with us in an effort to prevent the employment of women in the foundries." They couched this resolution in concern for women's and "the race's" physical and moral health. VTLC, "Minutes of Regular Meetings, 1912-16," 21 August 1913, UBCRBSC, VTLC fonds, Box 16.4.

²⁶ VTLC, "Minutes of Regular Meetings, 1912-16," 15 October 1914, UBCRBSC, VTLC fonds, Box 16.4.

²⁷ British Columbia, "First Annual Reports of the Superintendent of Neglected Children and Mothers' Pensions For the Year Ending November 30th, 1920," in *Sessional Papers of the Province of British Columbia*, 1921. This report also contains a complete listing of the organizations and individuals that were part of the delegations.

²⁸ *Victoria Daily Colonist*, 22 March 1918, 11.

Spofford was also made a commissioner, as were Dr. T.C. Green from New Westminster and D. McCallum, also from Victoria.

Though the commission was tasked with investigating the broader possibility of province-wide health insurance, it soon became clear that mothers' pensions were foremost on everyone's minds.²⁹ Through late 1919 and early 1920, the commission travelled to 18 municipalities throughout the province and heard arguments from local women's organizations, medical and social work professionals, welfare experts, charities, clergymen, and labour representatives. A clear consensus emerged from all of these hearings: for the proper training of future citizens, mothers without a breadwinner must be compensated by the state in order to preserve home life. A pension would allow a mother to "remain in her home and maintain it for the welfare of her children."³⁰

At the very core of this wholesale support for mothers' pensions was a belief that mothers -- especially white mothers -- did not belong in the waged labour force. Mothers' work outside the home, commissioners heard again and again, was damaging to both children and mothers. Many respondents, like Reverend Robert Herbison of Princeton, warned that the children of working mothers "run the streets for the greater part of the day," contributing to juvenile delinquency.³¹ The Revelstoke Women's Canadian Club issued similar warnings, advocating the pension as a way to let mothers "take care of their children in the home instead of going and scrubbing and letting the children run the

²⁹ The commission actually released an earlier, separate report on mothers' pensions, leaving aside the question of state health insurance for a later date.

³⁰ Royal Commission on Health Insurance (1919-1921), "Report on Mothers' Pensions," 22 March 1920, 2, BCA GR 0706, Box 1, file 1. [Hereafter Royal Commission, "Report on Mothers' Pensions."]

³¹ "BC Commission on Health Insurance (1919-1921), Proceedings, pp. 1-492" [hereafter "Proceedings (1919-1921)"], Reverend Robert Herbison, Princeton hearings, 8 December 1919, 2, BCA, GR 0706, Box 1, File 3.

streets.”³² The alternative to giving children free rein – putting them into institutions – was equally unappealing. Lilian Nelson, the Vancouver City Crèche matron, spoke in favour of mothers’ pensions, as did Maria Grant, who ran the Victoria WCTU home for orphaned and neglected children. “I think it is high time,” Grant argued, “when a mother should be able to live with her children and not have to leave her home or take them to some place and leave them.”³³ Paying a mother a monthly sum, Provincial Secretary J.D. MacLean explained, would enable her to “keep her family at home under her watchful care,” which would prevent juvenile delinquency, institutional placements, and mothers resorting to “doubtful modes of living.” These outcomes would “insure a better and higher type of citizenship” and would serve the interests of children, mothers, and the state.³⁴

Other respondents focused not just on the neglected children of working mothers, but on the burdens borne by the mothers themselves. In this respect, concern came mostly from the (limited) evidence presented by working-class representatives, who knew first-hand the challenges of wage-earning and mothering. In Nanaimo, the commission heard from coal miner Joseph Dickson, who related the story of a widowed mother with six children who made her living “out scrubbing” for \$1.50 per day:

“She had to turn in after seven or eight o’clock and do her own housework. That woman cannot go out and work and do her own

³² “Proceedings (1919-1921),” Mrs. S.G. Robbins, Women's Canadian Club, Revelstoke hearings, 6 January 1920, 267, BCA, GR 0706, Box 1, File 3.

³³ “Proceedings (1919-1921),” Mrs. Lilian Nelson, Vancouver hearings, 20 January 1920, 554-555, BCA, GR 0706, Box 1, file 4; “Proceedings 1 (1919-1921),” Mrs. William Grant (Maria), Victoria hearings, 13 January 1920, 409-410, BCA, GR 0706, Box 1, file 3. Many of the children in the WCTU home were the children of parents who did not have access to child care.

³⁴ Provincial Secretary Correspondence, “Speech by the Honourable J.D. MacLean on the second reading of the Bill providing for Pensions for Mothers,” BCA, GR 0344, Box 1, file 2.

housework and keep her children clean and in proper health, she cannot do it and I think there should be something done for people like her.”³⁵

Arguments about the rights-based nature of the pensions often accompanied responses like Dickson’s, as Little has observed.³⁶ Respondants’ insistence that compensation for motherhood went beyond pity and charity pervaded the proceedings. This sentiment was echoed in the commissioners’ report, which placed mothers’ pensions in the same category as soldiers’ pensions.³⁷ None other than Charlotte Whitton affirmed the principle in 1920: “It is State recognition, not charity,” said Whitton of the pensions.³⁸ This rights rhetoric was rooted in dominant gender relationships; the pensions were still expected to reinforce cultural assumptions that the ‘natural’ place for women was in the home, raising children.³⁹

Some respondents brought the conversation around to mothers’ “rights” in a more progressive way, at least for the time. Several labour representatives, including female union organizers, warned that pensions had the potential to create unnecessary “handicaps” for women, and to “saddle” them with the judgmental regulations of a

³⁵ “Proceedings (1919-1921),” Joseph Dickson, Nanaimo hearings, 12 January 1920, 354, BCA, GR 0706, Box 1, File 3.

³⁶ Little, “Claiming a Unique Place,” 97-98.

³⁷ Royal Commission, “Report on Mothers’ Pensions,” 3.

³⁸ “Another View of Mothers’ Pensions,” *Victoria Daily Times*, 1 May 1920, 23, reprinted from *The Sailor*, by Charlotte E. Whitton.

³⁹ Margaret Little suggests that BC’s mothers’ pension was a “hybrid” of Nelson’s two gendered tiers of welfare, but she is not suggesting that the rights discourse was gender blind. Nancy Fraser and Linda Gordon’s “genealogy of dependency” is instructive here. The right that women had to pensions, as Fraser and Gordon help to illuminate, was rooted in ideologies about women’s dependency. In this period, they argue, a notion of “good” i.e. household/domestic dependency existed. Mothers’ right to a pension, then, was really about the “right to dependency.” Nancy Fraser and Linda Gordon, “A Genealogy of Dependency: Tracing a Keyword of the U.S. Welfare State,” *Signs* 19, 2 (Winter 1994), 319-320.

paternalistic state.⁴⁰ The most appropriate way to recognize women's rights as citizens, they urged, was to facilitate choice and support in the balance between motherhood and work. Jack Kavanagh, the president of the VTLC whose roots were in the Socialist Party of Canada, declared that some mothers simply "prefer taking part in industry," and "such women might desire that the child be taken care of by the state in order to allow her to take her place in industry."⁴¹ The commissioners were obviously incredulous at these statements, and for the most part dismissed them as the views of radical labour advocates. Although they reveal intriguing hints of a discourse that would emerge more fully later in the century, in 1920 statements such as Kavanagh's remained at the margins of social welfare debates.

"Satan finds some mischief still for idle hands to do": Legislation Enacted

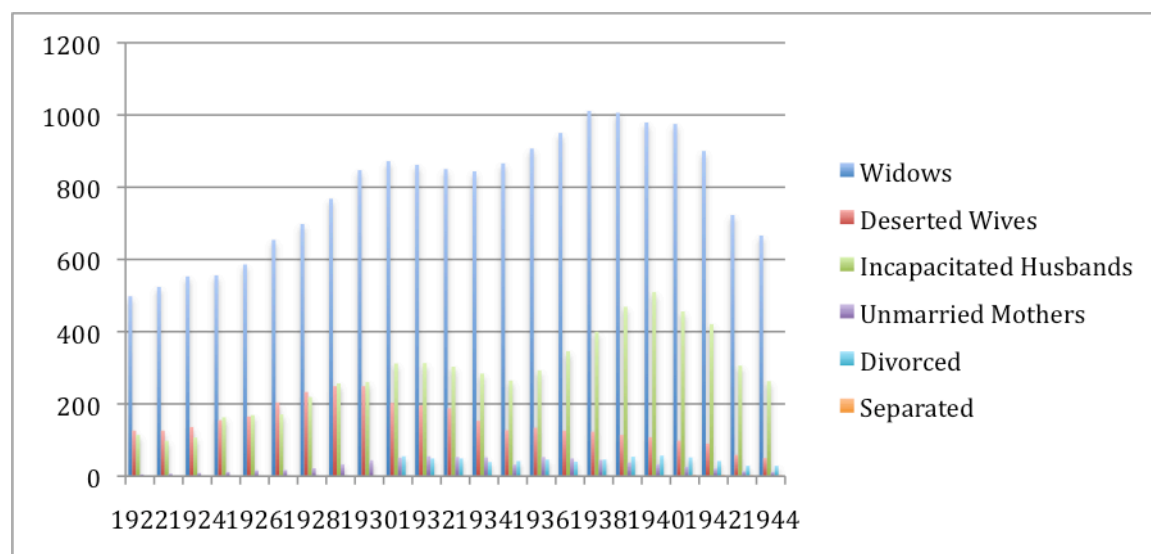
Beginning 1 July 1920, BC women could apply for a mothers' pension. Mothers with one child were eligible for \$42.50 per month, and \$7.50 per month was available for each additional child. Not all mothers were equally eligible, however: they had to be British subjects, residents of BC for at least 18 months, and have children under the age of 16. Though it was racially-exclusive, the legislation was also in many respects more

⁴⁰ Mrs. Edith Booth, the Prince Rupert representative of the Ladies Auxiliary of the OBU, argued that "if the state interferes as to the way the mother should spend the money the mother might as well earn the money. In England when they allow mothers' pensions there is always some person prying around to see that they do this or get something else – it is too much like charity – a woman is doing her best to bring up her family." "Proceedings (1919-1921)," Edith Booth, Prince Rupert hearings, 31 December 1919. See also the testimony of W. Robson, Gladstone Local Union of United Mine Workers, "Proceedings (1919-1921)," Fernie hearings, 10 December 1919, BCA, GR 0706, Box 1, File 3.

⁴¹ "Proceedings (1919-1921)," Jack Kavanagh, Vancouver hearings, 20 January 1920, BCA, GR 0706, Box 1, File 4. For a discussion of Kavanagh and other "socialist radicals" in the VTLC after 1917, see Howard, *The Struggle for Social Justice*, 127. Booth, Kavanagh, and Robson were expressing a version of what Sonya Michel has called the "limits of maternalism." Sonya Michel, "The Limits of Maternalism: Policies Toward American Wage-Earning Mothers During the Progressive Era," in *Mothers of New World: Maternalist Politics and the Origins of Welfare States*, ed. Seth Koven and Sonya Michel (New York and London: Routledge, 1993), 277-320.

inclusive than elsewhere in the country. BC was the only province that granted pensions to mothers with only one child, to deserted wives, to wives whose husbands were imprisoned or incapacitated, and even, through the discretionary clause, to those who were unmarried and divorced.⁴² Even then, for some highly-placed officials the legislation did not go far enough in its inclusivity. Mary Ellen Smith regretted that many unwed mothers would have to rely on the generous interpretation of the discretionary clause to be eligible for a pension. “May God forgive us,” she lamented, for “brand[ing] a mother who has not gone through a marriage ceremony [as] different [than] ourselves.”⁴³ Nevertheless, widowed mothers remained the state’s priority, as evidenced by their proportion on the pension rolls (See Table 1).

Table 1: Number of Mothers' Pensions Recipients, by category, 1922-44



Source: British Columbia, *Mothers' Pensions Board Annual Reports*, 1922-1944. Note that the very low numbers of women in the categories of “Husbands in Mental Institutions” and “Husbands in Prison” have been excluded from this chart.

⁴² “An Act to Provide Pensions for Mothers,” *Statutes for British Columbia 1920*, chpt. 61.

⁴³ *Victoria Daily Colonist*, 10 April 1920, 1, 3.

Despite the commissioners' recommendations – Winn, especially, wanted the pensions to be lodged in the Department of Education – administration of the Mothers' Pensions Act was assigned to the assistant superintendent of neglected children, George Pyke. On one important point the Act did conform to the commissioners' desires: the appointment of local welfare investigators to undertake home visits "to see that proper home life is being maintained, the health of the children safeguarded and that those of school age are making satisfactory progress."⁴⁴ Thirteen Local Advisory Boards were appointed in 1920 throughout the province, and four more in 1921. Appointment to one of these boards, though not paid, was nonetheless a highly-coveted position. Most of the boards were filled with well-placed female reformers. The Vancouver board, for example, consisted of Susie Lane Clark, Mrs. McNair (affiliated with the CAS, King's Daughters, Local Council of Women, Women's Canadian Club, and the Presbyterian Rescue Home for Girls), and Mrs. Sheasgreen (who had a long history of work with the Juvenile Court, Catholic Orphanage, and St. Paul's Hospital). Cecilia Spofford was appointed to the Victoria board.⁴⁵ While the advisory boards did not have the authority to officially approve or deny a pension, "to a very large extent" their reports "were taken as the recommendation upon which the applicant will be brought under the operation of the law."⁴⁶

Over 1000 pensions applications arrived in George Pyke's office in the fall of 1920, more than double the government's expectations.⁴⁷ The overwhelming response put

⁴⁴ Royal Commission, "Report on Mothers' Pensions," 12-13.

⁴⁵ *Victoria Daily Times*, 21 August 1921, 6; *Victoria Daily Times*, 30 September 1920, 15. Spofford was joined by Mrs. Robert Dinsdale and Mrs. Stuart Henderson.

⁴⁶ *Victoria Daily Times*, 13 August 1921, 1.

⁴⁷ *Victoria Daily Colonist*, 16 September 1920, 5.

a larger-than-expected strain on provincial finances. This did not bode well for the long-term sustainability of mothers' pensions, let alone for the short-term administrative hurdles, and officials decided that reforms to the legislation were needed sooner rather than later. As a result, the first set of amendments to the Mothers' Pensions Act came less than a year after the legislation was first introduced, in March 1921. Eligibility was restricted to mothers whose husbands' incapacitation occurred only while residing in BC, whose disability was medically certified, and who did not own assets in excess of \$2000 (later raised to \$2500).⁴⁸ The female members of the Local Advisory Boards were convenient scapegoats for the government's belt-tightening measures. Attorney General Farris blamed them for extending "too much generosity and consideration on the grounds of compassion," and for illegally granting pensions to mothers who were technically ineligible.⁴⁹ The advisory board members were also attacked by mothers and their advocates who objected to their "spying" and "catechizing."⁵⁰ Labor MLA Thomas Uphill, who would become a passionate spokesman for pensioned mothers throughout the 1920s, told the house of his many constituents who "declared that they would rather scrub for a crust of bread than go through the ordeal of being investigated by the committee."⁵¹ Facing criticism from all angles, the Local Advisory Boards were abolished.

⁴⁸ British Columbia, "An Act to Amend the Mothers' Pensions Act, 1921," *Statutes of British Columbia* (Victoria: King's Printer, 1921), c. 43.

⁴⁹ *Victoria Daily Times*, 31 March 1921, 6. Farris – as well as some of the Local Advisory Board members, despite his redirected blame – also advocated a decrease in the base pension amount from \$42.50 to \$35. Cecilia Spofford assured mothers that since the cost of living was falling, "this will permit a reduction in pensions without discomfort." An astute reader pointed out that elsewhere in the paper, an increase in MP's salaries was justified by the *increasing* cost of living. See *Victoria Daily Colonist*, 23 October 1921, 4. Vigorous protestations, mostly from women's groups, ensured that the amounts stayed the same.

⁵⁰ Mrs. Alicia Smith, Letter to Editor, *Victoria Daily Colonist*, 1 November 1921, 10; Mrs. May Wize, Letter to the Editor, *Victoria Daily Colonist*, 4 November 1921, 4; Mrs. Montague Williams, Letter to the Editor, *Victoria Daily Colonist*, 6 November 1921, 27.

⁵¹ *Victoria Daily Times*, 31 March 1921, 6.

The revised 1921 Act contained one final amendment, this one arguably the most important: responsibility for the Act's administration was transferred to E.S. Winn, chairman of the Workmen's Compensation Board (WCB). Winn's "reputation for fairness" was expected to provide a renewed "vision" for mothers' pensions that included a rational and streamlined administration.⁵² In truth, the function of the new Mothers' Pensions Board with Winn as chair did not differ much from pre-1921 procedures. Winn depended on "visiting committees" to make recommendations, especially in far-flung areas of the province. Many women from the advisory boards were retained in this capacity, but Winn and his colleagues also relied on local policemen, clergymen, and in some cases even prominent businessmen to report on mothers' eligibility and character.⁵³

The real significance of mothers' pensions new alignment with the WCB, however, was of a more symbolic nature. Provincial officials took the opportunity to remind everyone that, in their view, mothers' pensions were essentially workmen's compensation by another name and with another clientele; mothers were simply "indigent" for reasons other than industrial accidents. Winn described a mothers' pension

⁵² *Victoria Daily Times*, 11 November 1922, 28.

⁵³ British Columbia, *Annual Report made under The Mothers' Pensions Act for the year ending September 30, 1922*. The permanent appointment of a woman to the Mothers' Pensions Board became a controversial issue in 1924/25. Both the New Era League (NEL) and the Civilian Pensioned Mothers Association (CPMA; an organization to provide charitable assistance to struggling pensioned mothers) were concerned to get one of their own appointed to the Mothers' Pensions Board. The NEL pushed particularly hard on this issue, and wanted the Mothers' Pensions Board completely separated from the WCB, and constituting at least two women (Susie Lane Clark and another NEL member). The CPMA simply wanted their president, Barbara Chippendale, appointed to the already-existing Mothers' Pensions Board. Both groups were disappointed by the government's decision in December 1924 to appoint Miss Margaret Sutherland, president of the Women's Liberal Association, to the Board. Chippendale felt the appointment was a "great blow" to her personally, for she had assumed she was the favoured appointee of the government (as opposed to the women of a "certain league," undoubtedly the NEL). Susie Lane Clark was also dismayed at Sutherland's appointment. Clark conceded she was "no doubt a very estimable and capable person," but felt she was "not fitted for the position, because as a single women [sic], she has not the intuitional knowledge which belongs to a women [sic] who is a wife or mother, and must be embarrassed in the nature of the discussion which of necessity must come in the business of the Board." Correspondence between Winn, Morton, and Jessie Fulton of the CPMA, 1922, BCA, GR 0441, Box 227, File 8; Correspondence between Jessie Fulton and Morton, 1923, BCA, GR 0441, Box 235, File 9; Correspondence between Barbara Chippendale/Jessie Fulton, Winn, and Premier Oliver, 1924, BCA, GR 0441, Box 242, File 8.

recipient as a “non-industrial widow” who “should not be treated by the Government less generously than the industrial widow was treated by the employers of the Province.” Like WCB payments, mothers’ pensions “were intended as a substitute in part for the pay-cheque” of a husband.⁵⁴ Granting pensions to mothers was a matter of “equity and fairness,” according to Provincial Secretary MacLean, one that went “beyond the pale of charity.”⁵⁵ These statements are evidence of an understanding that pensions entitlement was on comparable footing to the claims based on male worker-citizenship.

Yet the question of mothers’ claims as citizens was not as straightforward as MacLean and Winn’s noble declarations would suggest. In the ten years following the passage of the mothers’ pensions act, the relative value of paid work and motherwork in relation to the state was an issue characterized by tension: welfare officials made contradictory statements and actions, and there were significant gaps between expectations and reality when it came to pensions administration. Many viewed the pensions as “a statutory right to which recipients were unquestionably entitled” if they fell within the scope of the legislation, as Margaret Little suggests.⁵⁶ This view was common among mothers’ pensions applicants and their supporters, many of who felt as though they were unjustifiably denied a pension. On the other hand, several senior welfare officials worked throughout the decade to limit the claims based on mother-work,

⁵⁴ Winn to Attorney-General Manson, 14 February 1925, BCA, GR 1323, Reel B2320. According to Winn, it was only fair that mothers’ pension amounts were on par with WCB payments; interestingly, even though many more mothers’ pensions were granted throughout the mid-1920s, the amount the province spent on Workmen’s Compensation payouts to “dependents of deceased workmen” was higher overall. See British Columbia, *Workmen’s Compensation Board Annual Reports*, 1924-1930.

⁵⁵ Provincial Secretary Correspondence, “Speech by the Honourable J.D. MacLean on the second reading of the Bill providing for Pensions for Mothers,” BCA, GR 0344, Box 1, file 2.

⁵⁶ Little, “Claiming a Unique Place,” 97.

and instead insisted on negotiating social citizenship's boundaries with paid work as the reference point.

Letters from and on behalf of mothers' pensions applicants, as well as pensions reporting in the press, hint at the expectation that the state should value and compensate care work. "She certainly deserves credit for keeping her little family together for the last eight years," as supporter of Mrs. G.'s pension claim wrote in 1920.⁵⁷ In 1921, community members wrote to MacLean on behalf of Mrs. E., a widow whose "heroic efforts in rearing such a family" of four children "by her own labour, thrift, and sense of duty" surely deserved compensation from the state.⁵⁸ Amidst controversy about pension amendments in the same year, an editorial from the *Victoria Daily Colonist* expressed the position held by many: "Most important," it claimed, "was "the establishment of a principle which will assure the beneficiaries that they are not the recipients of State charity, but that the enjoyment of a pension is a right."⁵⁹ Evidence that British Columbians interpreted mothers' entitlements broadly is also apparent in senior provincial officials' frustrations that "too many" mothers expected a pension. "Our greatest difficulty in administering this Act," Winn informed the Premier in 1925, "is to get the affected parties to realize that it is not a general pension scheme, but only a matter for allowance in cases where the parties are...indigents."⁶⁰

⁵⁷ J.A.B. to J.D. MacLean, 13 August 1920, BCA, GR 0344, Box 1, File 2.

⁵⁸ M.C.C. to J.D. MacLean, 5 February 1921, BCA, GR 0344, Box 1, File 2.

⁵⁹ *Victoria Daily Colonist*, 8 November 1921, 4. The prying of nosy welfare investigators went against this principle, according to the *Colonist*. There were often letters written on behalf of municipal officials on behalf of mothers as well. Interestingly, the motive behind those letters often seemed to be to get women off of municipal relief rolls and make them the financial responsibility of the province. See, for example, *Victoria Daily Times*, 28 October 1921, 13.

⁶⁰ Winn to Premier, 10 November 1925, BCA, GR 0441, Box 250, File 14.

For Winn and his colleagues in the provincial welfare bureaucracy, a mother's eligibility for a pension extended beyond a simple matter of maternal social rights. In their view, deservedness was a contested category that required taking into account more than mothers' service to the state. Their administrative decisions revealed a preoccupation with a mother's relationship to paid work. This logic was evident at the outset of Winn's efforts in 1921 to roll back pensions spending. Mothers who had "some form of employment or independent incomes" were placed under the microscope, their entitlement immediately called into question.⁶¹ As a *Colonist* editorial explained, the "policy now appears to be to grade these pensions by basing them on the earning power of the individual concerned."⁶² For many mothers, this meant an outright denial of pensions eligibility. Winn and his colleagues were more than willing to turn down a pension application if they deemed that a mother should be at work.

Mothers with one child were especially vulnerable to Winn's suspicion. Though technically included within the scope of the Act -- BC was unique in this respect -- one-child mothers often ran up against the expectation that they should be in the work force. Mrs. W., for example, a widowed mother of one living in Duncan, had her pension terminated suddenly in the spring of 1922 based on a technicality that many prominent local citizens considered ridiculous (her husband had died while the family was "sojourning" in Washington, rendering her ineligible). The technicalities of the Act, however, did not interest Winn as much as Mrs. W.'s employment status. "[T]he Board also takes the attitude," he explained to Premier Oliver, "that where the mother is in

⁶¹ *Victoria Daily Times*, 19 October 1921, 13.

⁶² *Victoria Daily Colonist*, 20 October 1921, 4.

sufficiently good health to work and where her age is not against her, she should be able to earn sufficient to maintain herself and one child.”⁶³

There were exceptions to the one-child rule if mothers could demonstrate that they were sufficiently in need. As George Pyke explained, if a mother’s health prevented her from working, if her child was ill, or “if by reason of age the mother is unable to maintain her and child,” a pension would be granted. Otherwise, he continued, a one-child mother “should be able to support herself and child without assistance from the Government.”⁶⁴ Denied pensions applications often included moral judgment of a mother’s perceived work ethic. Mrs. T. was a “young and healthy woman” who was “quite capable of earning sufficient to maintain herself and child if she wishes to,” explained Pyke in one letter. “The unfortunate part seems to be lack of desire. Self help is to be encouraged to the fullest extent.”⁶⁵ In a 1927 case, Winn suggested that Mrs. B was expected to go to work, since she was “a young, healthy woman of twenty-seven years of age, with only one child.”⁶⁶ Statements such as these highlighted the moral imperatives of paid work in the assessment of mothers’ entitlements -- as well the accepted level of wage discrimination for mothers, who were only expected to make enough to support one child.

Winn and Pyke’s decisions were partly about financial restraint. The government admitted that it had had underestimated mothers’ need and overestimated its ability to

⁶³ Correspondence between Mr. W., Premier Oliver, and E.S. Winn, 1922, BCA, GR 0441, Box 227, file 8. Other senior officials repeatedly expressed similar sentiments; see, for example, McNabb (Mothers’ Pensions Board Secretary) to Pooley (Attorney-General), 24 December 1928, BCA, GR 1323, Reel B2320.

⁶⁴ Correspondence between Pyke, Morton, and MPP George Hanes, June-July 1923, BCA, GR 0441, Box 235, file 9. At one point, Pyke identified the age beyond which a mother might be incapable of supporting a child through work as 45.

⁶⁵ Correspondence between George Pyke and Morton (secretary to the Premier), 1923, BCA, GR 0441, Box 235, file 9.

⁶⁶ Correspondence between Mr. S., Premier MacLean, and E.S. Winn, 1927, BCA, GR 0441, Box 267, file 6.

meet that need.⁶⁷ But moral reasoning pervaded decision-making. From the Board's point of view it was better to deny a pension and insure wage-earning than it was to grant a pension and foster a mother's chronic reliance on state assistance. Public pronouncements that pensions were not a "charity dole" belied very real concerns that they had the potential to destroy "self reliance" and "creat[e] a class that would tend to relax personal effort and lean on public benevolence."⁶⁸

For the same reasons, Winn and his colleagues considered it perfectly appropriate that pensions were designed to replace a husband's paycheque only "in part." In this respect, pensions represented a version of the 'principle of less eligibility' – to keep benefits low so as to preserve work ethic.⁶⁹ "Generally speaking," one annual report noted, "the mothers realize that this assistance is not intended to be sufficient for all their wants or requirements."⁷⁰ Indeed, the mothers' pension base rate of \$42.50 was lower than the lowest female minimum wage rate in 1920. An adult woman working in the mercantile industry was considered entitled to at least \$51.00 per month, a rate derived from the assumption that she had no dependents.⁷¹ Based on the government's own standards, \$42.50 for a mother and one child was remarkably low.

To make up the difference between the pensions amount and what a family actually needed to survive, a mothers' wage-earning was required and expected.

⁶⁷ *Victoria Daily Times*, 19 October 1921, 13.

⁶⁸ British Columbia, *Annual Report made under The Mothers' Pensions Act*, 1922, 2.

⁶⁹ James Struthers, *"No Fault of Their Own": Unemployment and the Canadian Welfare State, 1914-1941* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1983), 6-7.

⁷⁰ British Columbia, *Annual Report made under The Mothers' Pensions Act*, 1929, 1.

⁷¹ British Columbia, *Annual Report of the Department of Labour for the Year Ending December 31st 1920* (Victoria: King's Printer, 1921). Minimum wage rates varied by industry. Mercantile workers earned a minimum of \$51 per month, while those in the fishing industry were entitled to at least \$62 per month, the highest minimum wage rate for women. Office, telephone and telegraph operators also had high minimum wages at \$60 monthly in 1920.

Provincial officials heartily approved of this expectation. Nothing could be worse, from the government's perspective, than "creating a class that will always tend to relax personal effort and lean on public benevolence." Requiring a pension recipient to work was the best way to protect against the "grave danger to society" that chronic welfare dependency represented. Encouraging "self help," "initiative," "resourcefulness," and "enterprise" were explicitly stated as goals of the legislation throughout the decade. "We do believe in that old quotation," Winn declared in 1923, "that 'Satan finds some mischief still for idle hands to do.'"⁷²

Fears about the pauperization of pension recipients extended to the entire family. Pyke, and later Winn, consistently replied to applicants by explaining that the Board would not grant a pension unless every possible option for self-support had been explored, and that included the earnings of older children and support from other relatives. It would establish a "bad precedent," Pyke explained in 1921, to grant a pension to a Fernie mother whose son was out of work: "I do not think it was ever intended that the Mothers' Pensions should be used as an unemployment fund."⁷³ In another case, he denied a pension to a mother whose two oldest children "are employed and earning \$110.00 per month each."⁷⁴ "If the same effort were made towards getting the family to contribute to her support as are made in trying to get the Government to do so, perhaps something might be accomplished," Superintendent of Neglected Children David Brankin

⁷² Correspondence between George Pyke and Morton, 1923, BCA, GR 0441, Box 235, File 9. Winn was echoed by other senior officials: see Winn to Manson, 7 November 1922, BCA, GR 1323, B02211; McNabb to Pooley, 24 December 1928, BCA GR 1323, Reel B02320.

⁷³ Pyke to Farris, 6 April 1921, BCA, GR 1323, Reel B02211.

⁷⁴ Pyke to Johnson (Deputy Attorney-General), 4 April 1921, BCA, GR 1323, Reel B02211.

wrote in 1922.⁷⁵ Charlotte Whitton would express sentiments very similar to this when she arrived to investigate mothers' pensions in 1930.

**“Habits of industry and thrift and ambition for independence”:
Charlotte Whitton Comes to BC**

Conservative Premier Simon Fraser Tolmie, who had been elected in 1928 with the support of the province's business community, was slow to act on the unemployment crisis created by the Great Depression in BC. “Conservative thought,” as Jean Barman observes, “still held that poverty and unemployment resulted from personal failings.”⁷⁶ By 1931, however, BC had the country's highest unemployment rate at 28%. The government established work-for-relief camps for unemployed men, but relief efforts in the province were inhibited by sharply declining government revenues. Tolmie was desperate for ways to cut back on government spending, and through the early 1930s commissioned a series of reports to make recommendations to that effect. The Kidd Report, released in 1932, called for a drastic reduction in spending on social services including education and transportation.⁷⁷ Tolmie believed that spending on mothers' pensions was also putting an unnecessary strain on provincial finances, and in 1931 he asked Charlotte Whitton to investigate.

Whitton, the director of the Canadian Council on Child Welfare (CCCW) and the country's recognized social work expert, had recently completed a survey of Manitoba's mothers' allowances. Once finished with her BC report, Whitton would also undertake a

⁷⁵ Brankin to Farris, 24 March 1922, BCA, GR 1323, Reel B02211.

⁷⁶ Jean Barman, *The West Beyond the West: A History of British Columbia* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2007), 268.

⁷⁷ The Kidd commission was chaired by George Kidd, the former president of the BC Electric Company. See Barman, 268-71.

study of Nova Scotia's mothers' allowances, as well as advise on reforms in Ontario and Quebec. Her best-known advisory role in this period was to Prime Minister R.B. Bennett, who hired Whitton in 1932 to report on unemployment relief in the western provinces.⁷⁸

In all of these jurisdictions, her reports followed the same themes: she called for a significant curtailment of government involvement in the lives of families, and for cautious intervention -- managed by trained social workers -- only for families who conformed to her standards of "fit and proper" behaviour.⁷⁹ Tolmie and Whitton's ideological views of social welfare aligned to a great extent, and he was eager for her expert guidance in reforming BC's mothers' pensions program.

Whitton and her team of investigators arrived in BC in June 1931, and over the next several months they travelled throughout the province interviewing pension recipients and field workers. Her criticisms, outlined in her report of December 1931, were far-reaching. Whitton characterized BC mothers' pensions administration as one of "exploitation, abuse and heavy expenditure," the blame for which she placed largely on the overworked and undertrained field staff.⁸⁰ BC's spending on mothers' pensions, Whitton argued, was disproportionate in comparison to other provinces as well as to other

⁷⁸ See Catherine Mary Ulmer, "The Report on Unemployment and Relief in Western Canada, 1932: Charlotte Whitton, R.B. Bennett and the Federal Response to Relief," (M.A. thesis, University of Victoria, 2009).

⁷⁹ Christie, *Engendering the State*, 167-73; James Struthers, "A Profession in Crisis: Charlotte Whitton and Canadian Social Work in the 1930s," *Canadian Historical Review* LXII, 2 (1981): 169-185; Patricia Rooke and R.L. Schnell, *No Bleeding Heart: Charlotte Whitton, A Feminist on the Right* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 1987).

⁸⁰ The government employed a "field staff" of six to look after mothers' pensions, all of whom were women: Mrs. F.H. Murrie (appointed in 1922, a Scottish-born social worker, widowed with one son); Mrs. Laura Edwards (appointed 1920, widowed with no children, formerly of the Catholic Children's Aid Society); Mrs. O.J. Taylor (appointed 1927, widowed with no children, trained as a nurse); Mrs. Daisy Thompson (appointed 1921, widowed, a trained nurse with experience in the Medicine Hat, AB City Relief Department); Mrs. Amy G. Mowbrat (appointed 1924, married with two teenage children, husband a retired bank manager); and Mrs. Henrietta St. John (appointed 1927, married, husband was "totally disabled," formerly a visitor of the Board of Pensions in Ottawa). Each of these women was responsible for anywhere from 150 to 300 cases.

provincial expenditures. While the national average of per capita pensions spending was 72 cents, BC's rate was highest at \$1.21. Within the province, the pensions budget was eating up 3.5% of the entire annual provincial budget, an excessive amount considering that it only served 1550 families.⁸¹ The problem was not that pension amounts were too high in BC, but that they were haphazardly awarded to too many undeserving mothers.⁸² In Whitton's view, the best way to cut costs was to strictly limit eligibility, and thus cut down on the number of pensions awarded.

Whitton's report, put simply, called for much more rigorous policing of social citizenship's boundaries through monitoring of mothers' economic behaviour. In their present state, she insisted, pensions were actually doing more harm than good; negligent administration had multiplied the cases of "chronic dependency" and the situation threatened to get worse.⁸³ Like Winn before her, Whitton identified many cases in which pensions were (in her view) entirely unwarranted. This was especially true of mothers with "only" one child, who made up one-third of the caseload by the late 1920s (up from one-quarter in 1921).⁸⁴ Many of those cases resembled that of Mrs. AB, a widow with a school-aged daughter. Mrs. AB decided to leave her rural home and rent an apartment in Vancouver, where her daughter could attend a better school. Whitton disapproved of Mrs.

⁸¹ Charlotte Whitton, "Report of Miss Charlotte Whitton, Executive Director of the Canadian Council on Child and Family Welfare, on Mothers' Pensions and Social Service work in the Province of British Columbia," prepared for the Honourable S.L. Howe, Provincial Secretary (Victoria, 1 December 1931), 44-46. A full version of this report is available in the British Columbia Legislative Library.

⁸² Whitton was especially appalled at finding evidence of investigators colluding with mothers to "evade" regulations in order to receive a pension. In the case of Mrs. M, for example, an investigator encouraged her to divorce her husband – since as a divorced woman, she would be considered under the discretionary clause of the Act, and investigators assured her that "assistance could be paid when the divorce had been secured." If they had been doing their jobs properly, Whitton argued, investigators would have recognized that Mrs. M's case was not for the consideration of pensions administrators, but belonged under the Deserted Wives Maintenance Act where her husband would have been forced to provide support. Whitton, "Report...on Mothers' Pensions," 144-45.

⁸³ Whitton, "Report...on Mothers' Pensions," 174

⁸⁴ British Columbia, *Annual Report made under The Mothers' Pensions Act* (1921-1931).

AB's receipt of a pension. Mrs. AB was simply living off the state while she indulged in her desire to live in the city and enroll her daughter in private lessons. This was not a case of "serious need," Whitton concluded, but one of a woman "not very fond of work."⁸⁵ Her analysis of the 1930-31 caseload led Whitton to conclude that, although one-third of applications were denied because they had "resources deemed sufficient to maintain them without public aid," many more should have fallen into the same category.⁸⁶ One-child cases should be the first cut, she argued. Only in "very exceptional" cases could pensions be justified, including physical incapacitation or illness of the mother or child, or the presence of an incapacitated husband who required full-time care. Otherwise, the state should insist upon "the maintenance of the child by its mother."⁸⁷ It was much simpler, for example, for a mother with one child to find work as a live-in domestic.⁸⁸

Whitton also called for closer surveillance of pension rates. By 1931, it was common practice for administrators to reduce a mother's pension amount based on income from other sources. The pension amount, in other words, was meant to supplement, not replace, a mother's wage. Whitton approved of this policy, citing "wholesome and profitable" employment as the best way to ensure that mothers -- all mothers, not just those with one child -- developed "habits of industry and thrift and ambition for independence."⁸⁹ Children's earnings, support from relatives, or the absence of rent payments also factored into this sliding scale of pensions rates.⁹⁰ Whitton's

⁸⁵ Whitton, "Report...on Mothers' Pensions," 67.

⁸⁶ Whitton, "Report...on Mothers' Pensions," 77.

⁸⁷ Whitton, "Report...on Mothers' Pensions," 71.

⁸⁸ Whitton, "Report...on Mothers' Pensions," 62.

⁸⁹ Whitton, "Report...on Mothers' Pensions," 204.

⁹⁰ For example, a mother with one child who had equity in property and no rent to pay might qualify for as little as \$15 per month. Other potential sources of support that Whitton said investigators needed to be

concern was the lackadaisical attitude towards enforcing this policy. In many cases pensions were awarded above “the family’s minimum requirements,” thus encouraging dependence on the state. Such was the case with Mrs. P, a widow with seven children who otherwise was a model pension recipient: “The reports of this family showed good conditions throughout, as to health, school attendance and environment.” Nevertheless, Whitton suggested that Mrs. P’s pension should have been reduced as her children were old enough to work, and as her father-in-law (in whose house they lived) became old enough to qualify for an old age pension.⁹¹

As Mrs. P’s case makes clear, Whitton’s fears about dependency had implications for the entire family. Without regulation, a mother’s lack of ambition risked being passed down to create a second generation of “shifting, unattached social dependants.”⁹² If family independence could be achieved through participation in the paid labour or income of *any* family member, then it was the responsibility of investigators to insist on it.⁹³ In Mrs. AC’s family, for example, Whitton advocated for cancelling her pension and “throwing” her and her husband their two older earning children “on their own resources.” The combined income of the four of them, Whitton argued, would give them the resources to remain independent of public assistance, and at the same time provide “some assurance that the problem of the reproduction of similar stock... would not

aware of were military pensions, WCB payments, or family members collecting Old Age Pensions. Whitton, “Report...on Mothers’ Pensions,” 150.

⁹¹ Whitton, “Report...on Mothers’ Pensions,” 87.

⁹² Whitton, “Report...on Mothers’ Pensions,” 90.

⁹³ Sometimes she went so far as to suggest that legal action be allowed “for maintenance against older children in a position to assist, and who refuse to do so.” Such an action would be allowed under the Parents’ Maintenance Act of 1922. Whitton, “Report...on Mothers’ Pensions,” 208.

continue.”⁹⁴ All family members were implicated in Whitton’s vision for state intervention in the family, which was based on “the development of initiative, independence, self respect, and self-reliance at the earliest possible date, and to such a degree and strength as to avoid future dependency.”⁹⁵

Even Whitton’s pronouncements on mothers’ moral fitness was indistinguishable from her expectations about their economic pursuits.⁹⁶ For Whitton, a good mother was one who taught her children to be good workers, and to do so required being a worker herself. A clean house and well-behaved children were not just signs of moral integrity, but of a vigorous work ethic and healthy attitude towards work, and of a commitment to passing those traits on to their children. “Children reared in good, humble and poor homes,” Whitton wrote, “thrive much better...their general health is likely to be better; they have more individuality, adapt themselves better to ordinary life, are more resourceful, and more likely to develop lives of self-reliance and independence.”⁹⁷ A tidy home, “wholesome” children, and well-cared for vegetable garden, in Mrs. B’s case, symbolized her “good management” skills and her ability to budget resources carefully.⁹⁸ Conversely, mothers whose homes were “slovenly” and who had been found to be consorting with numerous male friends in the evenings should ideally have the “expenditure of [their] monthly allowance” approved by social workers so that their

⁹⁴ Whitton, “Report...on Mothers’ Pensions,” 100.

⁹⁵ Whitton, “Report...on Mothers’ Pensions,” 172.

⁹⁶ Moral regulation was a common feature of mothers’ pensions administrations across Canada. For the best treatment of this, see Little, *No Car, No Radio, No Liquor Permit*.

⁹⁷ Whitton, “Report...on Mothers’ Pensions,” 81.

⁹⁸ Whitton, “Report...on Mothers’ Pensions,” 83-85.

limited financial resources were spent in a manner considered appropriate by the state.⁹⁹

In Whitton's view, morality and economic behaviour were intertwined in "the sense of responsibility which is the very amalgam of our social structure."¹⁰⁰

The one issue on which Whitton had little say was the child care arrangements of working mothers. There was certainly no discussion in her report of public responsibility for child care. In focusing on family self-sufficiency, though, Whitton's attitude towards child care was implicit: it was a mother's responsibility to make arrangements in the private sphere, either through relatives or paid caretakers. One brief pronouncement on one-child mothers provides some insight into Whitton's thinking. She was more willing to be sympathetic to a mother with a young (pre-school aged) child (or children) if the mother was "so situated in relation to the lack of any home or relatives that it is otherwise impossible for her to support her child."¹⁰¹ Though Whitton was clear that this did not extend to unmarried mothers, whose lack of moral fitness should automatically disqualify them, this was virtually her only admission that access to child care could determine a woman's ability to work and thus her claim to state support. In giving this discussion such a marginal place, however, Whitton signalled that working mothers' child care arrangements were not a matter for state concern.

⁹⁹ Whitton, "Report...on Mothers' Pensions," 124, 209. She suggests this for women who received insurance payouts too. She says they should hand over their earnings to the state, which would then disperse it monthly along with the pension.

¹⁰⁰ Whitton, "Report...on Mothers' Pensions," 209.

¹⁰¹ Whitton, "Report...on Mothers' Pensions," 202.

Mothers' Pensions in the 1930s and Beyond: Change and Continuity

Premier Tolmie was receptive to Whitton's proposals. Depression conditions required fiscal restraint and, from a cultural perspective, demanded welfare policy designed to prevent dependency. Though Tolmie could not afford to hire the stable of professional social workers that Whitton recommended, he did hire Miss Elizabeth King of the Canadian Council of Child and Family Welfare to serve as acting supervisor of mothers' pensions. King in turn hired five new welfare visitors to more closely monitor pensioned mothers throughout the province.¹⁰² A series of reforms followed, including one that deemed one-child families officially ineligible for a mothers' pension unless "special circumstances" warranted one.¹⁰³

Tolmie's most controversial reform came in 1932, when he amended the Mothers' Pensions Act to transfer half of the financial responsibility for pensions to municipalities. Not surprisingly, the BC Union of Municipalities reacted with outrage at this offloading of welfare responsibility, especially during a time when they were struggling under mounting relief pressures.¹⁰⁴ Opposition to this reform also came from mothers' advocates who objected to the equation of mothers' pensions with "city relief." Helen Gregory MacGill, Susie Lane Clark, Mary Ellen Smith, and their colleagues in the New Era League and the Local Councils of Women held a protest in March 1932 to oppose Tolmie's reforms.¹⁰⁵ But government officials were unsympathetic, and in fact Winn (echoing a common refrain of Whitton's report) urged the Attorney-General to consider

¹⁰² British Columbia, *Annual Report on Mothers' Pensions*, 1933.

¹⁰³ British Columbia, *Annual Report on Mothers' Pensions*, 1933. Such as "illness on the part of the mother or child," or "another child in the home over the age of sixteen in ill health."

¹⁰⁴ *Victoria Daily Times*, 8 November 1932, 7; *Vancouver Province*, 26 September 1932, 16; *Vancouver Province*, 16 September 1932, 9.

¹⁰⁵ *Victoria Daily Times*, 24 March 1932, 6; *Vancouver Province*, 22 March 1932, 10.

renaming the act the Mothers' Assistance Act, "to get the term "pension" out of the minds of our people."¹⁰⁶

As a result of these reforms, and given the tumultuous nature of relief and welfare during the 1930s, mothers' pensions became something of a political hot potato through the next several years. While in the early 1920s both the Liberals and the Conservatives had been eager to take credit for the legislation, the 1933 election saw Tolmie and Liberal leader Duff Pattullo trade accusations that the other was running pensions as a "racket."¹⁰⁷ The reasons for this political about-face stemmed from mothers' pensions' gradual marginalization, as MacGill and her colleagues feared, to the level just barely above general relief.¹⁰⁸ Mothers' pensions amounts were reduced to a \$35 base rate and more importantly, they were stripped of their "special status" as a welfare program with some higher, nobler goal of compensating motherhood.¹⁰⁹ By the early-1930s mothers' pensions functioned basically as unemployment relief for mothers -- Director of Welfare Harry Cassidy even referred to pensions as "mothers' relief" -- with annual spending reflecting fluctuations in the female labour market (See Figure 3.2).¹¹⁰ Though expenditures had declined immediately following the Whitton reforms, they began a steady rise in the middle- to late-1930s as unemployment worsened. Officials readily attributed this increased generosity to the shortage of jobs for mothers and their older children.¹¹¹ Cutting pensions, after all, only "forc[ed] women on a labor market that was unable to

¹⁰⁶ Winn to Pooley, 16 March 1931, BCA, GR 1323, Reel B02321.

¹⁰⁷ *Victoria Daily Times*, 14 October 1933; *Victoria Daily Colonist*, 21 March 1931, 1; *Vancouver Sun*, 4 February 1932, 1.

¹⁰⁸ *Vancouver Province*, 4 April 1933, 7.

¹⁰⁹ Christie, *Engendering the State*, 172.

¹¹⁰ Harry Cassidy is quoted in Christie, *Engendering the State*, 177.

¹¹¹ British Columbia, *Annual Report on Mothers' Pensions*, 1935.

absorb them.”¹¹² Even mothers with one child were considered in a more sympathetic light due to the desperate unemployment they faced.¹¹³

Conversely, at the first sign of economic recovery in the latter years of the decade, provincial administrators encouraged closer scrutiny of mothers who should be expected to serve as the family breadwinner.¹¹⁴ On the advice of Harry Cassidy the newly-created Mothers’ Pensions Advisory Board undertook a study in 1937 to determine which mothers were “likely prospects for employment,” and recommended that visitors encourage mothers to pursue domestic work (for which there was a high demand in Vancouver at the end of the decade), enroll in dressmaking or secretarial evening training courses, or consider taking advantage of the Dominion Provincial Youth Training Programs to prepare them for employment.¹¹⁵ One Board member even suggested that Vancouver should re-establish a crèche to facilitate such efforts. The Board also urged Cassidy to find work opportunities for older children, especially boys, through

¹¹² *Victoria Daily Times*, 23 March 1933, 1.

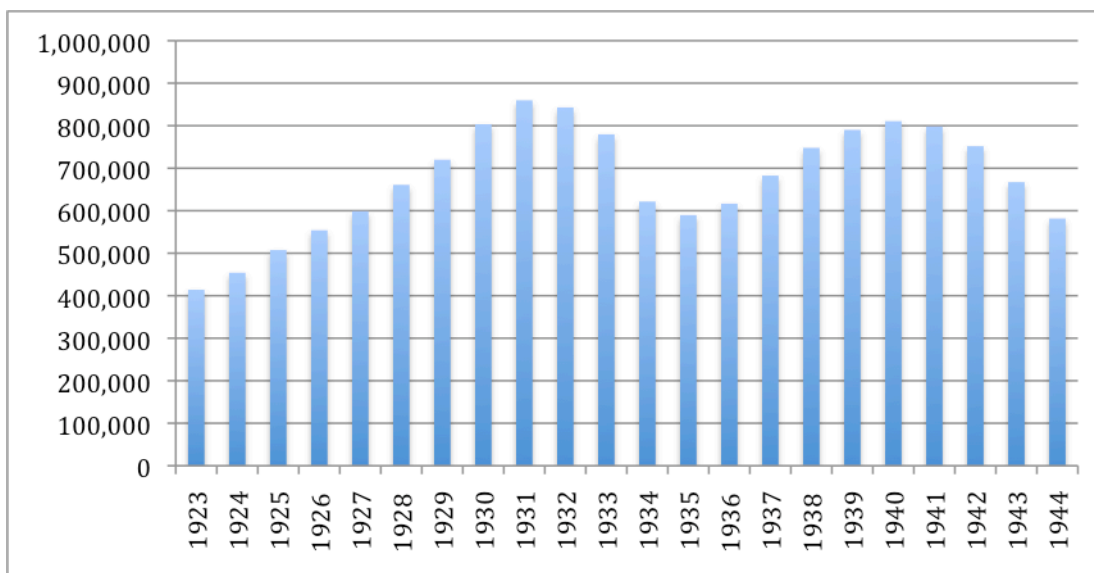
¹¹³ Davidson to Mother, 20 October 1934, BCA, GR 1323, Reel B2320.

¹¹⁴ British Columbia, *Annual Report on Mothers’ Pensions*, 1937.

¹¹⁵ Minutes the Mothers’ Pensions Advisory Board (MPAB), 10 May 1937, 28 September 1937, and 14 March 1938, BCA, GR 0496, box 26, file 9. The MPAB was created as part of 1936 reforms to mothers’ pensions legislation, a short-lived effort to improve the program before it was displaced even further into the realm of relief. Most significantly, the province reassumed full financial responsibility for the pensions. Other amendments stipulated that the husband had to have been disabled in BC, increased the allowed property value to \$2500, granted pensions to native British women even if they married an “alien,” and granted some money (\$7.50) to a mother if she had a disabled husband living with her. Members of the MAPB included Dr. Olga Jardine (past president of University Women’s Club, president Local Council of Women), Dr. George F. Davidson (chair), Mrs. W.R.F. Richmond, Mrs. F.W Smelts (who had worked with the Vancouver Crèche), and Mr. Robert Bone. Jardine became chair in 1939. *Victoria Daily Times*, 12 August 1936, 1; *Victoria Daily Times*, 19 June 1939, 11. On job training in the Depression, see Heidi MacDonald, “Maritime Women, the Great Depression, and the Dominion-Provincial Youth Training Program,” in *Making Up the State: Women in 20th Century Atlantic Canada*, ed. Janet Guildford and Suzanne Morton (Fredericton: Acadiensis Press, 2010), 131-50.

cooperation with officials in other departments such as agriculture, mines, and forestry, so that they could contribute to their families' upkeep.¹¹⁶

Table 2: Total Spending on Pensions, in dollars, 1923-44



Source: British Columbia, *Annual Report on Mothers' Pensions*, 1923-1944. Note: during the years that municipalities were responsible for half of pensions funding (1932-36), those amounts are factored into these totals.

In aligning mothers' pensions with general relief, Whitton's report and its aftermath marked a decisive break with the mothers' pensions of the 1920s. Shed of their association with maternal entitlement, pensions in the 1930s were "placed on a much more...charity-based course," as Nancy Christie has observed.¹¹⁷ Yet in another respect there was a significant degree of continuity between the two decades. Changes to mothers' pensions in the 1930s marked a reorientation towards a notion of welfare that to some extent had been present even in the 1920s: that a mother's deservedness for state

¹¹⁶ Minutes of the MPAB, 28 September 1940, BCA, GR 0496, box 26, file 9.

¹¹⁷ Christie, *Engendering the State*, 169.

benefit was measured by her relationship to waged work and her susceptibility to welfare dependency. In 1921 as in the late-1930s, officials worried that the pension would have the “very serious effect in breaking down the spirit of independence throughout Canada.”¹¹⁸ As such, what remained consistent throughout the 1920s and 1930s was a careful regulation of social citizenship’s boundaries vis-à-vis a mother’s work. This certainly took on new urgency in the 1930s given the context of the Depression, but Whitton’s report and the changes that followed were also in some senses a reaffirmation, albeit one framed in new rhetoric about charity-based relief, of the principles established from the very beginning of mothers’ pensions administration. Maternal entitlement was a noticeable presence at the boundaries of social citizenship in the interwar years, but work-based entitlement remained an important determinant of social inclusion and exclusion.

Mothers, Workers, and Citizens in BC’s Interwar Years

Given that so much of Whitton’s 1931 report was taken up with urging mothers into paid work, she also included an analysis of the provincial labour force to prove that her proposals were not unreasonable. Whitton argued that “opportunities for the employment of women in British Columbia in the age groups, in which many of these mothers falls, compare very favourably with those of other provinces [sic].” She pointed in particular to the continued opportunities, despite the Depression, in female-dominated industries: “laundries, cleaning, and dyeing industries,” along with garment making,

¹¹⁸ British Columbia, *Annual Report on Mothers’ Pensions*, 1936.

stenography, waitressing, food service, and, especially, char work and domestic service.¹¹⁹

It was true that, in the industrial occupations at least, many women's jobs were sheltered from the effects of the Depression. Eric Sager shows that between 1929 and 1934 in BC there was actually an increase in the proportion of women workers in the industrial labour force, which can be explained by their segregation in industries of "inelastic demand": food products, garment making, laundries, and street railways/utilities. These industries accounted for more than 80 percent of female wage-earners in BC.¹²⁰ Sager also notes that the continued employment of women in the first years of the Depression was part of a larger story about women's increasing labour force participation in the interwar years and beyond, a trend that Veronica Strong-Boag also identifies in the national context. In BC, the growth rates of employment of women in industry outpaced female population growth between 1921 and the Second World War.¹²¹ Of course, these "official" statistics revealed female employment only in those industries deemed worthy of recording by the Department of Labour; many more women were employed in domestic work and other non-industrial positions, which remained a relatively stable source of work for women through the interwar years.¹²²

¹¹⁹ Whitton, "Report...on Mothers' Pensions," 71.

¹²⁰ Sager, "Women in the Industrial Labour Force," 46-7. Sager also points out that the women's employment as a proportion of the total industrial labour force increased over the same years (from 7.5 percent in 1929 to 9.9 percent in 1933). He does not suggest that this meant "that more women were being hired than men," but that "proportionately fewer women were being laid off" (45). Accordingly, in the latter years of the Depression women occupied a lower proportion of the labour force as men were rehired (46).

¹²¹ Sager, "Women in the Industrial Labour Force," 56; Veronica Strong-Boag, "The Girl of the New Day: Canadian Working Women in the 1920s," *Labour/Le Travail* 4 (1979): 131-64.

¹²² Bettina Bradbury reminds us that there "is no question that the paid work of married women, in particular, has been under-enumerated to some extent in the censuses in Canada." For example, many women took on paid work in the home that allowed them to continue to care for their children. Bettina Bradbury, *Working Families: Age, Gender, and Daily Survival in Industrializing Montreal* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2007), 169-170.

Yet even if women were somewhat less likely to be laid off than men, these labour market statistics also demonstrate the extent to which women were ghettoized into low-paid and unstable work.¹²³ Women may have been able to find a job in one of the industrial sectors protected from unemployment, but there they could earn only about 60 percent of the wages of a male worker.¹²⁴ These inequalities were multiplied by a woman's marital status and motherhood. Around 75 to 80 percent of women employed in industrial occupations in the 1930s were young, single, and presumably childless.¹²⁵ Mothers' labour force opportunities were constrained by their responsibilities to the home and to their children, which meant that for many, even lower-paid domestic work was the only option. On these low wages, balancing work and home life was a struggle for many women. Widowed mother Mrs. C. was just one among many who worked in domestic service but "[could not] earn enough to pay for the children being kept while at work."¹²⁶ For mothers who were pushed into the labour market because of the vagaries of pensions administration, work did not provide the stability and independence that Whitton and other provincial officials hoped it might.

Women's and mothers' subordination as workers highlighted just how strictly gendered the labour market remained in the interwar years. The continued unequal position of women workers, and especially married mothers who worked, was reflected in Depression-era panic about their usurping jobs that rightfully belonged to men. Gender

¹²³ The steady rates of women's employment should not obscure the extent of women's unemployment, as Lara Campbell points out. Mothers and young women looking for jobs were often not recorded as unemployed, but simply as "dependents." Campbell, *Respectable Citizens*, 45.

¹²⁴ British Columbia, *Annual Reports of the Department of Labour*, 1930-40. Adult women's average wages ranged from 55 to 66 percent of men's wages throughout the Depression. The general trend through the decade was one of a declining proportion.

¹²⁵ British Columbia, *Annual Reports of the Department of Labour*, 1925-39.

¹²⁶ Correspondence between Mrs. C. and Morton, 1928, BCA, GR 0441, box 277, file 10.

ideology rather than economic reality explains this panic, as Lara Campbell explains in the Ontario context. The same was true of BC. Fraudena Eaton, a member of the Board of Industrial Relations, even felt compelled to respond to the widespread antagonism against married women in the labour force: “We hear a great deal about the married women workers,” Eaton wrote, but she pointed out that married women’s labour force participation had held steady at 20 percent of all female workers “over a period of years.”¹²⁷ Sager’s analysis of the labour market, furthermore, shows how unlikely it was that employers were replacing men with women in the 1930s.¹²⁸ Instead, reactions to women (especially married women) in the labour force were more about the perceived threat to the male breadwinner norm.¹²⁹

The preoccupation with threatened masculinity and the eroding capacities of male breadwinners translated into a reorientation of social welfare policy in the Depression. Women (especially mothers) had no inherent right to work; men, as family breadwinners, did. When that right was undermined because of fluctuating economic conditions beyond his control, it was the state’s responsibility to step in. “This persistent concern with upholding the status of male breadwinners,” Nancy Christie argues, led to a privileging of “paid labour as the sole foundation of welfare rights,” and more specifically the privileging of the male paid labour.¹³⁰ Federal Unemployment Insurance (UI), which was proposed in 1935, deemed unconstitutional in 1937, and eventually agreed to as a

¹²⁷ British Columbia, *Annual Report of the Department of Labour*, 1935.

¹²⁸ Sager, “Women in the Industrial Labour Force,” 48.

¹²⁹ For a debate about reactions to married women in the labour force, and the degree to which that was explained by concepts of economic justice versus gender norms, see: Alice Kessler-Harris, “Gender Ideology in Historical Reconstruction: A Case Study from the 1930s,” *Gender & History* 1, 1 (Spring 1989): 31-49; Margaret Hobbs, “Rethinking Antifeminism in the 1930s: Gender Crisis or Workplace Justice? A Response to Alice Kessler-Harris,” *Gender & History* 5, 1 (Spring 1993): 4-15.

¹³⁰ Christie, *Engendering the State*, 246.

constitutional amendment once the war started in 1940, embodied this new welfare paradigm. Male breadwinner independence and female mother/homemaker dependence, as Ruth Roach Pierson shows, was inscribed into the UI legislation.¹³¹

All of this compounded BC's working mothers' already-limited welfare entitlements. The maternal basis of mothers' pensions was further worn away in the 1930s as pensions entered the realm of needs-based charity. As of 1 January 1938, the Mothers' Pensions Act was repealed and replaced with the Mothers' Allowances Act, a legislative reform that Charlotte Whitton had urged in 1931. As she explained: "pensions" were payments "in recognition of services already rendered," while allowances were payments to citizens who would otherwise be indigent.¹³²

For mothers whose wage-earning was necessary for family survival -- and indeed, this was the main reason that mothers worked¹³³ -- social support was hard to come by. A mother who worked outside the home signalled to welfare providers that the family was somehow broken, and assistance was provided as such. The Vancouver Day Nursery Association (VDNA) was a case in point. The VDNA was created privately in July 1932 to replace the services of the Vancouver City Crèche. Rather than operate a child care institution, however, the VDNA oversaw the placement of working mothers' children in the individual homes of caregiving mothers, a system known as foster day care. The VDNA system was considered to be an improvement on the "congregate care" of the

¹³¹ Pierson, "Gender and the Unemployment Insurance Debates."

¹³² Whitton, "Report...on Mothers' Pensions," 177-8.

¹³³ British Columbia, *Annual Report of the Department of Labour*, 1935. Fraudena Eaton explained: "In most cases necessity, and not choice, is the compelling factor of the married women's employment, and criticism of her holding a place in the business world is usually levelled at her by persons with a somewhat superficial knowledge of the circumstances surrounding her employment."

crèche because it provided care in “real homes.”¹³⁴ The rehabilitation of deviant working-class mothers and children was the VDNA’s real aim, however. The foster day homes were not simply for mothers who needed “a convenient place to leave their children,” but a place where children could be helped out of the “underprivileged class” and mothers could receive “sound instruction in child training, correct habits and diets.”¹³⁵ The VDNA caregivers considered themselves voluntary social workers whose work was inspired by pity rather than any belief that working mothers were entitled to child care.

Working mothers and their advocates resisted these shrinking boundaries of social citizenship in the 1920s and 1930s. This resistance was not widespread or even particularly public; the rights of married women to wage-earning were mostly left out of Depression-era BC labour politics.¹³⁶ Though some Vancouver women on the left bucked the national trend somewhat by indicating their sympathy for the rights of married working women, they were mostly preoccupied with immediate concerns about relief efforts, and thus did not engage in political action in support of working mothers’ rights.¹³⁷ Alternative versions of working mothers’ citizenship are nonetheless evident in their individual interactions with state officials, as well as in the rhetoric of sympathetic politicians and welfare visitors. In their battles over the terms and conditions of mothers’ pensions, women articulated a concept of welfare entitlement that derived from a number

¹³⁴ Vancouver Day Nursery Association, *Annual Report*, 1933, UBCRBSC. The VDNA also saved the city money.

¹³⁵ Vancouver Day Nursery Association, *Annual Report*, 1936, 1937, UBCRBSC.

¹³⁶ Creese, “The Politics of Dependence,” 372. For the most part, BC’s “militant mothers,” focused their efforts on unemployed men and, to some extent, single women. Irene Howard, “The Mothers’ Council of Vancouver: Holding the Fort for the Unemployed, 1935-1938,” *Vancouver Past: Essays in Social History*, ed. Robert A.J. McDonald and Jean Barman (Vancouver: UBC Press, 1986), 249-87.

¹³⁷ Margaret Hobbs, “Equality and Difference: Feminism and the Defence of Women Workers During the Great Depression,” *Labour/Le Travail* 32 (Fall 1993), 208; Sangster, *Earning Respect*, 78-9.

of sources, including their loyal party voting record, their status as “native daughters” of BC and Canada, and their work in rearing the future citizens of the nation.¹³⁸

Most commonly, women understood their social rights to be rooted in their interlocking identities as mothers, workers, and citizens. Pensioned mothers, as well as those who felt they had been unfairly denied a pension, highlighted the role that their work – both paid and unpaid – played in their dignity and value as mothering citizens. It was precisely *because* she was both worker and mother that a woman was entitled to the services and protection of the state. Mrs. A, for example, appealed to Premier Oliver in 1926 to reinstate her cancelled pension: “I was foolish enough to actually believe that this Mother's Pension business was intended to help working mothers to keep a home up for their children.” Surely, she continued, the Premier could see that she was entitled to a pension after all her “years of hard and patient labor.”¹³⁹ Like Mrs. A, other mothers claimed a right to a pension not to give up their paid work, but in order to maintain some dignity and security in the balance between work and motherhood.¹⁴⁰ These themes were echoed by CCF MLA Dorothy Steeves, who throughout the Depression was an outspoken advocate for the rights of working mothers as welfare recipients.¹⁴¹ They were also evident in Charlotte Whitton’s strong reaction against welfare visitors who

¹³⁸ See, for example: Correspondence between Mrs. R. and Premier, 1927, BCA, GR 0441, box 267, file 6; Correspondence between Mrs. B and Morton, 1923, BCA, GR 0441, box 235, file 9; Correspondence between Mrs. D. and Premier, 1924, BCA, GR 0441, box 242, file 8. For a careful analysis of working-class expressions of citizenship in Ontario, see Campbell, *Respectable Citizens*.

¹³⁹ Correspondence between Mrs. A. and Premier, 1926, BCA, GR 0441, box 258, file 9.

¹⁴⁰ Correspondence between Mrs. S. [friend of Mrs. N] and Premier, 1922, BCA, GR 0441, box 227, file 8; Correspondence between Mr. E. [friend of Mrs. H] and Premier, 1926, BCA, GR 0441, box 258, file 9.

¹⁴¹ *Victoria Daily Times*, 26 February 1935, 7; *Vancouver Sun*, 26 February 1935, 9. See Susan Walsh, “The Peacock and the Guinea Hen: Political Profiles of Dorothy Gretchen Steeves and Grace MacInnis,” in *British Columbia Reconsidered: Essays on Women*, ed. Gillian Creese and Veronica Strong-Boag (Vancouver: Press Gang Publishers, 1992), 73-89. Labour MLA Thomas Underhill of Fernie also consistently defended mothers’ pensions recipients.

demonstrated a “disturbing tendency...of looking upon the granting of social assistance as a statutory right.”¹⁴²

These interactions, despite their limited public scope, served to highlight the discrepancy between working mothers’ lived experiences on the one hand and the gendered norms of work and family on the other. In women’s (and their political allies’) recognition and articulation of the gap between ideal and reality we see the seeds of a movement for women’s equality that would emerge in fuller force in the following decades. At the end of the 1930s, though, the gendered structures of inequality were powerful forces in the labour market and in social welfare policy-making. As a result, neither paid work nor social benefits offered working mothers better terms of citizenship.

* * *

Child care policy and programs received scanty attention during the interwar years, both at the provincial and municipal levels. The popularity of maternalist notions of welfare was partly responsible for child care’s absence. Mothers’ pensions, in theory, were heralded as the “solution” to the problem of working motherhood, and thus removed the need for publicly-funded child care services such as the Vancouver City Crèche. In practice, mothers’ pensions did not necessarily eliminate a mother’s need to earn a wage. Mothers’ paid work was necessary to supplement pension cheques, and it was also a condition of receipt of the cheque within a welfare system geared towards preserving the work ethic, preventing chronic dependency, and maintaining the self-sufficiency of poor and working-class families. Yet even though mothers were expected (and even obligated)

¹⁴² Whitton, “Report...on Mothers’ Pensions,” 91.

to be paid workers, there was virtually no attention paid to their child care needs.

Mothers' second-class status as workers helps to explain why. Especially amidst the unemployment crisis of the Great Depression, the claims of worker-citizens were strictly reserved for male breadwinners. Social rights for working women, and especially working mothers, were far from a welfare priority in the 1920s. Child care was a matter for family, neighbours, and in cases of extreme need, private charity services like the Vancouver Day Nursery Association. As in the 1910s, working mothers' social citizenship in the interwar years was constrained by classed and gendered notions of work. These ideologies and realities were carried into the Second World War, when working mothers and child care policy moved to the forefront of the political agenda.

Chapter 4

“It takes real mothers and real homes to make real children”: Child Care Debates During and After the Second World War

British Columbia was forced to confront the issue of working women head-on during the Second World War. As elsewhere in Canada, the war put an end to the unemployment crisis of the Depression. Wartime demand for resources led to a revival in the lumber, shipbuilding, and manufacturing industries in the province, creating so many jobs that “those left on unemployment relief,” as Patricia Roy and John Herd Thompson note, “were either aged or infirm.”¹ As men enlisted to serve overseas, women filled many of their jobs. The provincial Department of Labour reported in 1941 that female employees were taking the place of men in such “unfamiliar” occupations as:

[W]elding, machine-tending in sash and door plants and other wood-working establishments, assembly and checking in electrical, gun, and aeroplane factories, or sanding and glueing in furniture plants. Others are doing lathe-work, spot welding, operating stamp-presses, working on winding and small cable machines in establishments making metal tanks, drums, or wire ropes.²

Women were employed in lumber factories and saw factories; they operated “machines of all sizes” and performed “mechanical operations of all kinds” that according to the labour department “no longer hold mysteries for these nimble-fingered

¹ Patricia Roy and John Thompson, *British Columbia: Land of Promises* (Toronto: Oxford University Press, 2005), 138.

² British Columbia, *Annual Report of the Department of Labour*, 1941.

workers.”³ By 1942, “[p]ractically every line of industrial work sees women and girls engaged in occupations that a few years ago were considered to be men’s work.”⁴

This radical gender reorientation of the labour force brought with it a certain degree of anxiety. Of course, women’s industrial labour force participation was not an entirely new phenomenon in BC. The proportion of female workers in industry had been increasing steadily since the mid-1920s, as Eric Sager has shown.⁵ The scale of the employment was new, however, and so too was the rate of married women’s employment. Between 1939 and 1944 (the year of highest female employment), the proportion of the industrial labour force that was female jumped from 9 percent to 16 percent.⁶ At the same time, the proportion of women workers who were married also increased, from 22 percent in 1939 to 37 percent in 1944 (See Table 3). The cultural anxiety about working women and mothers during the war, then, was partly about the dimensions of growth.

Just as unsettling for many British Columbians, however, were the *types* of married women and mothers who were entering the labour force. As mothers’ experiences with the crèche and with mothers’ pensions made clear, it had long been expected that working-class mothers needed to earn wages to meet their families’ economic needs, as well as to shore up their families’ work ethic. But the demands of wartime industry required tapping into the so-called ‘reserve army’ of middle-class mothers, who were “drawn by the opportunity to supplement the family finances and at

³ British Columbia, *Annual Report of the Department of Labour*, 1942.

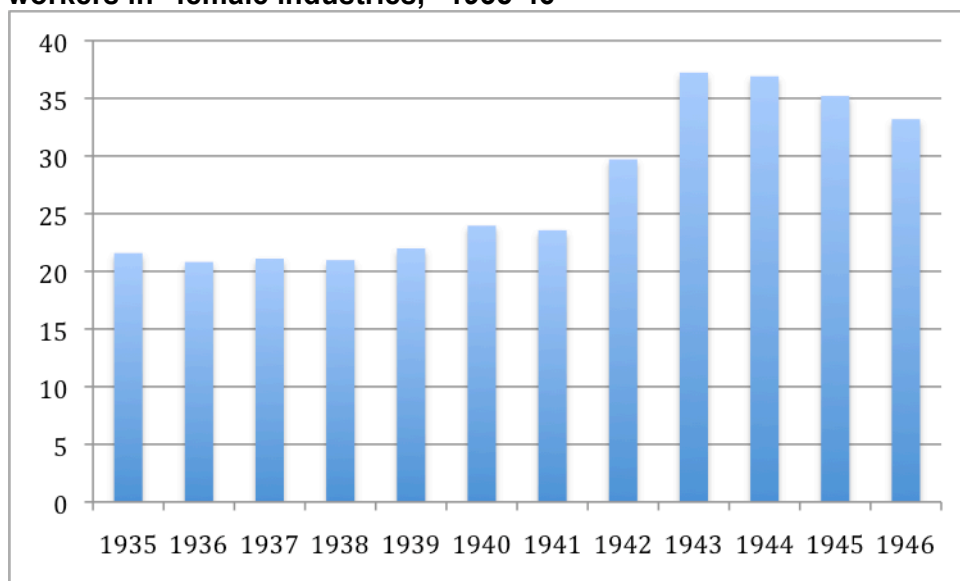
⁴ British Columbia, *Annual Report of the Department of Labour*, 1942.

⁵ Eric W. Sager, “Women in the Industrial Labour Force: Evidence for British Columbia, 1921-53,” *BC Studies* 149 (Spring 2006), 46.

⁶ British Columbia, *Annual Report of the Department of Labour*, 1939-1945.

the same time assist in war-work,” as the Labour Department explained.⁷ Mothers also had more opportunities to take work in traditionally female occupations like domestic service, laundries, restaurants, hotels, and office work, positions left vacant by single women moving into higher-paying factory jobs. Politicians, welfare officials, and social commentators warned of the threat that mothers’ employment posed to (idealized) middle-class family life and domesticity.

Table 3: Married Women in BC Labour Force, as a percentage of all female workers in "female industries," 1935-46



Source: British Columbia, *Department of Labour Annual Reports*, 1935-46.

It was in this context that debates about wartime day nurseries played out. In the summer of 1942, the federal government announced the Wartime Day Nurseries Agreement (WDNA), a shared-cost initiative that would provide child care services for women working in war industries. In the midst of heated debates, as well as

⁷ British Columbia, *Annual Report of the Department of Labour*, 1942.

investigations by provincial welfare officials, BC declined to sign the agreement. The official explanation pointed to insufficient need: the rates of working motherhood were not high enough to justify the expense. Evidence from around the province suggested otherwise, however, as did the urgency of community-level undertakings to provide much-needed child care services to working mothers. Provincial officials, though, were content to let those private interests meet the increased need for child care.

During the interwar years, tension between maternal- and work-based access to social citizenship played out in mothers' pensions. By the end of the 1930s, the gendered and classed hierarchies of work and welfare had been firmly established: the state's prime concern was the protection of independent, male-breadwinner families. For working-class and working poor mothers -- those symbols of "failed" families -- public assistance was a measure of last resort designed for preservation of the work ethic. During the war, though, working mothers could not simply be pushed to the margins of welfare policy and instead were at the centre of political debates about social rights for mothers. Contained within those debates, as this chapter shows, was familiar uneasiness about respectable mothers working outside of the home. Given the priority assigned to male-breadwinner, female-homemaker families, it is perhaps not surprising that politicians, welfare officials, and various community members feared that providing publicly-funded day nurseries would encourage mothers to abandon their domestic responsibilities, inviting all manner of dangers: juvenile delinquency, family breakdown, and an immoral citizenry. For the mothers who worked out of necessity, child care could be provided the same way it always had been: in the private sphere, either by family, neighbours, or charitably-minded community groups.

The provincial government's rejection of the WDNA caused a great deal of consternation among working mothers' advocates, including some left-leaning female politicians, women's groups, and community-based child care providers. Debates about mothers' wartime employment gave child care politics its most prominent platform to date in twentieth-century BC, and from those debates emerged rhetoric about mothers' social citizenship that to that point had been visible only on the margins. A limited number of public figures, including MLA Laura Jamieson, argued that access to day care was a mother's right; that the war marked a new, permanent relationship between women and paid work that necessitated government involvement in child care. More common, however, were familiar entreaties for day nurseries to assist pitiable mothers to remain free from public assistance, to keep their families together, and to counteract the immorality represented by working-class neighbourhoods.

In the final stages of the war, a new type of political discourse entered into debates about child care: the need to train children in the ideals of democratic citizenship. This was a popular (and politically safe) argument for increasing the number of child care centres in the province, most of which were labelled play schools or kindergartens. But the citizenship-education impulse was removed from the specific needs and concerns of working mothers. Indeed, in the years immediately following the war, these play- and education-based centres were considered entirely distinct from the policy and programs designed to serve employed mothers. In the postwar ubiquity of nuclear-family ideology, any mother who worked outside the home was assumed to be acting out of economic desperation. Services like the Vancouver Day Nursery Association continued to treat working mothers as charity cases.

The Second World War and the years immediately following were, in many respects, pivotal years for the social citizenship of working mothers in BC. Debates about child care and the politics of mothers' employment were imbued with pre-war ideologies about women, work, and welfare, but the war also revealed changing attitudes towards working motherhood, especially at the level of local day care providers. Though the gap between work and family norms and the realities of working mothers' lives remained, the experience of war suggested that governments may have a responsibility to close that gap, and to provide a more meaningful version of social citizenship for working mothers.

The Wartime Day Nurseries Agreement

During the Second World War the Canadian labour force was closely regulated and controlled by the federal government, and more specifically by the National Selective Service (NSS). The head of the NSS, Arthur MacNamara, was responsible for the mobilization of workers on the homefront to ensure that Canada's economy remained healthy even as men left their jobs to serve as soldiers. Employing unemployed men was central to MacNamara's plans, but an even more valuable labour reserve was to be found in the ranks of Canada's women. The task of finding women to fill vacancies in industry was assigned to Fraudena Eaton who, in 1942, moved from her position on the British Columbia Labour Relations Board to head the NSS Women's Division (NSSWD).⁸ In the summer of 1942, when it became apparent just how badly women workers were needed for Canada's war effort, Eaton began to measure the national supply. The goal was, eventually, to train these women for wartime industrial jobs, and place them where they

⁸ Eaton eventually became the Associate Director of the National Selective Service.

were most needed, which often meant moving them across the country to more industrialized provinces like Ontario and Quebec.⁹ The first measurements of the female labour force focused on women aged 20 to 24 – these were the young, single, and presumably childless women considered most suitable for wartime work. It soon became clear, however, that the demand for workers could not be met without drawing on married women and mothers. These older women would serve two purposes: they could take up work in domestic and service positions, thereby freeing younger women for full-time factory work, and they could also work in factories themselves.

The official recruitment of married women into the labour force raised the question of child care. As Eaton noted, the demand for child care had become “a burden too heavy for private agencies” to carry alone.¹⁰ The problem was especially acute in central Canada where the majority of war industry and manufacturing was located. Increasingly, government planners began to float the idea that day care for mothers in war industries was the responsibility of the state. Throughout the spring and summer of 1942, federal and provincial child welfare officials held consultations to explore the possibility of government-sponsored day care centres. The recognized national experts in child welfare were brought into the discussion, including George Davidson, the executive director of the Canadian Welfare Council, and Dr. W.E. Blatz, the director of the Institute of Child Study at the University of Toronto.¹¹

⁹ Ruth Roach Pierson, *“They’re Still Women After All”: The Second World War and Canadian Womanhood* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1986); Jennifer Stephen, *Pick One Intelligent Girl: Employability, Domesticity, and the Gendering of Canada’s Welfare State, 1939-1947* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2007), 18, 25-29.

¹⁰ Pierson, *“They’re Still Women,”* 50.

¹¹ Pierson, *“They’re Still Women,”* 50-1.

At the end of the summer, the federal government announced the Dominion-Provincial Wartime Day Nurseries Agreement (WDNA), a shared cost program available to any province that wished to establish public day care services for the children of mothers working in “essential” war industries.¹² Full-day child care offered through the WDNA nurseries would be available to any child from 2 to 6 years of age, along with out-of-school care for children aged 6 to 16. Funds from the WDNA could also be used to provide home-based care for infants. Parents were responsible for a 35 cent fee per day per child for nursery care, and slightly less for after school care.¹³ The day nurseries’ capital and operating expenses were to be shared equally between the federal and provincial governments and, similar to private services, the WDNA nurseries would continue to rely on the voluntary assistance from women’s groups for their day-to-day operation.

Ontario and Quebec, as the provinces containing the most wartime industrial activity, were the first to adopt the agreement (Ontario on 29 July 1942, and Quebec on 3 August 1942).¹⁴ Over the course of the war, Ontario opened 28 day nurseries, many of them located in close proximity to factories that employed mothers. Others operated in community halls and church basements. Quebec operated only 6 WDNA nurseries, all of them located in Montreal. Alberta originally signed the agreement, but later backed out, claiming, in a controversial decision, that demand for wartime day nurseries was scarce.¹⁵ All other provinces argued that they were not “sufficiently industrialised,” and thus their

¹² Pierson, “*They’re Still Women*,” 51.

¹³ *Victoria Daily Colonist*, 3 July 1943, 6.

¹⁴ Pierson, “*They’re Still Women*,” 51.

¹⁵ Tom Langford, *Alberta’s Day Care Controversy: From 1980 to 2009 and Beyond* (Edmonton: Athabasca University Press, 2011), 20-21.

relatively low numbers of working mothers did not necessitate public money being spent on child care services.¹⁶

In British Columbia, decisions about the Wartime Day Nurseries Agreement fell largely to Isobel Harvey, the superintendent of neglected children, who worked in close consultation with Fraudena Eaton. When word of the program reached the west coast in the spring of 1942, Harvey immediately contacted Eaton; the two women were familiar with each other from Eaton's years in the BC Department of Labour. At that point, Harvey considered the WDNA no more than a "rumour," but she was anxious about the details should a program materialize: would the centres be self-supporting, or would they rely entirely on government funding? Would the day nurseries be available only to mothers working in defence industries, or all working mothers?¹⁷

Eaton's response was vague. Though she provided Harvey with a draft of the federal government's agreement with Ontario, she gave no indication of support for a BC wartime day nursery plan. In fact, at that point Eaton had likely already made up her mind about the unsuitability of the WDNA for BC, and soon after began to actively discourage it.¹⁸ Eaton was well-acquainted with the Vancouver Day Nursery Association (whose services were known as foster home care or foster day care) and similar private resources in other towns, and believed that they could absorb any extra demand for wartime child care. "Mrs. Eaton knows very well," Harvey explained, "our capabilities regarding foster-home care, and has told us we are not to branch into day nurseries until

¹⁶ Susan Prentice, "Workers, Mothers, Reds: Toronto's Postwar Day Care Fight," *Studies in Political Economy* 30 (Autumn 1989), 116-7. See also Patricia Schulz, "Daycare in Canada: 1850-1962," in *Good Day Care: Fighting for It, Getting It, Keeping It*, ed. Kathleen Gallagher Ross (Toronto: Women's Press, 1978), 150.

¹⁷ Harvey to Eaton, 27 June 1942, British Columbia Archives [hereafter BCA], GR 0883, box 18, file 17.

¹⁸ Eaton to Harvey, 2 July 1942, BCA, GR 0883, box 18, file 17; "Memorandum of Agreement," between Dominion Government and Province of Ontario, 1942, BCA, GR 0883, box 18, file 17.

we have exhausted our foster-home possibility.”¹⁹ Harvey’s opinion of the WDNA lined up with Eaton’s, and she agreed that public expenditures on day nurseries were unnecessary when the demand could be met privately. Harvey recognized, however, the possibility that demand might eventually exceed supply. She admitted that “if industry continues to expand here, one of these days we will run out of foster-homes.”²⁰ One of Harvey’s senior advisors, Laura Holland, urged caution before dismissing the WDNA entirely. Before any final decisions were made, Holland suggested, “the extent of the need should be determined.”²¹

BC’s Wartime Child Care Needs: Perception and Reality

Provincial welfare officials, particularly the field officers stationed throughout the province, did indeed make some effort to determine the “extent of the need” for wartime child care.²² And although Harvey and Eaton were convinced that private resources were sufficient, reports from welfare field officers often suggested otherwise. Throughout the war these officials, most of them women employed by the provincial welfare department, kept up a steady stream of correspondence with Harvey to keep her apprised of the child care situation in their respective jurisdictions.²³ In many cases, their reports highlighted worrying child care shortages. Harvey’s offered the same advice to each of them:

¹⁹ Harvey to Dalgleish (Tacoma Family Welfare Association), 3 August 1942, and Dalgleish to Harvey, 25 July 1942, BCA, GR 0883, box 18, file 17.

²⁰ Harvey to Dalgleish, 3 August 1942, BCA, GR 0883, box 18, file 17.

²¹ *Vancouver Sun*, 1 December 1942, 6.

²² The Department of Labour, for their part, was “alert to the problem that might arise if no provision is made for the care of the children of these working mothers,” though their actions throughout the war did not amount to much more than keeping “a very close check of this problem.” British Columbia, *Annual Report of the Department of Labour*, 1942.

²³ See Megan Davies, “Welfare Amazons or Handmaidens of the State?: Welfare Field Workers in Rural BC, 1935-42,” in *Child and Family Welfare in BC: A History*, ed. Diane Purvey and Chris Walmsley (Calgary: Detselig Press, 2005), 195-234.

encourage the development of private, home-based child care services, using the Vancouver Day Nursery Association as a model. “Foster day-care,” she urged repeatedly, “is much the cheapest and best procedure.”²⁴ Government involvement was a last resort, to be considered only in the face of an overwhelming child care crisis.

In many cases, however, reports coming in from around the province suggested that the scope of child care problem had stretched available private resources beyond their limits. Even Vancouver’s services were feeling the pressure, despite Harvey’s assurances that the Vancouver Day Nursery Association (VDNA) met the city’s entire wartime child care needs. The VDNA, in fact, was overtaxed by dramatically increased workloads. Their growing client base came from two sources. First, many more mothers were taking on domestic day work in the initial years of the war, eager to earn wages after years of suffering through the Depression. These mothers easily found domestic work in the homes of middle- and upper-class families, many of whom were “frantic” to replace their “permanent maids,” younger women who had jumped at the chance to earn much higher wages in wartime factory work.²⁵ By 1942, furthermore the expanding clientele of the VDNA also reflected job opportunities created by the wartime economy. Mothers reported having jobs in “canning, factory work, making...war uniforms, cleaning of railway coaches,” as well as “waitress work, clerking, hotel, laundry and cleaning plants, elevator operators, repairing steel drums.” All of these jobs, as the VDNA’s reports explained, were “considered essential to the war effort on the home front, and these workers have thereby released men, single women and those with no ties

²⁴ Harvey to York, 8 October 1942, BCA, GR 0883, box 18, file 17.

²⁵ Vancouver Day Nursery Association, *Annual Report 1941*, University of British Columbia Rare Books and Special Collections [hereafter UBCRBSC].

for active service.”²⁶ The result, however, was a “tremendous increase” in the need for child care spaces, with demand growing by about 50 percent from year to year.²⁷

In smaller cities and rural areas, too, private child care resources were overextended. Such was the case in Trail, where the smelter was employing mothers as replacements for enlisted men and boys. Madge York, the town’s welfare visitor, urged Harvey to pay heed to a developing child care crisis. “Ever since the Smelter starting employing women” in the fall of 1942, York informed Harvey, “I’ve seen the need developing.” The regional welfare supervisor, as well as the company president Mr. Blaylock, also suggested that government action on child care provision was needed.²⁸ So too did women in Trail, one of whom told Harvey that “[w]hat women are going to do with there [sic] children is becoming problem,” and offered to set up “a home” to care for the children of mothers working at the smelter.²⁹ Harvey told York that government intervention should be considered a last resort in Trail. “If things really begin to look as if you have to start something,” she wrote, “it may be possible for one of us to come up.” In the meantime, Harvey insisted that “[f]oster-home care such as is given by the Vancouver Day Nursery should suffice...[T]here should be no difficulty whatever in providing proper care for the children of Trail, if the smelter needs mothers for working.” Harvey also revealed that she considered the matter of day nurseries to be somewhat trivial, especially for the newly-hired regional supervisor Mr. Smith. “Tell Mr. Smith,” she joked

²⁶ Vancouver Day Nursery Association, *Annual Report 1942*, UBCRBSC.

²⁷ Vancouver Day Nursery Association, *Annual Report 1941*, UBCRBSC.

²⁸ York to Harvey, 6 October 1942, BCA, GR 0883, box 18, file 17.

²⁹ Mrs. J. Kisell to Superintendent of Neglected Children, 2 November 1942, BCA, GR 0883, box 18, file 17.

to York, “that I just love the idea of his starting day nurseries – I never would have thought he would start out this way.”³⁰

As in Trail, other resource-based towns were reporting wartime child care concerns. Kimberley’s crisis was brought to Harvey’s attention not only by the provincial field worker (Berna Holt), but also by the School Board, the Parent-Teacher Association, and women involved in various voluntary agencies in the community. The “neglect” of children of mothers employed by the town’s Concentrator called for government intervention, according to these sources. For the Parent-Teacher Association, the province’s decision not to participate in the WNDA was “rather staggering,” given the demonstrated need in their town and others.³¹ Harvey was typically noncommittal, again urging welfare officials to step up their efforts to secure private child care services. Berna Holt was able to establish a foster home system similar to Vancouver’s, which pleased Harvey because it “entailed no expense” for the provincial government.³² Though they had desired a public day nursery, Kimberley’s concerned citizens were somewhat appeased by the foster day-care system since it at the very least ensured that “no woman would have the excuse that she did not know where to have her child cared for.”³³

³⁰ Harvey to York, 8 October 1942, BCA, GR 0883, box 18, file 17.

³¹ For the School Board, the concern was “neglect” – that those children would be left unsupervised outside of school hours, presumably running wild on the streets, and would fail to do their homework and start skipping school. The School Board thought that the solution lay in the Public Health Nurse, who could “keep an eye on the homes of the children and if the situation became very lax,” then notify the proper authorities. “The general feeling is that inadequate supervision have been provided [sic] in many instances but no actual evidence of neglect has been established.” Holt to Zella Collins, 28 September 1943, BCA, GR 0883, box 18, file 17.

³² A central information hub was set up in the community where mothers were matched up with caregivers, and caregivers were given resources and support in getting their homes licensed by the WILB.

³³ Holt to Collins, 28 September 1943, BCA, GR 0883, box 18, file 17. Though apparently Holt ran into problems with the PTA, who thought that any kind of child care system should go well beyond custodial care. Their plan, essentially, was to force all children of working mothers (or otherwise “neglected”) into PTA-sponsored child care, where they would receive lessons in “habit training and character building.” As Holt told Harvey, “it took a great deal of talking to have some of the members realize that the working

Port Alberni was another resource town particularly affected by the wartime employment of mothers. There, the Alberta Pacific Lumber Company hired 200 women in the fall of 1942, thirty percent of whom were married with children. Community members and field officer Zella Collins raised alarms about the neglected, truant, and delinquent children that resulted from the town's high rates of working motherhood. The problem in Port Alberni, Harvey had to admit, was more serious than elsewhere, though she was still reluctant to pledge government support for day nurseries. Instead, Harvey commissioned Collins to do an extensive study of the social and economic circumstances of the town's working families. That mothers and communities had expressed the need for child care was not enough to convince Harvey. Along with the public health nurse, the school principal, and an official from the Department of Labour, Collins visited as many homes as possible to record the ages and numbers of children, parents' occupations, children's attendance records, and reports from the community about the conditions of the mother and family. Collins's reports spoke to much more than the need for child care. She passed judgment on mothers' behaviour and on the condition of their households, linking their perceived moral failings to their employment outside the home. Mrs. E., for example, who took up work at the lumber company after her husband deserted her, was criticized for being "very friendly with a man...who spends a good deal of time at the home." In the meantime, her children were left to "shift for themselves" while Mrs. E was at work.³⁴

parent of a child was the one to decide whether they would Place a child in a Foster Home or not." Evidently, the PTA members thought they could "impose Foster Home care on the workers."

³⁴ Zella Collins, "Married Women in Employment: Port Alberni and Alberni," 25 October 1942, BCA, GR 2738, box 1, file 2.

In Collins's view, Port Alberni's problems did not stem from a lack of quality child care; rather, the very fact of mothers' employment was at the root of the town's social plights. In that respect, the solution was not the establishment of public day nurseries or foster-home care – it was convincing mothers to give up their jobs. For BC welfare officials, in other words, mothers' work was not needed for the war effort. "I think with a little reasoning," Collins suggested, the lumber mill "would not employ any more married women if it could secure single girls."³⁵ There were indications that the lumber company was receptive to this logic. "The day we called," Collins reported, "Mr. Wright refused to employ a woman with four small children...on the basis that she could not work and give them proper care."³⁶ Not only would her mothering responsibilities impede her work responsibilities (since "she would be likely to miss a good deal through illness of small children, such as colds and sore throats"³⁷), but as a worker she would also be less of a mother.

Debating Mothers' Employment in Wartime BC

In Port Alberni, as in Trail, Kimberley, Vancouver and elsewhere, provincial welfare officials' reluctance to support public day nurseries stemmed from a more widespread uneasiness about the employment of mothers outside the home.³⁸ For Harvey and her advisors, questioning the "need" for government-supported child care went

³⁵ This meant that the mill would have to provide housing, recreation, and other services suitable for young single female employees, which Collins was eager to help secure.

³⁶ Zella Collins, "Married Women in Employment: Port Alberni and Alberni," 25 October 1942, BCA, GR 2738, box 1, file 2.

³⁷ Zella Collins, "Married Women in Employment: Port Alberni and Alberni," 25 October 1942, BCA, GR 2738, box 1, file 2.

³⁸ The debate was also heated in Kelowna, where women were increasingly being employed for fruit-picking jobs. There were tentative inquiries into day nurseries, but no real action. Regional Supervisor to Mrs. Edith Pringle (Deputy Inspector of Welfare Institutions), 12 July 1943, BCA, GR 0883, box 18, file 17.

deeper than the simple fact of a discrepancy between the number of children needing care and the number of spaces available. Instead, the question was more fundamental: was it really necessary for mothers to be employed? Was the evidence of inadequate child care throughout the province really a function of the wartime economy? That is, were mothers working because their labour was absolutely necessary for the war effort? Or were they simply (and selfishly) taking advantage of wartime job opportunities to earn extra money, even though their family did not require the extra wage? As Zella Collins explained, the “whole approach should be on the basis of our country’s need. If the country really needs them in industry...then the Government should see to it that their minds are at rest regarding their children.”³⁹ There had not been convincing evidence that the country truly needed these BC mothers, according to Collins, Harvey and their colleagues. Their decision not to offer child care support betrayed their underlying doubt that there was “such a labour shortage in BC to warrant the employment of women with young children.”⁴⁰

As discussions of the WDNA made their way through the bureaucratic channels, debates about mothers’ wartime employment were also unfolding on the public stage. Was mothers’ labour really essential to the war effort? Were their energies not better spent in the home? Though working motherhood had been a contentious issue in the past, these debates reached a new order of magnitude in the context of the war. For one, they were tied up in patriotic fervour; in questions about contributions to the country and how each citizen could best do his or her part in the war effort. More importantly, though,

³⁹ Zella Collins, “Married Women in Employment: Port Alberni and Alberni,” 25 October 1942, BCA, GR 2738, box 1, file 2.

⁴⁰ *Vancouver Sun*, 1 December 1942, 6.

debates about child care and mothers' employment during the war implicated *all* mothers and families. Up until the war, work outside the home was considered an unfortunate but inescapable reality for many poor and working-class mothers, whose child care needs were very low on the list of social welfare priorities. During the war, however, employed mothers came from the ranks of the respectable working- and middle-classes. As a result, child care policy was no longer a marginal welfare issue, but was tied up in assumptions and expectations around gender relationships in middle-class family and work life. The WDNA set off a debate that was about much more than a policy arrangement with the federal government – at stake was the question of whether society was faced with a new reality in ordinary British Columbian families, one in which mothers were paid workers and the government had a responsibility to protect and support them and their children.

For those who answered that question in the affirmative – that child care was needed to secure a woman's right to work outside the home – the war provided an opportunity for their argument to gain traction in a way that had not previously been possible. Support for mothers' employment was not even necessarily about the war effort, as it was in industry-heavy central Canada. Instead, working mothers' advocates capitalized on the political visibility of the issue to push for a need that had always existed: public support for child care. Leading the public charge in this respect was MLA Laura Jamieson, the CCF member for Vancouver Centre. Before becoming a politician, Jamieson had been long-established in women's rights activism in the province, beginning with suffrage campaigns. She had served as a juvenile court judge, and was in the leadership of the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom.⁴¹

⁴¹ Joan Sangster, "The Role of Women in the Early CCF," in *Beyond the Vote: Canadian Women and Politics*, ed. Linda Kealey and Joan Sangster (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1989), 118-138;

Jamieson's activism translated into her undertakings as a politician. Her years in the BC Legislature were taken up with battles for improved women's wages and working conditions, health care and insurance, and child welfare. During the war, Jamieson was among the most outspoken advocates for the rights of working women – rights, she said, that should continue after the war was over. Government-sponsored day care was among them. She insisted that the war had created a new freedom for women that would not spontaneously disappear in peacetime. "Women who have learned to enjoy economic independence," she argued, "are not going back to that barbarian state in which their husbands can ill afford to keep them." Publicly-funded child care should be, according to Jamieson, part of the reality of post-war life.⁴²

Other female politicians on the left voiced similar views. Grace MacInnis, Jamieson's CCF colleague in the Legislature, also championed state protection for women's opportunities and rights in the workplace, including public day nurseries.⁴³ Federal female politicians echoed MacInnis and Jamieson in BC. Among them was Dorise Nielsen, the Unity/Labour-Progressive MP from North Battleford, SK, and the first federal politician to hold political office while her children were still young. "The emancipation of women as wage earners has come to stay," Nielsen declared. "I feel I am speaking the views of every Canadian woman when I say that the women of Canada do not want, after the war is over, any suggestion that the only place fit for them is in the

Connie Carter and Eileen Daoust, "From Home to House: Women in the BC Legislature," in *Not Just Pin Money: Selected Essays on the History of Women's Work in British Columbia*, ed. Barbara K. Latham and Roberta J. Pazdro (Victoria: Camosun College, 1984), 395.

⁴² *Victoria Daily Colonist*, 3 July 1943, 6.

⁴³ Carter and Daoust, "From Home to House," 398. MacInnis also served as a CCF Member of Parliament for Vancouver-Kingsway from 1965-74.

home.”⁴⁴ Nielsen’s pronouncements, and those from BC’s provincial politicians, were given generous airing by supportive journalists. and were further circulated through publications like Jamieson’s socialist feminist political tract, *Women, Dry Those Tears*.⁴⁵

Changing views of women, work, and child care were also being expressed from the ground up. Wartime letters to the editor routinely featured support for working mothers, many of them responses to accusations that mothers were neglecting their children in selfish pursuit of extra income. That women felt compelled to respond to those accusations indicated the pervasiveness of the pressure to remain in the home, but it also suggested the growing defiance against expected domesticity. Mrs. F., for one, was disgusted with those who would have her give up her job. “This is so ridiculous,” she wrote, that,

[I]f it weren’t such an important issue one would be inclined to laugh. Let every woman realize, as so many of us do, that as women we are individuals, citizens of a democratic country, in which we should, and will, have the right to decide for ourselves that for which we are best suited.⁴⁶

Others resented the implication made by the Ontario Labour Minister that women in that province were “using child-care centres to unload their responsibilities.” When word of the minister’s statement reached BC, Grace McGaw, who was in charge of female personnel at the North Vancouver Shipyards, mounted a spirited defence of working mothers. “We have no reason to believe that any of the married women are working just to shirk the responsibilities of their homes,” she argued. “These women are

⁴⁴ *Victoria Daily Colonist*, 3 July 1943, 6.

⁴⁵ *Women, Dry Those Tears* is undated, but it was published in Victoria during the war years. It is reprinted in Beth Light and Ruth Roach Pierson, *No Easy Road: Women in Canada 1920s to 1960s* (Toronto: New Hogtown Press, 1990), 373-377. See also Susan Walsh, “Equality, Emancipation, and a More Just World: Leading Women in the B.C. CCF,” (M.A. thesis, Simon Fraser University, 1984).

⁴⁶ *Victoria Daily Times*, 12 February 1944, 11.

doing a real wartime job and only some crank wanting to shove women back into the homes would make such a statement.”⁴⁷

On the other hand, the wartime disruption to family life was considered by some to be more of a threat than an opportunity. Resistance to Jamieson and MacInnis’s views led, as the press gleefully reported, to “unseemly hair-pulling in the House,” particularly when Tilly Rolston, the Conservative MLA for Point Grey, voiced disdain for mothers who would give up their domestic responsibilities in favour of wage-earning.⁴⁸ Like Isobel Harvey, Rolston believed that public day nurseries were unnecessary because the extensive employment of mothers was unwarranted. “The absentee mother problem already has produced the most critical juvenile delinquency situation in our history,” she warned, and the strain to families caused by working mothers was making BC a “centre for divorces.” Instead of encouraging mothers to abandon their domestic duties, “women should be drafted for duty in the homes of the nation, to preserve those homes and stay the rising tide of juvenile delinquency.”⁴⁹ According to Rolston, working motherhood was undermining rather than strengthening the war effort:

“Military victory will be a hollow mockery if we produce a generation of demoralized and delinquent Canadians while winning this war to preserve our way of life. Your daily newspaper and local police record will show you how serious this threat has become. We have thousands of underfed, neglected children who are key carriers, while mother wields a blow torch.”⁵⁰

The suggestion that the state should provide care for children was “an insult to British Columbia mothers,” according to Rolston. What mothers wanted most of all was to

⁴⁷ *Vancouver Province*, 14 December 1943.

⁴⁸ *Vancouver Sun*, 12 February 1944, 13. Point Grey was an upper-middle-class riding in Vancouver.

⁴⁹ *Vancouver Sun*, 5 February 1944, 30.

⁵⁰ *Vancouver Sun*, 5 February 1944, 40.

“bring up their own children,” not to leave child-rearing to “some parched, dried-up, starched and cultured academician” in a day nursery.⁵¹

Rolston’s position touched a nerve for many BC citizens. The press was eager to scare the public with images of children “hungry and running wild,” who lacked mothers to prepare home-cooked meals and instead went to “a movie with a bag of peanuts.”⁵²

One woman, identified only as “Plain Jane,” warned of the threat that working mothers represented to society:

Look at many of your young mothers of today, one shudders as to the habits their children will achieve from their bad example. ... From scarlet painted lips dangles a cigarette, their legs encased in ill-fitting pants, of which one leg is often rolled up to the knee to show a bare unbeautiful leg. Their feet are poked into shoes that have loose heels and go clickaty clak as they slop along. Looking up at these bedraggled females are the innocent eyes of young children, how can one expect but that a girl will grow up sloppy as her mother, or hope for a boy to turn out manly, when his mother isn’t even womanly. Let us remember it takes real mothers and real homes to make real children.⁵³

For the opponents of day nurseries, the provision of child care was entirely outside the boundaries of acceptable public services. It was the government’s duty to preserve home life, not to encourage its destruction.

The public battles between Jamieson and Rolston and their respective supporters revealed an important new context for day care politics. No longer simply an inconsequential welfare measure for poor families, advocates offered another version of child care that was linked to women’s rights, choice, and opportunities. Wartime working motherhood and Jamieson’s defense of public day nurseries worked to challenge the

⁵¹ *Victoria Daily Colonist*, 4 March 1943.

⁵² *Victoria Daily Times*, 5 February 1944, 5. See also: *Vancouver Sun*, 5 February 1944, 30; *Vancouver Province*, 5 February 1944, 6; *Vancouver Province*, 26 February 1944, 6; *Vancouver Province*, 15 March 1944, 4.

⁵³ *Vancouver Province*, 3 March 1944, 4.

dominant assumption that there was something wrong with families that needed state assistance for child care; that intervention in the family should be reserved only for rehabilitative purposes. These arguments foreshadowed a kind of child care politics that would become more important in the late 1960s and early 1970s – and ultimately, which would gain more traction in those years. As the on-the-ground efforts at establishing day nurseries in Vancouver illustrated, the idea of day nurseries as women’s right was a discursive strategy with limited practical application in wartime BC.

**“Mother love hasn’t a chance at Jackson and Powell”:
Campaigns for Wartime Day Nurseries in Vancouver**

Though the province’s rejection of the WDNA did frustrate BC’s day nursery supporters, it did not put an end to their efforts entirely. Mothers still worked, whether for economic necessity or patriotic duty, and their children still needed child care. So while Jamieson and Rolston clashed over the ideological aspects of working motherhood, others were engaged in on-the-ground battles for the practical necessities of day care provision. In this realm, defenders and providers of child care remained in familiar – and politically safe – territory. They worked to garner support for existing day nurseries (and hoped for new ones) by focusing on the prevention of juvenile delinquency, the promotion of acceptable moral standards, and the need for social support to prevent the total breakdown of family life. To borrow a phrase from Susan Prentice, they “manipulated a conservative idea without challenging it,” by suggesting that day care was at the very least a stop-gap measure to prevent all the problems that Rolston and her supporters feared most.⁵⁴

⁵⁴ Prentice, “Workers, Mothers, Reds,” 120.

Members of the Vancouver Housewives' League spearheaded much of the day nursery advocacy during the war, and in fact they formed a day nurseries subcommittee to coordinate campaigns for government support. The Housewives' League was a consumer advocacy group that worked to combat the rising price of household goods, but its efforts also extended to other aspects of mothers' lives, including rent controls, low-cost housing, and child care. Many of the women in the Housewives' League, including well-known activist Effie Jones, had roots in the Depression-era Mothers' Council, a group of left-wing women who were active in relief protests and offered support for striking workers.⁵⁵

The Housewives' League day nursery committee worked in close alliance with the Consumers' Council of Vancouver, as well as with Council of Social Agencies. The League's day nurseries spokeswoman, Lillian Newitt, was a member of the Council of Social Agencies, as was E. Stanway Scanlon, the secretary of the Consumers' Council. Together, Newitt and Scanlon fought throughout the war to draw attention to the inadequacy of government support for day nurseries. In particular, they lobbied on behalf of the three private nursery facilities that had already been established in wartime Vancouver: Gordon House Play School and Alexandra House Play School, both in downtown-area community centres, and Strathcona Nursery School, located at the corner of Jackson and Powell streets in the working-class downtown east end. Although they were described as "playschools," these three centres were explicitly designed for "supervised play for children of working mothers" and to serve "homes where the mother

⁵⁵ Irene Howard, "The Mother's Council of Vancouver: Holding the Fort for the Unemployed," in *Vancouver Past: Essays in Social History*, ed. Robert A.J. McDonald and Jean Barman (Vancouver: UBC Press), 267-8, 286.

is away working all day.”⁵⁶ In fact, Strathcona Day Nursery was established by the Council of Social Agencies in September 1943 in anticipation of government support it assumed was forthcoming; the Council of Social Agencies executive director explained to the provincial government that Strathcona presented the perfect opportunity “to set a pattern for government supported nurseries for children of mothers engaged in war industries.”⁵⁷

The provincial government’s rejection of the WDNA was a blow to all three centres. Newitt and Scanlon could see that parents’ fees and charitable contributions were not enough to keep the centres afloat, especially not at Strathcona. They also did not think that day nurseries were simply a “civil responsibility.”⁵⁸ Scanlon, on behalf of the Council of Social Agencies, appealed to the city of Vancouver, hoping that officials in the city’s welfare administration had influence they could use at the provincial level to convince the government to rethink their decision on the WDNA.⁵⁹ The city was unreceptive to his pleas. After consulting with Zella Collins, the city informed Scanlon that they could see no reason to take action on day nurseries, nor to put undue pressure on the provincial government. Their reasoning reflected the influence of Collins and other provincial welfare officials: “To date the number of existing war industries in Vancouver has not necessitated the employment of women with children.”⁶⁰ According to the city’s

⁵⁶ *Vancouver Province*, 20 August 1943, 5; *Vancouver Province*, 7 September 1943, 22. The nursery schools were also useful because the children could be away from the household during the day if one of the parents had to sleep after working night shifts.

⁵⁷ Donald Granville Stewart, “Strathcona Nursery School: Its Contributions for Working Mothers” (MA thesis, UBC, 1956), 8.

⁵⁸ *Vancouver Sun*, 9 August 1943, 2.

⁵⁹ E. Stanway Scanlon to Alderman G. Miller, 30 July 1943, City of Vancouver Archives [hereafter COVA], City Social Service Department fonds, PR 449, 106-A-5, folder 13,

⁶⁰ Collins to W.R. Bone (City Social Service Department), 14 August 1943, COVA, City Social Service Department fonds, PR 449, 106-A-5, folder 13.

survey of the three centres, “only twelve mothers of those represented by the one hundred nineteen children in the play schools are engaged in war work.”⁶¹ Echoing provincial logic, the city clerk deemed the time not “ripe” for day nurseries.⁶²

For Scanlon and Newitt, the time had *always* been ripe, and the war simply created new urgency around an already-existing need. While the city and the province defined “war work” very narrowly, focusing only on women in previously all-male jobsites like the Burrard Dry Docks, day nursery advocates pointed out that mothers’ employment increased due to demand in any number of war-related jobs, even if they were not technically “industrial.”⁶³ Laundries, restaurants, hotels, dry-cleaning facilities, stores, offices: demand for all of these services increased in the war context, and so too did the numbers of women required to staff them.⁶⁴ By 1943 and 1944 the Vancouver Day Nursery Association estimated that upwards of 80 to 85 percent of its client mothers were engaged in war-related work.⁶⁵ This was irrefutable evidence, according to Newitt and Scanlon, that government support for day nurseries was not only justified, but necessary.

The Housewives’ League and Consumer Council campaigns for day nurseries may have been a response to a new reality in BC society, but their arguments were in many respects rooted in old ideas about charity and child welfare. For Scanlon and Newitt and others, the “working mother” and the “underprivileged child” were two sides

⁶¹ City Clerk to W.R. Bone, 20 August 1943, COVA, City Social Service Department fonds, PR 449, 106-A-5, folder 13.

⁶² *Vancouver Province*, 2 March 1943, 8.

⁶³ Collins to W.R. Bone (City Social Service Department), 14 August 1943, COVA, City Social Service Department fonds, PR 449, 106-A-5, folder 13.

⁶⁴ British Columbia, *Annual Report of the Department of Labour*, 1942.

⁶⁵ Vancouver Day Nursery Association, *Annual Report 1943* and *Annual Report 1944*, UBCRBSC.

of the same coin – and the families served by day nurseries were still very much considered to be from the ranks of the underprivileged poor and working-classes. The rhetoric they used did not reflect Jamieson’s orientation towards women’s rights; rather, they pointed to day nurseries’ ability to keep children off the streets, ensuring that they did not adopt immoral habits or become juvenile delinquents. Centres like Strathcona, Newitt argued, provided children with the enriching experiences they did not receive in their overcrowded, impoverished homes. Strathcona had its critics, especially those (like the Civilian Pensions Mothers Association) who argued that mothers should be encouraged to stay home to look after their children.⁶⁶ Newitt disagreed: “Mother love hasn’t a chance at Jackson and Powell,” she declared, implying that it was unrealistic to expect that poor and working-class mothers, even with a mothers’ pension, could provide the sort of care their children required.⁶⁷ As Newitt’s comments suggest, the approach of most of the social agencies fighting for day nurseries of Vancouver was guided by ideas about charity for unfortunate mothers and children.

The campaign for day nurseries in Victoria had a similar tenor. There, a delegation of concerned voluntary welfare agencies warned the Minister of Labour that “large numbers of Victoria women are working outside their homes, in the place of men who were in uniform,” and that it was “obvious that in most cases their pre-school-aged children [were] not receiving proper care and attention.”⁶⁸ Eventually they decided to create the Greater Victoria Nursery School Association to “co-ordinate the activities of

⁶⁶ *Vancouver Province*, 30 July 1943.

⁶⁷ *Vancouver Province*, 30 July 1943.

⁶⁸ *Victoria Daily Colonist*, 3 December 1943, 2. This representation to Pearson included representatives from the Council of Social Agencies, the James Bay Wartime Housing Centre, the Trades and Labor Council, the PTA, the Mothers’ Union, the Joint Labor Conference, the CCF Party, the Labor-Progressive Party, the Business and Professional Women’s Club, and the University Women’s Club.

all individuals and groups furthering the nursery school movement,” as well as provide educational and research services.⁶⁹ According to the Association, in one three-block radius alone in Victoria, over 75 preschool-aged children were left unsupervised while their mothers worked. They urged the province not only to sign on to the Wartime Day Nurseries Agreement, but to press the federal government to enlarge the definition of “war-working mother” to include *any* women who were taking men’s jobs (not just “essential” war jobs).⁷⁰ According to the popular rhetoric in Victoria, the “value of nursery schools,” lay in the benefit to “children from underprivileged homes,” who were otherwise headed for lives of “delinquency and crime.”⁷¹

In both Victoria and Vancouver, the push for public responsibility for child care arose from pity rather than entitlement; from a desire to “help families help themselves” in unfortunate circumstances. Day nurseries prevented children from becoming a “burden” on the community, and helped to “maintain a feeling of independence in those families,” who otherwise would have to resort to charity to get by.⁷² The entreaties for wartime day nurseries, in other words, contained direct echoes of the justification for the Vancouver City Creche and older charity-style notions of child welfare. Though public figures like Laura Jamieson tried to bring the rights of working mothers into child care politics, welfarist concern for children ultimately had more political purchase. With the support of day nursery advocates like Scanlon and Newitt, the gap between child care and working women’s rights continued to widen as the end of the war approached.

⁶⁹ *Victoria Daily Colonist*, 30 October 1943, 6.

⁷⁰ *Victoria Daily Times*, 3 December 1943, 6.

⁷¹ *Victoria Daily Colonist*, 30 October 1943, 6.

⁷² Vancouver Day Nursery Association, *Annual Report 1940*, UBCRBSC. The added bonus, of course, was that day nurseries made more economic sense than charity.

**“The day nursery is a training ground for democracy, not a dumping ground for babies”:
Child Care Policy and Practice in Postwar BC**

Politicians and welfare officials in BC were clearly worried about how postwar society would return to “normal” when men started returning home to their jobs. These concerns mirrored a larger national discussion about the “post-war problems of women,” which were discussed in a 1943 report by a subcommittee of the General Advisory Council on Reconstruction. Two British Columbian women, Grace MacInnis and Evelyn Lett, were members of the subcommittee, and they reported that women and their employers in Vancouver-area war plants for the most part saw “women as an integral part of the future economic structure.”⁷³ Observations like this led to the report’s inclusion of declarations about women’s “right as a citizen...to work at whatever occupation she wished and subsequently to enjoy ‘equality of remuneration, working conditions and opportunity for advancement’ with men.”⁷⁴ The report went so far as to recommend that “nursery schools” be available for working mothers, who were imagined as part of the postwar labour force albeit only on a part-time basis.⁷⁵

Yet postwar declarations about women’s equality in the labour market, as Jennifer Stephen argues, were little more than “gestures.” The report did not offer any substantial challenge to the belief that “preference in the postwar economy went to men,” and that

⁷³ Quoted in Gail Cuthbert Brandt, ““Pigeon-Holed and Forgotten”: The Work of the Subcommittee on the Post-War Problems of Women, 1943,” *Histoire Sociale-Social History* 15, no. 29 (May 1982), 247. The participation of women in the postwar labour force, furthermore, was “dependent upon the achievement of postwar prosperity,” as Brandt explains.

⁷⁴ Brandt, “Pigeon-Holed and Forgotten,” 253.

⁷⁵ Brandt, “Pigeon-Holed and Forgotten,” 249.

the preferred place for mothers was in the home.⁷⁶ Indeed, this ideology was inscribed into postwar policy-making across the country, which was uniformly focused on preserving the middle-class male-headed home as the bastion of a productive democratic society. The major policy undertaking in this respect was Family Allowances, which Nancy Christie interprets as a “means to foster postwar consumption, which in turn would ensure full employment, economic equilibrium, and social stability.” Full employment meant, of course, full male-breadwinner employment.⁷⁷ It was a given, therefore, that wartime day nurseries was not part of the postwar policy menu, a fact which Fraudena Eaton made very clear.⁷⁸ The WDNA, therefore, was cancelled in June 1946.

The cancellation of the Wartime Day Nurseries Agreement was very controversial in Quebec and especially in Ontario, as Susan Prentice has documented.⁷⁹ In BC, however, the announcement had little effect, most obviously because it was never in force in that province. Nevertheless, it came as a relief to many, who could claim a victory in the sense that BC had never resorted to public day care for war workers. Tilly Rolston, for one, was “glad” that “no large program for day nurseries” had been

⁷⁶ Stephen, *Pick One Intelligent Girl*, 202-203. For the most most thorough discussion of the postwar return to gender norms, see Ruth Roach Pierson, *They're Still Women After All*. Jeff Keshen sees more evidence of progress with respect to women's place in immediate post-WWII society, though still located within the continued persistence of gender stereotypes. Jeff Keshen, “Revisiting Canada's Civilian Women During World War II,” *Social History/Histoire Sociale* 30, 60 (1997): 239-266.

⁷⁷ Nancy Christie, *Engendering the State: Family, Work, and Welfare in Canada* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2000), 251. The policy orientation was also reflected in the “demobilization” of working women after the war. See Stephen, *Pick One Intelligent Girl*, esp. chpt. 6.

⁷⁸ Stephen, *Pick One Intelligent Girl*, 174-177.

⁷⁹ Susan Prentice, “Reds, Mothers, Militants: A History of the Postwar Daycare Campaigns in Toronto” (PhD thesis, York University, 1993).

established.⁸⁰ With the return of women to their homes, Rolston hoped, there would be “less need for day nurseries,” and the commotion would disappear.⁸¹

Even Rolston knew, however, that the need for day nurseries would not disappear entirely. The efforts to restore female domesticity were implicitly understood to be a middle-class concern; working-class women and non-white women still needed to work, a fact that policy-makers accepted.⁸² What Rolston and others hoped and expected, therefore, was that working mothers and their day care demands would disappear from mainstream policy discussions, once again demoted to that realm of social services concerned with the welfare and rehabilitation of failed families. Child care politics, in other words, could be separated from troublesome claims that day care was an entitlement due to every woman who chose to work. Day nurseries could return to their proper place: “a peacetime welfare activity to give assistance to those with large families and low incomes,” preferably one handled by private social agencies.⁸³ Even Vancouver’s day nursery operators agreed that it was “foolish” to continue offering child care services to the extent that it had been available during the war years. This would only encourage mothers, as Gordon House’s Kathleen Gorrie argued, to work for selfish reasons. The risk was that day cares would become a vehicle for “middle-class privilege rather than a need.”⁸⁴

For those who continued to work on behalf of existing day nurseries, the postwar preoccupation with the nuclear family required a new approach to advocacy. The charity

⁸⁰ *Vancouver Province*, 5 February 1944, 6.

⁸¹ *Vancouver Province*, 26 February 1944, 6.

⁸² See Stephen, *Pick One Intelligent Girl*, 202-203; and Veronica Strong-Boag, “Canada’s Wage-Earning Wives and the Construction of the Middle-Class,” *Journal of Canadian Studies* 29, 3 (Fall 1994), 5.

⁸³ *Vancouver Sun*, 1 December 1942, 6.

⁸⁴ *Vancouver Sun*, 23 February 1944, 13; *Vancouver Province*, 23 February 1944, 15.

framework remained important, but in the mid-1940s a new rhetoric appeared in day care debates: that of education and citizenship training. Day nurseries were touted as places where children could receive the lessons required to become upstanding democratic citizens, the foundation of a new peaceful society. The “nursery school” movement in Britain, which provided “working lessons in democracy,” provided a model for British Columbians.⁸⁵ Canada’s recognized expert in child psychology also endorsed a vision of a network of day nurseries that could be used to “train the child to fit the social pattern.”⁸⁶ According to proponents, this was especially important in poor and working-class neighbourhoods where both children and mothers suffered from a lack of moral and social guidance.

Newitt and the Housewives’ League day nurseries committee adopted this rhetoric wholeheartedly. “The day nursery,” she told the Women’s School for Democracy, “is a training ground for democracy, not a dumping ground for babies. Here, children learned self-discipline, order, co-operation – the art of living together.”⁸⁷ For this reason, the city and the province had an obligation to support centres like the Strathcona Day Nursery because it gave “children from overcrowded rooms and houses... education and training that they couldn’t otherwise receive.”⁸⁸ Mothers benefited too, because they were able to “learn a great deal about the physical and psychological needs of their children from contact with this kind of community life.”⁸⁹ Day nurseries had a distinct advantage over family day care, according to Newitt, because these democratic lessons

⁸⁵ *Vancouver Province*, 21 February 1944, 7.

⁸⁶ *Vancouver Sun*, 21 March 1944, 12; *Vancouver Province*, 21 March 1944, 9; *Vancouver Province*, 15 April 1944, 16.

⁸⁷ *Vancouver Sun*, 14 April 1944, 11.

⁸⁸ *Vancouver Province*, 26 February 1944, 6.

⁸⁹ *Vancouver Sun*, 3 March 1944, 4.

were best learned with a child's peer group.⁹⁰ The client mothers of Strathcona agreed: one woman's 3-year-old had "learned to share toys, take turns, and play happily with other children, as well as improving in disposition, concentration, and ability to care for herself." The day nursery had proved much more successful for this family than home-based care, which lacked the materials, resources, and training that a centre could provide.⁹¹

What this line of argument did, however, was further demote the particular child care needs of working mothers. Woven into education rhetoric, day nurseries and kindergartens became almost entirely separate from the issue of working motherhood. "[W]hether or not mothers go out to work," one mother urged, "let us have more nursery schools, the children need them."⁹² Eventually, this education- and training-oriented logic morphed into calls for an entirely new type of "infant schools." The Vancouver School Board approached the Minister of Education in 1944 to request an amendment to the School Act that would allow children as young as three to enroll in kindergartens (while kindergartens were private institutions, their operation was regulated by the provincial government).⁹³ This proposal was supported by none other than Tilly Rolston, who endorsed educational programs for young children provided that "we...have a knowledge that the mothers using the nursery schools are not doing it for their own particular benefit, but for the benefit of the children."⁹⁴ The interests and needs of working mothers were not even part of the picture.

⁹⁰ *Vancouver Province*, 14 April 1944, 14.

⁹¹ *Vancouver Province*, 17 May 1944, 4.

⁹² *Vancouver Province*, 17 May 1944, 4.

⁹³ *Vancouver Sun*, 29 March 1944.

⁹⁴ *Vancouver Sun*, 25 February 1944, 6.

In both Vancouver and Victoria, the kindergarten and preschool movement gained in popularity as the war drew to a close. Spring Ridge School in Victoria announced that it would offer “pre-primary” classes in the fall of 1944, the first to be “officially connected to the public school system in the province.” Though the government was only obligated to provide public school to children six years of age or older, the Spring Ridge kindergarten allowed children to be exposed to the habits and values of good citizenship as early as possible. Similar programs started in Vancouver in at least two schools (Henry Hudson and Dawson). The Vancouver School Board assumed most of the financial responsibility for these kindergartens, though they continually pushed the Department of Education to provide “more lower-age education.”⁹⁵ For children younger than five, centres offering “play time” services became popular in urban areas. Five centres opened in Vancouver in May 1944 as a joint project of the Council of Social Agencies, the Metropolitan Health Board, and Women’s Voluntary Services. These centres were open from 1 to 6 pm on weekdays for school- and pre-school-aged children of the wives of servicemen, not because they were engaged in paid work but because they deserved some leisurely time to themselves to run errands or do volunteer work.⁹⁶

The provincial government was not directly involved in the funding or provision of child care services, but it did record the growing numbers of kindergartens and preschools established across the province. BC was the first province to introduce licensing requirements for child care centres and homes, and in doing so lodged responsibility for child care firmly alongside other welfare functions. Beginning in 1943, all child care facilities – both centres and foster day homes – were required to apply for

⁹⁵ Along with the BC School Trustees’ Association. *Victoria Daily Colonist*, 22 June 1944, 5.

⁹⁶ *Vancouver Province*, 4 March 1944, 10.

licensing through the Welfare Institutions Licensing Board (WILB), and were held to health and safety standards determined by the provincial government.⁹⁷ In its role as overseer, the WILB emphasized the divergence between education-oriented early childhood care and welfare-oriented residual day care. Through the late 1940s and into the 1950s, this regulatory intervention assumed two separate channels of child care. The first, and more acceptable channel was classified by the WILB as “Kindergartens, Play Schools, and Nursery Schools.” The provincial government’s discussions of these types of centres had little to do with mothers’ situations. In terms of public utility, kindergartens and play schools were hard to oppose politically: they were training grounds for democratic citizenship, they provided socialization opportunities for children, and they gave mothers a few hours of well-deserved time to themselves. By 1950, the province was home to more than 100 licensed facilities in this category, including centres in Ocean Falls, Port Alberni, Sidney, and of course Vancouver and Victoria.⁹⁸

The subordinate second channel, on the other hand, was explained by the postwar pervasiveness of the nuclear family ideology that “virtually [made] invisible the many women who both raised children and worked outside the home.”⁹⁹ In this category, “Foster Homes for Day Care,” the WILB kept track of the services of the Vancouver Day

⁹⁷ The Welfare Institutions Licensing Act was passed in 1939. Its purpose was “to authorize government control, through a system of licensing, of institutions that provide services, with or without charge, for underprivileged persons in need of protection.” British Columbia, *Social Welfare Branch Annual Report*, 1948. The Welfare Institutions Licensing Board (WILB) was made up of the Provincial Health Officer or his deputy, the Superintendent of Child Welfare, and three other civil servants. The WILA was initially the responsibility of the Provincial Secretary, was shifted to the Department of Health and Welfare in 1950, and then to the Department of Social Welfare in 1960 (and Health became a separate department).

⁹⁸ Sandra Griffin, et.al, “Canadian Child Care in Context: Perspectives from the Provinces and Territories: British Columbia Report,” in *Canadian National Child Care Study*, ed. Alan Pence (Ottawa: Department of Health and Welfare, 1992), 22-23. The other area in which the provincial government was more actively involved in the 1950s was preschool teacher training. See Griffin, “British Columbia Report,” 24-25.

⁹⁹ Alvin Finkel, “Even the Little Children Cooperated: Family Strategies, Childcare Discourse, and Social Welfare Debates 1945-1975,” *Labour/Le Travail* 36 (Fall 1995), 94.

Nursery Association – now known as the Foster Day Care Association – and a similar program established in Victoria in 1952. As in Vancouver, the Victoria foster home system was explicitly welfarist and economic in its rationale; without these homes, “the family would have been forced to ask for public assistance.”¹⁰⁰ The foster home care stream, in other words, was based on familiar classist notions about the dependency of working mothers, and on the need to rehabilitate troubled or abnormal families. As the VDNA explained in the mid-1950s:

[W]hen a Mother makes application for the Day Care of her child it is our responsibility as caseworkers to solve her problem. Why do Mothers of young children have to work away from their families? ... [It is our] fervent hope that employment conditions for fathers of young families will improve so that more Mothers will be able to stay home.¹⁰¹

The provision of day care, according to the VDNA, was not as important as their role in “persuad[ing] the Mothers to remain at home.”¹⁰²

While the gap between education-based child care and welfare-based services to poor families was inscribed in provincial policy, at the level of private local service provision the distinction was often not so clear. The changing nature of the Strathcona Day Nursery in the 1950s showed this to be the case.¹⁰³ Immediately after the war, Strathcona had been available as a “general service” to any child as a playschool, but by the 1950s administrators began to narrow their services “to the more specific problem faced by the working mother.”¹⁰⁴ In this new orientation, “both education and home

¹⁰⁰ British Columbia, *Annual Report of the Social Welfare Branch, 1952*.

¹⁰¹ British Columbia, *Annual Report of the Social Welfare Branch, 1955*. Emphasis in original.

¹⁰² British Columbia, *Annual Report of the Social Welfare Branch, 1955*.

¹⁰³ The Strathcona Nursery School was still being run as a private organization, with funding from the Community Chest as well as Alexandra Neighbourhood Activities. Stewart, “Strathcona Nursery School: Its Contributions for Working Mothers,” 5.

¹⁰⁴ Stewart, “Strathcona Nursery School,” 10-11.

supplementation [were] closely interwoven.”¹⁰⁵ There was recognition on Strathcona’s part that working mothers were not necessarily charity cases, and that their children deserved the play-based educational benefits that went beyond the custodial care in foster home programs. Indeed, Strathcona’s client mothers worked for a number of reasons: economic need was most commonly cited, but mothers also insisted that they worked for “enjoyment,” because they “found it satisfying,” and because they “were not content to stay at home to be “...just a housewife.””¹⁰⁶ Virtually all of the Strathcona mothers also insisted that there was a great need for similar facilities throughout the city, since there was a lack of “desirable facilities for child care while [mothers] worked.”¹⁰⁷

The case of Strathcona illustrated an important reality in postwar BC: mothers had not retreated back into the home, they continued to work for both economic and personal reasons, and there was a continued need for a more meaningful approach to child care policy and practice in provincial politics. While some provincial officials clung to the belief that “nurseries give mothers too much time for beer parlors,” others were willing to acknowledge that the public provision of child care was an ever more important component of the provincial political agenda.¹⁰⁸ The social welfare department reported in 1953 that requests for day care “for children of mothers who do not *need* to work to supplement the family income but who *want* to work are increasing.”¹⁰⁹ This raised an important question:

¹⁰⁵ Stewart, “Strathcona Nursery School,” 8.

¹⁰⁶ Stewart, “Strathcona Nursery School,” 55-57.

¹⁰⁷ Stewart, “Strathcona Nursery School,” 88.

¹⁰⁸ *Vancouver Province*, 16 June 1949, 42. This was the response given by Edna Page, the Deputy Superintendent of Welfare, to Mrs. H., who wanted to establish a day nursery but was denied licensing because she did not have a social work diploma.

¹⁰⁹ British Columbia, *Annual Report of the Social Welfare Branch, 1953*. Emphasis added.

While everyone agrees it is important for mothers to stay at home and that their most important job is to care for their children, should disapproval be shown about a mother going to work if good care for her children can be provided and she prefers it that way?¹¹⁰

In the coming years, policy-makers would be forced to grapple with this question and to carefully consider the government's responsibility to working mothers.

* * *

If there ever was a moment during the twentieth century when the “reserve army of labour” explained child care policy, the Second World War, when women's labour was vital to the war effort, would surely be it.¹¹¹ That BC did not adopt the Wartime Day Nurseries Agreement, however, despite evidence of rising numbers of mothers in the labour force and of the desperate child care circumstances for many of those mothers, challenges the validity of the reserve army thesis. Instead, social, ideological, and economic forces better explain BC's wartime day care rationale. Alvin Finkel and Susan Prentice's studies of child care policy in other parts of the country during and after the war offer the same conclusion.¹¹² Prescriptions against middle-class mothers' work outside the home carried a great deal of weight, even in the unusual circumstances of the war. Provincial welfare officials demonstrated reluctance, as they had during the Depression, to intervene in families in a way that might upset traditional gender roles.

¹¹⁰ British Columbia, *Annual Report of the Social Welfare Branch, 1953*.

¹¹¹ For an article that argues for the utility of the reserve army of labour thesis, see Ronnie Leah, “Women's Labour Force Participation and Day Care Cutbacks in Ontario,” *Atlantis* 7 (1981): 36-44. For a discussion of this thesis that complicates the notion of a female labour reserve and its relationship to day care policy, see Ruth K. Abbott and R.A. Young, “Cynical and Deliberate Manipulation? Child Care and the Reserve Army of Female Labour in Canada,” *Journal of Canadian Studies* 24, 2 (1989): 22-38.

¹¹² Finkel, “Even the Little Children Cooperated”; Prentice, “Workers, Mothers, Reds.”

Public child care, from this perspective, was a sure way to encourage the disruption of the family. The best solution for working mothers' child care needs, according to welfare officials, was to discourage employers from hiring mothers, and in cases where it could not be avoided, to let private day care provision pick up the slack, much the way it had always done for working-class and poor mothers. The war was just a temporary disturbance to be ridden out, and when peace returned day nurseries could go back to their normal functions of providing rehabilitative welfare services to disadvantaged or broken families. The provincial government's limited forays into child care through licensing regulations reinforced the assumption that the education-based services for children of middle-class families remained separate from the child care needs of working mothers.

But while the war mainly represented continuity from the perspective of social policy-making, there were signs that expectations around work and motherhood were beginning to shift. For one, after the war working mothers did not disappear from the labour force in the way that provincial welfare officials expected.¹¹³ For another, high profile politicians like Laura Jamieson were challenging accepted attitudes towards working mothers, and asking the government and the public to reconsider the boundaries of social citizenship. Finally, at the level of local private service provision, day care providers were beginning to think of themselves as not just charitable services, but as centres where the interests of children and the interests of working mothers were not incompatible – that is, that they offered practical and educational care for children whose mothers derived personal satisfaction from working outside of the home. From the level

¹¹³ The BC Department of Labour stopped keeping track of the proportion of married women in the labour force in 1946, so exact numbers of mothers in the workforce is hard to know.

of the provincial government down to local welfare providers, there was a tentative and growing sense in BC that child care could no longer be considered simply a residual charity-styled service for deviant families, but that it might be considered a legitimate public service in recognition of the social rights of working mothers.

Chapter 5

“The working mother is here to stay”: The Making of Provincial Child Care Policy in the 1960s

If the introduction of public child care services was to be determined by some minimum quantity of working mothers in society – as provincial welfare officials insisted during the war – by the 1960s, few would deny that the critical mass had been reached. In 1961, 22 percent of married women across Canada were working, a figure that had risen from 4 percent in 1941 and would rise to 41 percent by 1975.¹ In British Columbia, women made up nearly one-third of the 1960s labour force, and almost one-half (45 percent) of those women were mothers, slightly above the national average of 40 percent.² For many of these mothers, a “two phase” cycle of wage work had developed, in which they worked until they had their first child and then again when their children were older.³ It was increasingly common, furthermore, for mothers to work even when their children were young. By the middle of the 1960s, over half of BC’s working mothers had children under the age of 14 requiring either full-day or after-school child care, or both.⁴

¹ Canadian Council on Social Development (CCSD), *Day Care: Report of a National Study* (Ottawa: Canadian Council on Social Development, January 1972), 8; Joan Sangster, *Transforming Labour: Women and Work in Postwar Canada* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2010), 19.

² British Columbia, *Department of Labour Annual Reports, 1962-67*. In 1962, women made up 26 percent of the total labour force; in 1963, 28 percent; in 1964, 29 percent; in 1965, 30 percent; in 1966, 30 percent; and in 1967, 31 percent. Rianne Mahon, “The Never-Ending Story: The Struggle for Universal Child Care Policy in the 1970s,” *The Canadian Historical Review* 81, 4 (December 2000), 590.

³ Sangster, *Transforming Labour*, 19.

⁴ Women’s Bureau, Department of Labour, *Working Mothers and Their Child Care Arrangements* (Ottawa: Queen’s Printer, 1970).

Mothers' permanent presence in the work force was still accompanied by a great deal of ambivalence and anxiety, but no one could deny that it had significant policy implications. Rather than "attempting to devise means of keeping the mothers home," Alvin Finkel explains, politicians and planners across the country had to start thinking about "insuring the best child care" for their children.⁵ In BC, the Department of Social Welfare admitted as much as early as 1956: "If it is to become a permanent part of Canadian culture that married women with young children are needed as part of the labour force, then a good day-care programme must be worked out for the care of these children."⁶

Though the Social Credit government under W.A.C. Bennett was largely "unwilling to spend money on social programs" through its entire twenty year administration (1952-72), as Cheryl Collier notes, a "growing population and rising social service demands" left Bennett's government with few options but to invest in a modest day care program in the mid-1960s.⁷ By 1966, tangible action became feasible thanks to newly-available money from the shared-cost Canada Assistance Plan (CAP), the federal government's efforts to consolidate social service spending. Under the CAP-sponsored day care program, BC mothers who were social assistance recipients were eligible for subsidies to help offset the costs of child care.⁸ There were strict conditions

⁵ Alvin Finkel, *Social Policy and Practice in Canada: A History* (Waterloo: Wilfrid Laurier Press, 2006), 205.

⁶ British Columbia, *Social Welfare Branch Annual Report*, 1956.

⁷ Cheryl Collier, "Governments and Women's Movements: Explaining Child Care and Anti-Violence Policy in Ontario and British Columbia, 1970-2000" (PhD diss., University of Toronto, 2006), 116.

⁸ Similar programs were set up in other provinces. See, for example, James Struthers, *The Limits of Affluence: Welfare in Ontario* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press and Ontario Historical Studies Series, 1994), 242-3; and Tom Langford, *Alberta's Day Care Controversy: From 1908 to 2009 and Beyond* (Edmonton: Athabasca University Press, 2010).

attached to eligibility: subsidies were available for child care only in licensed facilities, which meant that for mothers with children younger than 3, home-based foster day care was the only type of arrangement eligible for support. Government support, furthermore, did not extend to financial assistance for day care centres themselves, either in the form of capital or operating expenses. The state's involvement in day care was about the specific need of individual mothers, not the broader societal concern for widely-accessible day care.

Did this modest day care program represent a reshaping of social citizenship's boundaries in BC? After all, not since the Vancouver City Crèche had any level of government acknowledged, through the creation of policy, that working mothers were entitled to public support for the care of their children. For the decades between 1920 and 1960, the logic of state intervention and non-intervention had revolved around the central goal of maintaining the integrity of "traditional" gender norms in the family and the workforce, and the state's responsibility to mothers operated within the confines of female domesticity. Within this welfare paradigm, mothers' waged work was a necessary evil in the name of preventing welfare dependency, but it did not entitle them to the work-based social benefits of male breadwinners, nor should it be endorsed more broadly through government-sponsored day care. Ultimately, working motherhood was an unfortunate state of affairs for women on the margins of welfare policy and of society. In the 1960s, however, working mothers were inching their way towards the mainstream. The first limited forays into provincial day care programming offered the potential to open the boundaries of social citizenship in such a way as to legitimize the overlap of earning and caring, rather than assuming that overlap to be a sign of family failure.

But this reading of 1960s day care policy should not be taken too far. A closer look at the details of provincial day care subsidies, the program's relationship to the national "war on poverty," and the ways that local welfare groups were able to make their imprint on provincial policy reveals little alteration in longstanding approaches to social citizenship. Instead, social support for working mothers remained very much the same as it had always been: limited by assumptions about gender and class, and contingent upon certain mothers' relationship to paid work. The new reality of mothers working outside the home, crucially, was not accompanied by any reorientation of the gendered division of work and care. As Joan Sangster has shown, the idealization of the nuclear, male-breadwinner family remained pervasive even in the 1960s, and it continued to "[constitute] the ideological backdrop to women's work outside the home."⁹ Though mothers were begrudgingly accepted as wage workers, their presence in the work force was still considered markedly distinct from men's. Women were not entitled to a "family wage" or any of the benefits inherent to the family-wage-earner. More importantly, mothers were still assumed to have primary responsibility for child care, whether they arranged for it through family, friends, or through private foster day homes or day nurseries.¹⁰ In this prescriptive domain, day care assistance was not something that was available for just any working mother – it was linked to family crisis, and provided as a "a service for the poor."¹¹

⁹ Sangster, *Transforming Labour*, 50-51.

¹⁰ The prevalence of the ideal of the male-headed family in which mothers did the unpaid work of caregiving, even in the midst of mothers' increasing labour force participation, is explained in Veronica Strong-Boag, "Canada's Wage-Earning Wives and the Construction of the Middle Class, 1945-60," *Journal of Canadian Studies* 29, 3 (1994): 5-25. See also Joan Sangster, *Earning Respect: The Lives of Working Women in Small-Town Ontario, 1920-1960* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1995), chap. 8.

¹¹ Martha Friendly and Susan Prentice, *About Canada: Childcare* (Black Point, NS: Fernwood Publishing, 2009), 75.

Perhaps what is most telling about the nature of 1960s day care policy is that its administration was housed in the Department of Social Welfare – not in the Department of Labour. In this respect, the BC story follows from the national one. There were pressures from “state feminists” within the federal bureaucracy in the 1960s for day care to be considered an issue of women’s employment equality. Marion Royce, the director of the Women’s Bureau in the Department of Labour, was insistent that day care was needed in recognition of the particular needs of mothers as worker-citizens, a point she tried to reinforce through studies such as *Day Care Services of Children of Working Mothers*, released in 1964. As Rianne Mahon has shown, however, Royce’s position gained “little sympathy” from other federal bureaucrats or indeed from the wider public, who were willing to recognize working mothers in theory, but not willing to inscribe the matter of their distinct employment concerns into public policy. Instead, Royce and the Women’s Bureau followed the lead of the Family and Child Welfare Division of the Canadian Welfare Council, which was advocating for the inclusion of day care on the federal policy agenda not as a labour issue, but as a welfare one. This ensured that day care policy making was removed from issues of women’s employment equity, and instead was considered a matter for social workers and welfare officials.¹²

When the opportunity for day care funding arrived in the form of CAP in 1966, the pattern had therefore been established. Government-sponsored day care in BC – like the provision of mothers’ pensions before it – was reserved for families in which a mothers’ work signalled a “social crisis.” Linked to the receipt of social assistance, and embedded within CAP, BC’s day care program had an explicitly welfarist orientation.

¹² Mahon, “The Never-Ending Story,” 593. See also Annis May Timpson, *Driven Apart: Women’s Employment Equality and Child Care in Canadian Public Policy* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2001), 18-20.

Only the most “needy” of mothers were eligible for subsidies, and provincial welfare officials considered their access to day care to be a requisite service that facilitated their “rehabilitation” through waged work or job-training programs. Government-backed day care, in other words, was an anti-poverty strategy designed to restore normalcy to low-income families, and to provide children with access to the moral and educational training considered to be in short supply in their own homes. As Mahon points out, this rationale for day care was amenable for both policy-makers, welfare advocates, and in public opinion because it “left the nuclear family unchallenged.”¹³

Limited though they were, the provincial government’s experiments in day care subsidies offered hope for local welfare groups. Well before the introduction of CAP in 1966, organizations such as the Vancouver Community Chest had been running campaigns for more and better day care, much of their lobbying aligning with the welfare-based logic that came to define the provincial program. Their efforts stemmed from long-held frustrations with government, which had been ignoring their pleas for support since the establishment of private wartime centres like the Strathcona Day Nursery. A feeling of guarded optimism surrounded the announcement of the subsidy program, and the Community Chest (later known as the United Community Services) and other social agencies willingly did their part in efforts to create new child care spaces. They also cooperated with provincial government officials through the Advisory Committee on Day Care, which was meant to evaluate the state of child care services, provide direction for future policy, and put the new provincial policy to the test in Vancouver’s Marpole Day Care Centre. Cautious hope soon turned into frustrated

¹³ Mahon, “The Never-Ending Story,” 593.

expectations, however. When policy was put into practice, the inadequacy of provincial policy was thrown into sharp relief, even in the closely-supervised Marpole centre. Day care advocates insisted that the subsidy program was meaningless without a commitment from the government to fund not just individual ‘needy’ mothers, but to put financial resources into capital and operating expenses of day care centres. As the decade drew to a close, it was clear to many, including those among the ranks of an emerging women’s rights movement, that until social citizenship was premised upon women’s *right* to work rather than their *obligation* to do so, provincial day care services would remain hugely inadequate.

Rising Concerns about Child Care in the Early- and Mid-1960s

Aside from the licensing responsibilities of the Welfare Institutions Licensing Board, the provincial government was virtually absent in day care services before 1966.¹⁴ Local agencies and community groups were left to cobble together arrangements on a small scale, occasionally with meager short-term grants from municipal governments. Aside from kindergartens and playschools (which were not affordable or useful for many working families), the foster day care system remained the primary type of care designed for working mothers. By 1960, even those private centres that had developed out of wartime working women’s needs – among them, the Strathcona Day Nursery – had largely shifted their operations to focus on the management of family day homes.¹⁵ But

¹⁴ Between 1942, when child care services were brought under the purview of the Welfare Institutions Licensing Board (WILB), and 1966, the provincial government’s role in day care was limited to licensing. Both institutions (for the care of children aged 3-5) and private family homes (which could care for children under-3) were eligible to receive WILB licenses for the care of children, and the Department of Social Welfare kept careful track of both. 1966 was the first year that the specific category of “group day care” appeared in the Department of Social Welfare reports.

¹⁵ British Columbia, *Department of Social Welfare Annual Report*, 1960.

while the number of kindergartens and preschools grew steadily, mostly as a result of their popularity as educational and socialization resources among middle-class families, the same could not be said for family day homes. Throughout the late 1950s and early 1960s, the number of licensed private homes stayed fairly steady, with around 30 to 35 operating each year.¹⁶ Furthermore, the foster day care system did not vary from its welfare orientation; if anything, its operation was shifting even closer to that of child welfare for “broken families” and those with “social problems.”¹⁷ The department even suggested in 1962 that foster day homes should be subject to the same oversight as boarding homes for troubled and disadvantaged children.¹⁸

In the early 1960s, a ranged of concerned voices began to draw attention to a developing day care crisis in BC. Their anxiety was informed by a rising trend in working motherhood that showed no sign of slowing down. While the rates of female labour force participation grew dramatically beginning in the mid-1950s, the proportion of those female workers who had young children was also increasing.¹⁹ Relatively precise figures about working mothers’ labour force participation in the mid-1960s are available thanks to the federal Department of Labour Women’s Bureau’s *Working Mothers and Their Child-Care Arrangements*, which was based on data collected in 1967.²⁰ At that point, nationally, one in five mothers with children under 14 years of age were working for wages.²¹ Put another way, 24 percent of the female labour force were mothers, and over

¹⁶ British Columbia, *Social Welfare Branch and Department of Social Welfare Annual Reports*, 1956-1965.

¹⁷ Foster Day Care Association of Vancouver, *Annual Report*, 1955, UBCRBSC.

¹⁸ British Columbia, *Department of Social Welfare Annual Report*, 1962.

¹⁹ This was a national trend; see Timpson, *Driven Apart*, 8.

²⁰ Women’s Bureau, *Working Mothers and Their Child Care Arrangements*.

²¹ Nationally, the percentage of married women who worked for wages doubled between 1951 and 1961, from 11 percent to 22 percent. Susan Crompton and Michael Vickers, “One Hundred Years of Labour Force,”

half of those had children under 6 years of age. In British Columbia, 21 percent of mothers with children under 14 participated in the labour force.²² Of the province's total female labour force, the proportion of those who were mothers was much higher than the national average: 45 percent of BC's working women were mothers. In 32 percent of those cases, the children were over 6 years of age (and thus did not require full-day care). Another 15 percent of working mothers, however, had children under 6, and yet another 15 percent had children both older and younger than 6.²³ All told, almost one-fifth of children under 14 in BC had a working mother, which translated to 105,000 children.²⁴

Working Mothers and Their Child-Care Arrangements did not gather provincial data about the number of hours that mothers worked, nor about the details of specific child care arrangements for each province, but national figures hint at trends in British Columbia. Mothers were more likely to be full-time workers if their children were between the ages of 6 and 13, but just barely. 64 percent of mothers with school-aged children (6-13 years of age) worked full-time hours, but 63 percent of mothers with children under 6 also topped 35 hours of work per week.²⁵ The vast majority – 84 percent -- of the children with working mothers required care, whether they were under 6 and required full-day care, or whether they were school-aged and required afternoon or

Statistics Canada: Canadian Social Trends, no. 57 (Summer 2000), 8. In 1941, the rate of married women who worked was 4 percent, and by 1980, half of married women were participants in the labour force.

²² These figures excluded women who worked in family businesses, and who were unemployed and looking for employment when the survey was being done.

²³ Women's Bureau, *Working Mothers and Their Child-Care Arrangements*, 20.

²⁴ Women's Bureau, *Working Mothers and Their Child-Care Arrangements*, 37.

²⁵ This figure relates to mothers with children under 6 *only*; 60 percent of working mothers who had children both older and younger than 6 worked full-time. The majority of working mothers were in clerical, service, and professional and technical occupations: 30, 24, and 17 percent, respectively. Women's Bureau, *Working Mothers and Their Child-Care Arrangements*, 26, 34.

evening care.²⁶ What, then, were the child care arrangements for these children? In about two-thirds of the cases, the children of working mothers were cared for in their own home, either by their father, or by older relatives and friends.²⁷ Care by family and friends outside of the home was the strategy of 15 percent of working mothers; the same proportion had no regular arrangement and was forced to seek out child care on an ad hoc basis.²⁸ Only 1 percent of working mothers could rely on the services of a day nursery or nursery school, a figure that rose slightly to 3 percent when only children aged 3-5 were considered.²⁹

The policy implications of these changing patterns in work and family life was impossible to ignore, both at a national and provincial level. Clearly, as one BC social agency remarked, “the working mother is here to stay.”³⁰ Reports and studies began to appear in the early 1960s calling attention to the inadequacy of child care in the province. A 1961 report commissioned by the provincial government identified “substitute day care for the children of working mothers” as a key policy area requiring research. The report’s author, Michael Wheeler, observed that although more than 40 percent of working women were married (and thus likely had children), little was known about the quality and quantity of day care available in the province.³¹ Rising concern about access to day care was fuelled in part by growing dissatisfaction with the foster day home system.

²⁶ Women’s Bureau, *Working Mothers and Their Child-Care Arrangements*, 39. For 12 percent of children, their mothers worked only during school hours. 4% of the children of working mothers were cared for by mothers at their jobs (i.e. as a boarding house keeper or foster home mother).

²⁷ Women’s Bureau, *Working Mothers and Their Child-Care Arrangements*, 41.

²⁸ Women’s Bureau, *Working Mothers and Their Child-Care Arrangements*, 41.

²⁹ Women’s Bureau, *Working Mothers and Their Child-Care Arrangements*, 41.

³⁰ Advisory Committee on Day Care, United Community Services, “Day Care Services,” 16 July 1968, BCA, GR 135, box 2, file 18.

³¹ Michael Wheeler, “A Report on Needed Research in Welfare in British Columbia,” March 1961, BCA, GR 0128, box 8, file 71. Wheeler would go on to write the CCSD’s report on day care in 1972.

Local welfare officials in Vancouver, for example, made public their concern about the “shocking conditions” in many foster home settings.³²

The most thorough and pointed critique of BC’s day care situation came in 1965, when the Vancouver Community Chest released its *Report on Day Care Needs*.³³ The impetus behind the report revealed something of an important shift in the rhetoric around day care, at least among local day care advocates – and the committee behind the report represented an impressive array of local welfare officials, including representatives from Foster Day Care, Vancouver’s Child Day Care Centre, Vancouver Co-operative Preschools, the City Social Service Department, Catholic Pre-School Services, the UBC Child Study Centre, Vancouver Children’s Aid Society, City Health Services, the provincial Welfare Institutions Licensing Board, and the Community Chest and Council’s Welfare and Recreation Committee.³⁴ In their *Report on Day Care Needs*, the committee began to tentatively pull day care away from its long-held association with residual welfare services. It was no longer appropriate, the committee said, to think about day care as a service of “last resort” for poverty-stricken families. The new reality of work and family life meant that day care should be available even to “normal families with normal children” -- that is, middle-class families, not necessarily just those who had suffered

³² “A Brief on the Urgent Needs in Child Welfare Services in British Columbia,” 13 September 1965, BCA, GR 0128, box 8, file 72. This brief was submitted by a “Delegation Representing a Group of Independent Citizens.”

³³ Community Chest and Councils of the Greater Vancouver Area, Welfare and Recreation Council, *Report on Day Care Needs* (June 1965).

³⁴ Community Chest, *Report on Day Care Needs*, 1.

some kind of social breakdown.³⁵ Day care had “unique values of its own” to offer to all children and their parents.³⁶

The demands that issued from the report were simple: that more day care spaces were needed to match the growing numbers of working mothers in the city and the province. The report estimated that the rates of working motherhood in Vancouver were higher than provincial figures: 55 to 60 percent of the city’s female labour force were mothers, compared to 45 percent province-wide. The high rate of mothers’ employment combined with inadequate child care services meant that 11,000 of the city’s children were without adequate day care.³⁷ 6,000 of those “acutely” required improved care. The report’s authors suggested that this likely underestimated the need for day care, since many mothers were reluctant to admit to needing child care when working outside the home was still largely stigmatized. “There was a natural tendency,” the committee observed, “for mothers to be protective in replying to questions about the care of their children.” This was especially true of mothers with infants and very young children. For the committee, this did not mean that there was less demand for under-3 care; if anything, it meant that focusing on quality care for infants and toddlers was even more imperative.³⁸

The Community Chest’s high-profile report did much to publicly catapult day care onto the provincial political agenda. A sense of deep dissatisfaction with the government’s approach to child care permeated every section of the report. The list of the

³⁵ Community Chest, *Report on Day Care Needs*, ii.

³⁶ Community Chest, *Report on Day Care Needs*, i.

³⁷ The report identified 10 small-scale private day care centres, along with several foster day homes. Seven of the homes that provided care were not licensed. According to the report, these services were able to meet 10 percent of the need for child care.

³⁸ Community Chest, *Report on Day Care Needs*, 20. Statistics are located throughout the Report.

committee's grievances resonated widely, especially with day care providers throughout the city and the province who had been struggling for years to maintain their operations based only on the inconsistent support of private donors, and whose appeals for help had been repeatedly dismissed by provincial welfare officials.³⁹ This report laid out a detailed vision for the government's role in day care, and in doing so laid the onus for action on the province. "All departments dealing with health, welfare and education," were implicated in the subject of day care, according to the Community Chest. The report's practical suggestions focused on increasing the number of child care spaces, included hiring more WILB staff "to enable an aggressive program of licensing and inspection," and urging the city could ease its fire and health regulations to allow more homes to qualify for licensing.⁴⁰

Yet for all its insistence that day care was a service to which every "normal" family should have access, the report was still largely imbued with enduring rhetoric about working mothers and welfare. The report's authors earmarked the Department of Social Welfare for the bulk of day care responsibility, where child care programming could be developed along class-specific conditions. While middle- and upper-class families deserved increased access to services, they should also be expected to pay for day care. For the report's authors, this was apparently self-explanatory; it was simple common sense that if a working mother was in a financially comfortable situation, she should pay for child care. Accordingly, the services designed for these families – commercial and for-profit day cares – received the least amount of attention in *Report on*

³⁹ See, for example, Board of Directors, Gordon Neighbourhood House to W.D. Black, 10 December 1965, BCA, GR 128, box 13, file 138; Minister of Social Welfare to J.A.C. Grant (President, Alexandra Community Activities), 29 December 1965, BCA, GR 128, box 13, file 138.

⁴⁰ Community Chest, *Report on Day Care Needs*, iii-iv.

Day Care Needs. It was families in “economic need” who were of the most interest to the committee. These families most required additional child care spaces because of day care’s ability to ameliorate social problems. According to the committee, day care functioned as an important “preventive” public welfare measure: it could help alleviate issues of child neglect, mental illness of mothers, delinquency, social “maladjustments” of children, and all of the damaging effects that accompanied poverty, including “social isolation, lack of educational, social and work opportunities, lack of intellectual and emotional stimulation, [and] the destruction of initiative, motivation, and hope.”⁴¹

Whether in subsidized private centres or publicly-run day cares, the children of working-class and poor families could receive the kind of preventive care that they lacked in their own homes.

The calls for more and better day care in the early- and mid-1960s were based on the recognition that working mothers were “here to stay,” but beyond surface gestures and lip service, advocates did not go so far as to acknowledge that working motherhood was a so-called “normal” part of family life. Instead, working motherhood remained synonymous with low-income families and potential welfare dependency. The belief that day care was a service for needy and disadvantaged families would be embedded in the provincial government’s first real foray into day care programs.

The Canada Assistance Plan and Provincial Day Care Policy: “Moderately Encouraging” Steps Forward

Rising concerns about day care cannot be separated from the growing attention to poverty. Inspired by American president Lyndon Johnson’s 1964 declaration of a “war on

⁴¹ Community Chest, *Report on Day Care Needs*, 8-9.

poverty,” James Struthers explains, the issue of poverty “exploded into public consciousness” across Canada in the mid-1960s.⁴² The federal government’s response was the Canada Assistance Plan, a national program that would “promote adequate levels of assistance so that Canadians will not, through poverty, be denied an adequate standard of food, clothing, shelter and other essentials for normal living and the preservation of family life.”⁴³ CAP consolidated a range of welfare programs, including Unemployment Assistance, mothers’ allowances, medical care for the poor, and child welfare programs into one centrally-administered, shared-cost program, in a way that would curb out-of-control social spending. National Health and Welfare officials also hoped that CAP would bring “rationalization and reason” to welfare programs, many of which were simply fostering long-term dependency. ‘Rehabilitation’ therefore became the watchword of CAP, which incorporated job training and placement among its network of programs.⁴⁴

The “rediscovery” of poverty in the 1960s was accompanied by a growing recognition that poverty was a particularly female problem. Women, especially the elderly and single mothers, made up a disproportionate number of poor and low-income families on social assistance.⁴⁵ In the BC Department of Social Welfare, officials were

⁴² Struthers, *Limits of Affluence*, 211.

⁴³ Quoted in Struthers, *Limits of Affluence*, 234.

⁴⁴ Struthers, *Limits of Affluence*, 232.

⁴⁵ Finkel, *Social Policy and Practice*, 258-60. 69.1 percent of female single-parent homes were living in poverty, compared to 21.2 of all families. These are 1975 national statistics. As Finkel points out, Prime Minister Pearson estimated that 200,000 women would be added to “the rolls of those receiving a federal contribution.” On the issue of the feminization of poverty, see Diana Pearce, “Welfare Is Not for Women: Why the War on Poverty Cannot Conquer the Feminization of Poverty,” in *Women, the State, and Welfare*, ed. Linda Gordon (Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1990), 265-279; Wendy McKeen, *Money in Their Own Name: The Feminist Voice in Poverty Debate in Canada, 1970-1995* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2004), esp. chap. 3. In the Department of Social Welfare reports in BC, the numbers of Social Allowance recipients are not divided by sex.

beginning to identify the particular challenges faced by mothers on Social Assistance – especially the single mothers who made up approximately one-quarter of the caseload.⁴⁶

The department's emphasis in the early 1960s was on "vocational training" and "rehabilitation" projects for social assistance recipients, efforts that resulted in modest success for single men and male family heads. But for single mothers, the department explained, employment-based rehabilitation "did not usually produce the desired result." Lack of access to affordable child care was largely to blame. The amount that mothers were able to earn on the job was not enough to cover their "living costs" as well as an additional child care expense.⁴⁷

Alongside the Community Chest's 1965 *Report on Day Care Needs*, community social workers and welfare groups in BC released a flurry of studies and reports in the mid-1960s that drew attention to the problems and solutions that the feminization of poverty demanded. The ramifications of increased poverty, after all, were being absorbed by these underfunded local agencies. Along with other "home helps" and job-training services, publicly-funded day care was frequently included on the list of services designed to help families "to help themselves" in gaining their self-sufficiency.⁴⁸ From

⁴⁶ Social Allowance and Social Assistance are used interchangeably. The *Social Assistance Act* was passed in 1945. In 1956, the *Mothers' Allowance Act* was repealed, and all remaining Mothers' Allowance cases were rolled into the social assistance caseload. At that time, there were fewer than 300 Mothers' Allowances cases in the province; most mothers since 1945 had been helped through Social Allowances since the regulations of that program were "broader and less prohibitive." British Columbia, *Annual Report of the Department of Social Welfare*, 1959. With regard to the statistics: the Department of Social Welfare classified social assistance recipients according to "heads of families," "singles," and "dependents." Wives and children made up the dependents category. Within the heads of families category, reports only rarely distinguished between "one-parent families" and "two-parents families," and even then did not specify whether the family head was male or female. The clearest glimpse we get at the proportions of single mothers came in 1965 and 1967, when the Department's annual reports stated that one-parent families made up "one quarter" and "23%" of family cases – and it seems the reader is meant to assume those family heads were mothers. British Columbia, *Annual Report of the Department of Social Welfare*, 1967, 1969.

⁴⁷ British Columbia, *Annual Report of the Department of Social Welfare*, 1965.

⁴⁸ Community Chest and Councils of the Greater Vancouver area, "Proposals for the Federal/Provincial Conference on Poverty and Opportunity," 8 December 1965, BCA, GR 128, box 3, file 29. A "homemaker-

the national to the local, anti-poverty advocates pointed to affordable day care as an important part of women's escape from poverty.⁴⁹

While there was little evidence that national officials imagined day care as one of CAP's priorities (although CAP did mark the first time federal contributions were used to support single mothers), this pressure from below had an impact on CAP negotiations within the BC provincial bureaucracy.⁵⁰ The preventive benefits of day care outlined by the Community Chest and others fit nicely into the government's plan to use CAP funds to alleviate "social crisis" in low-income families. Besides giving a mother the peace of mind to earn wages and thus work towards her family's financial independence, day care also allowed for early intervention into the social problems that resulted from poverty. "As day care is extended," a report from the Department of Social Welfare explained, "particularly to children whose homes provide limited opportunities, it is foreseen that fewer children will encounter major problems in adjustment to school and in their homes and communities."⁵¹

In the fall of 1966, the government announced that CAP funding would be used to provide day care subsidies. As part of CAP, the subsidy program was no different than other means-tested income supports, and it was available to only the "neediest" of

housekeeper" service was one popular anti-poverty strategy recommended by several welfare groups. This service provided help for social assistance recipients who could not do their own cleaning, cooking, laundry, or other domestic tasks because of illness, disability, or injury. It could also provide "baby-sitting" services for working mothers. There was talk about turning these services into public programs with the help of CAP funds. BCA, GR 128, box 5, file 41.

⁴⁹ In its 1967 national survey, for example, the Canadian Welfare Council urged governments to consider day care along with "homemaker services and counselling services" as a way to gradually extract women from their reliance on social assistance. J.S. White, "Issues in Social Policy," speech given at the Community Funds and Councils of Canada Staff Development Institute, Geneva Park, ON, 23 March 1968, BCA, GR 135, box 2, file "Canadian Welfare Council, Correspondence (67-68)."

⁵⁰ On the inner workings of day care bureaucracy, see Mahon, "The Never-Ending Story."

⁵¹ British Columbia, *Department of Social Welfare Annual Report*, 1967.

mothers. CAP funding was not used to establish or support child care centres, but only to subsidize the day care spaces occupied by the children of social assistance recipients, and only for those children who attended licensed and approved non-profit “public” day care centres. For mothers whose children were under 3 years of age, the only option for subsidized day care was in a licensed family day home, since day care centres were not eligible for under-3 licenses. In 1968, subsidy coverage was extended slightly to include any low-income family who demonstrated need, and to any licensed day care centre or home, public or private. Subsidy levels were set on a sliding scale set by the Department of Social Welfare and determined by an evaluation of the family’s residual income. Social assistance recipients were entitled to \$3 per day per child to attend a child care centre, or \$2.50 per day for an under-3 child to attend a day home. Families who were deemed to have less than \$10 per month to spend on child care also qualified for this “Plan C” funding. “Plan B” families, those with \$11 to \$25 of residual monthly income to put towards child care, were eligible for \$2 per child per day for centre-based care, and \$1.50 for home-based care. In addition, as of 1 January 1969, a \$1 per day per child universal subsidy was available to non-profit day care centres who met several conditions, among them that they reserved at least 10% of their enrollment for Plan C families, submitted their audited financial statements to the province, and charged a sliding scale fee to all parents except those on Plan C.⁵²

One major problem with this new provincial program was that licensed, subsidy-eligible day care spaces were in short supply. Without financial support, social agencies and community groups had a hard time establishing and maintaining day care centres that

⁵² J.A. Sadler (Assistant Deputy Minister of Social Welfare), “Circular Letter to All Municipalities and Officials of the Department of Social Welfare,” 7 November 1968, BCA, GR 135, box 2, file 18.

could meet WILB licensing standards. In January 1967, only nine day care centres were licensed and approved for subsidy payments: 4 in Vancouver, 2 in North Vancouver, and 1 each in Richmond, Surrey, and Terrace, for a total of only 331 subsidy-eligible child care spaces in the province. Considering that the Community Chest had identified 6,000 children in Vancouver alone who were desperate need of day care, the province's initial efforts hardly made a dent, even with the promise to fast-track the approval of centres in Prince Rupert, Victoria, and Alert Bay.⁵³ The onus to increase the number of licensed child care spaces, however, was still entirely on local agencies, community organizations, and parent groups. The provincial government was happy to pass much of the responsibility for the growth of day care on to organizations familiar with child care undertakings: the Vancouver Children's Aid Society, the Community Chest/United Community Services, the city of Vancouver's welfare department, and in Victoria, the Family and Children's Service (FCS; a Community Chest agency).⁵⁴

These agencies, usually in conjunction with other charitable organizations, began to ramp up their efforts around day care initiatives in the aftermath of the CAP announcement. In Victoria, the city's first group day care explicitly designed for the needs of working mothers opened in January 1967 in the basement of the Centennial United Church, with the support of the FCS, the Lion's Club, the Community Welfare Council, as well as church members. Though the church had been the site of a play

⁵³ Bingham (Superintendent of Child Welfare) to Sadler, Memo Re: Day Care, 23 January 1967, BCA, GR 135, box 2, file 18.

⁵⁴ The provincial government relied heavily on local and municipal officials in all respects to administer the new provincial program. In both Vancouver and Victoria, the province designated local "administering agencies" to oversee subsidy authorizations and payments, and to supervise the billings for family day homes. J.A. Sadler (Assistant Deputy Minister of Social Welfare), "Circular Letter to All Municipalities and Officials of the Department of Social Welfare," 7 November 1968, BCA, GR 135, box 2, file 18; *Victoria Daily Times*, 19 July 1967, 39.

school for some time, the day care centre was the community's attempt to provide "a home away from home for the children of mothers who have to work to make a living... The children are fed hot meals at lunch time, take afternoon naps and are provided with the affection and attention they require."⁵⁵ Similar projects followed at St. Paul's Anglican Church in Victoria West, and in Saanich.⁵⁶ In all these locations, there was an explicit recognition that these day care centres differed in form and function from play schools and kindergartens. Their purpose was not "educational," but to care for children while mothers "earned their cheques."⁵⁷ Not surprisingly, these centres also generated familiar criticism. Controversy about a day care in Saanich, for example, gave one municipal councillor a platform to argue that women were simply "working to boost family incomes into the \$8,000-a-year class," so that they could afford "two cars and a big stereo set. The impact of the mass media is forcing them to work, requiring the children to be left somewhere."⁵⁸ In their defense of working mothers, FCS officials like Victoria's Jane Gurr insisted that mothers who used day care were "forced" to work, that

⁵⁵ *Victoria Daily Times*, 13 January 1967, 32; *Victoria Colonist*, 22 June 1967, 23; *Victoria Daily Times*, 22 June 1967, 2.

⁵⁶ In Saanich, day care battles emerged in the form of zoning controversies. While there were already zoning regulations in place for institutions like kindergartens, day care centres were subject to different regulations because they were not "educational" in purpose. See *Victoria Daily Times*, 22 February 1967, 26. Church basements were popular sites for day care centres because they were usually large (and unused) spaces with kitchen and bathroom facilities that met WILB standards. The other factor that helps explain the popularity of churches, however, was the assumption that they played a role in the social welfare of the community. The director of the Victoria FCS, Gordon Wright, told an inter-church conference in 1968 that "more day care centres for the children of working mothers are needed in suitably-located churches," because "the state has not taken over everything the church once did for human welfare." Others commented that "today's with-it church reaches out" to provide services to needy families. In Burnaby, St. John the Divine church established a low-cost day care centre as part of their mission to "give help to people who may temporarily or permanently be unable to help themselves." In this respect, churches' involvement in day care services did not vary much from traditional notions of charitable community work. *Victoria Daily Times*, 17 February 1968, 27; *Vancouver Sun*, 27 July 1968, 14; *Vancouver Sun*, 8 March 1969, 14; *Vancouver Province*, 30 September 1967, 41.

⁵⁷ *Victoria Colonist*, 13 January 1967, 21.

⁵⁸ *Victoria Daily Times*, 15 July 1967, 23; *Victoria Colonist*, 15 July 1967, 19; *Victoria Colonist*, 16 July 1967, 6.

that it was up to generous community organizations to “find a way to assist them to fulfill their duties both at home and in the labor field.”⁵⁹

In Vancouver, the Community Chest -- now known as the United Community Services (UCS) -- took the lead in the creation of new day care spaces, which was not surprising considering that it had spearheaded most of the community-based day care since the Second World War (Strathcona Day Nursery was a Community Chest-supported project, for example). Under their guidance, and combined with the efforts of the FCS in Victoria and other groups throughout the province, the number of licensed day care centres began to slowly increase. Provincial reports from 1967 identified 21 subsidy-eligible centres. The number increased to 27 in 1968. The government declared that centres (as well as licensed family homes) were developing “in gratifying numbers,” and pointed to the “steady and significant growth” in all types of day care in 1967 and 1968.⁶⁰ Though the number of child care spaces was still far short of the demand, the UCS suggested that day care activity throughout the province was “moderately encouraging.”⁶¹

There were indications that the UCS could remain hopeful about the future of the provincial day care program, however, particularly because they were called upon to establish an Advisory Committee on Day Care. Because the UCS had staked out its position as a day care authority with the release of the *Report on Day Care Needs*, provincial officials looked to it to provide expertise and leadership for the fledgling provincial program. The deputy minister of Social Welfare E.R. Rickinson and J.R. Sadler, the Director of Social Welfare (the chief civil servant in charge of day care) asked

⁵⁹ *Victoria Daily Times*, 19 July 1967, 39; *Victoria Colonist*, 13 January 1967, 21.

⁶⁰ British Columbia, *Department of Social Welfare Annual Reports*, 1967-1970.

⁶¹ “Information on Day Care for Mr. R. R. Loffmark prepared by Marpole Area Council (UCS), Day Care Committee,” 31 October 1967, BCA, GR 135, box 2, file 19.

the UCS to recruit members for the Advisory Committee, which was tasked with “stimulat[ing] interest in day care,” “coordinat[ing] the efforts of those involved in providing services,” “review[ing] and evaluat[ing] the overall program,” and making recommendations regarding financing.⁶² The advisory committee was comprised of 24 people, including representatives from existing day care centres, social agencies (including, for example the Catholic Children’s Aid Society, the Family Services Agency, and North Shore Neighbourhood House), the City Social Service Department, the Welfare Institutions Licensing Board, child welfare organizations, and, of course, the UCS.⁶³ Throughout the late 1960s, the committee was the hub of child care policy and practice, and it had significant access to provincial officials in charge of day care administration.⁶⁴ The limits of its influence, however, would soon be revealed.

Unmet Expectations: The Case of Marpole Day Care

⁶² Letter from Virginia Biernes (President of UCS) to Dan Campbell (Minister of Social Welfare), 13 June 1968, BCA GR 135, box 2, file 18. In fact, Rickinson had been in close contact with the UCS throughout CAP/day care talks. When they handed over their 1965 report to the provincial government, they met with Rickinson, the Deputy Minister of Welfare, and even discussed the possibility that the Community Chest would become “100%” responsible for day care service in the city (in exchange, the provincial government would take on full responsibility for a Homemaker-Housekeeper program). Rickinson, “Memo Re: Meeting in Honourable Black’s office,” 17 December 1965, BCA, GR 128, box 10, file 92.

⁶³ “Advisory Committee on Day Care,” n.d. (c. January 1967), BCA, GR 135, box 2, file 18. Another role that the UCS played in the development of child care services was through their involvement in Preschool Enrichment Programmes (PEPs). PEPs were designed for 4-year-olds who needed extra help to prepare them for public school “owing to limitations and deficiencies in his home environment.” The UCS recommended that more of these types of programs be established in the city, to be funded jointly through the provincial departments of Welfare, Education, and Health. United Community Services of the Greater Vancouver Area, “Report on Preschool Enrichment Programmes,” April 1968, BCA, GR 135, box 2, file 19.

⁶⁴ Provincial officials were also keen to ensure that the UCS did not abandon their commitments to day care thinking that the provincial government would pick up the slack. By the time CAP funding was announced, Sadler had secured a commitment from the UCS that “they would endeavour to put more resources into these services and would not withdraw any voluntary funds because of government participation.” Letter from Virginia Biernes (President of UCS) to Dan Campbell (Minister of Social Welfare), 13 June 1968, BCA GR 135, box 2, file 18.

One of the Advisory Committee on Day Care's first undertakings was the development of a "Plan for Public-Private Partnership for Day Care," (PPP) which was designed to increase the number of child care spaces in the province as well as to ease the transition from entirely-private day care to the involvement of provincial authorities.⁶⁵ Included in the plan were suggestions about subsidy levels, grants to non-profit groups, and the organization of family day homes – the program details that would constantly be up for debate over the next several years. The PPP plan also secured a central role for the Advisory Committee in the negotiation around those details. Following on the advice contained in the report, the committee began meeting every 2-3 months beginning in early 1967 to assess the state of day care in the province and provide advice on how to improve the quality and quantity of care.

Meetings and consultations served an important purpose in the exchange of ideas, but the Advisory Committee's most tangible contribution to day care policy and program development was the establishment of the Marpole Day Care Centre, a "demonstration project" to test the new provincial policy. The committee felt that it could oversee the operation of a centre that would act as a model for other groups, and that could be used to work out the kinks in subsidy schemes. In early 1967, a fledgling day care centre in the Marpole area of Vancouver was identified as an ideal test case, because it was located in "an average low to middle class community with a large number of single parent families in need of Day Care."⁶⁶ The Marpole Area Council had already secured licensing for the

⁶⁵ Minister of Social Welfare, "Press Release," 7 November 1968, BCA, GR 135, box 2, file 18.

⁶⁶ Marpole Area Committee on Day Care, "Progress Report," presented to Dan Campbell, 13 February 1967, BCA, GR 135, box 2, file 19; *Vancouver Province*, 30 September 1967, 41. The Marpole neighbourhood is in south-central Vancouver, along the northern edge of the Fraser River.

St. Augustine's Church Hall, but resources were scarce and the centre was struggling to get off the ground.

An impressive array of day care practitioners and policy-makers converged on the Marpole project. The five-member Marpole Day Care Committee, led by Dorothy Behesti, took the lead, guided and supported closely by the Advisory Committee. Other UCS representatives also regularly attended Marpole meetings, as did several from Vancouver's Family Service Agencies. The provincial welfare department also kept a careful eye on how things unfolded; Behesti was required to send regular updates to Welfare Minister Dan Campbell. Together, these committees and agencies developed a projected budget required for Marpole's operation. The total capital costs needed to do the minor adjustments to the church required by the licensing regulations was \$1600, which had already been secured through private donations. To keep food costs as low as possible, families would be required to provide lunches and snacks, though the centre would supplement the noon meal with hot soup. The largest portion of the budget was dedicated to staffing costs. A supervisor earned a monthly salary of \$350, and with assistants, support staff, and janitors, personnel expenses totalled \$850 per month. Taking into consideration all operating costs (less a small monthly donation from the St. Augustine's Church), the committee expected that the minimum monthly operating budget would total \$1100. Based on a 22-day work month, with an average of 85% occupancy, the Marpole Day Care would have to charge \$3.85 per day per child in order to break even.⁶⁷

⁶⁷ Behesti to Campbell, February 1967, BCA, GR 135, box 2, file 19.

With the majority of families eligible for the provincial subsidy of \$1 per day, the Marpole committee determined that parents' fees, in order for the centre to remain in the black, should be set at \$2.85 per day per child. Many on the committee felt, however, that this amount was much too high for most parents in the Marpole neighbourhood. Furthermore, the committee was under pressure from the church to limit their day care services to those families in "genuine need," and \$2.85 was well out of the affordability range for low-income and welfare families that the church wanted to serve. Ideally, the committee wanted to establish a fee structure based on each family's "ability to pay." Based on their analysis of the Marpole area's employment and income statistics from the BC Federation of Labour, however, the average daily fee that families were able to pay was \$1.50 per child.⁶⁸ Even with the subsidy, that rate would leave the centre with a monthly operating deficit of \$394.⁶⁹ In preliminary budget estimates, therefore, the gap between costs and revenues at Marpole hinted at the financial difficulties that threatened the success of this test case.

Despite these concerns, the Marpole Day Care Centre went ahead and opened in June 1967. After only a few months, the extent of the financial difficulties became apparent. The Advisory Committee reported to the provincial government that it was "evident that the income generated through the provincial subsidy and parent fees is inadequate."⁷⁰ The centre did not immediately run at full capacity, and since subsidies were paid based on daily attendance, not monthly registration, the expected income from

⁶⁸ For the committee's purposes, they established the "ability to pay" rate at 7.5% to 10% of a woman's net income.

⁶⁹ According to the committee's calculations, even increasing parent fees to \$2.50 would leave them with a monthly deficit of \$109. Both amounts assumed an average 85 percent daily occupancy rate.

⁷⁰ UCS, "The Expansion of Day Care Services: Statement of the Advisory Committee on Day Care," November 1967, BCA, GR 135, box 2, file 19.

the government subsidies was not available. For the same reasons, neither did income from parent fees. Despite staying on (or even slightly under) budget for staffing and program expenses, the centre had amassed a substantial deficit by the autumn of 1967.⁷¹

Marpole's financial troubles did not surprise the committee, and they moved quickly to make recommendations for making the centre more sustainable. Marpole's failure or success, after all, had implications for other day care centres, and indeed for the entire provincial day care program. The committee was keenly aware that if Marpole, with its access to experienced welfare practitioners and government and community consultants, could not remain operational, other day care centres were surely doomed. The committee emphasized that Marpole's shortfalls were not, as the government suggested, due to "uninterested citizens" or "lack of demand" – it was simply that parent fees and subsidies did not generate enough income to keep the centre afloat. The solution, according to the committee, was simple: provincial funding that was more responsive to the actual requirements of operating a day care centre. Foremost among the funding requirements were staffing costs. The committee called for 100% government funding in covering the salaries of teachers, teachers' assistants, and day care directors. Alternately, they recommended public coverage of 90% of teaching and administrative costs, combined with subsidies for "auxiliary services" such as food preparation and janitorial services. The committee acknowledged, however, that the likelihood the government would cover staffing costs to that extent was low, and so urged, at the very least, for an increase in the per-child subsidy to meet the budgeted difference between total operating

⁷¹ UCS, "The Expansion of Day Care Services: Statement of the Advisory Committee on Day Care. Appendix A: Marpole Day Care Centre: Budget vs. Actual," November 1967, BCA, GR 135, box 2, file 19.

costs and revenue from fees.⁷² Anything less would undermine the efforts of committed day care providers, of which there were a growing number. The committee identified 15 to 20 groups in Vancouver alone who had made inquiries into establishing day care services. Without a significant revision to funding schemes, those centres would surely collapse under financial pressure – if they managed to get established in the first place. The committee was reluctant to support these initiatives, although the spaces they would create were sorely needed. “With Marpole in mind,” the committee declared, “[we] cannot, in all conscience, encourage them to open.”⁷³

The experiences of other day care centres throughout the province were indeed bearing out the committee’s concerns. Gladys Maycock, the WILB’s day care representative, was kept busy visiting and inspecting new centres throughout the summer and fall of 1967, and her reports were mostly discouraging. In Maycock’s view, the problems usually boiled down to financial practicalities. The centres that provided the highest-quality care, she informed provincial bureaucrats, were for-profit centres that did not qualify for subsidized spaces, and thus remained inaccessible to those who most needed their services.⁷⁴ Others faced similar problems as Marpole: Victoria’s Centennial Day Care Centre, for example, the capital city’s first to be part of the public-private

⁷² UCS, “The Expansion of Day Care Services: Statement of the Advisory Committee on Day Care,” November 1967, BCA, GR 135, box 2, file 19.

⁷³ UCS, “The Expansion of Day Care Services: Statement of the Advisory Committee on Day Care,” November 1967, BCA, GR 135, box 2, file 19.

⁷⁴ Maycock to Bingham, 22 September 1967, BCA, GR 135, box 2, file 19. Maycock dealt with inquiries from several centres in the Greater Vancouver area, and from as far away as Vernon. See, for example: Mrs. R. Merriman (Okanagan Valley Pre-School Education Association) to Campbell, 14 June 1967, BCA, GR 135, box 2, file 19; Maria Clark (Day Care Centre Board, the Church of St. John the Divine) to Campbell, 21 July 1967, BCA, GR 135, box 2, file 19.

partnership plan, operated below capacity and was thus running a deficit.⁷⁵ Groups in North Vancouver and Richmond encountered similar problems. Even those that saw high attendance, furthermore, still faced shortfalls that seemed impossible to overcome. Deryck Thomson, the Executive Director of Family Service Centres of Greater Vancouver, explained to Sadler, Rickinson, and Campbell that despite these centres' efforts at responsible budgetting, careful spending, and relatively high parent fees, the gap between revenue and costs would not be bridged without more provincial funding commitments. Thomson emphasized that the budget deficits were not the result of underestimating parents' ability to pay. Indeed, of the almost-40,000 days of care provided in centres between January and July 1967, approximately 90 percent of those days were paid by families slotted into the "Plan A" fee schedule, and thus paid the maximum fee expected of parents (which differed at every centre).⁷⁶ The problem, Thomson explained, was "solely financial. The present subsidy levels are inadequate to close the gap between cost of the service and parent fees." Thomson also responded to accusations that these centres were catering to parents who simply wanted access to cheap day care services while they worked to increase their already-high incomes. In "every instance," he argued,

[I]t has been properly determined that the child in question needs day care. In every instance, the parents or parent are expected to pay what they can afford based upon an assessment of family income at the point of intake.⁷⁷

⁷⁵ D.G. Homer (Executive Director, Greater Victoria Community Welfare Council) to Rickinson, 20 June 1967, BCA, GR 135, box 2, file 19.

⁷⁶ 90 percent of day care, in other words, received the \$1 universal subsidy, which was the lowest the government paid. Thomson to Sadler, 31 October 1967, BCA, GR 135, box 2, file 19.

⁷⁷ Thomson to Sadler, 31 October 1967, BCA, GR 135, box 2, file 19.

Thomson thus joined the chorus of day care advocates who insisted that it was not mismanagement or freeloading parents who undermined the success of provincial day care programs, but rather the very practical realities of unbridgeable gaps between revenue and costs.

Budget shortfalls, though arguably the most significant issue with the day care program, was not the only problem plaguing start-up centres throughout the province. Some day care centres had trouble receiving their license; the Riley Park Community Association in Vancouver, for example, was told that “parks are no place for day care centres.”⁷⁸ Others faced opposition from the community, seemingly based on a “not in my backyard” assumption about the undesirable families that used day care. At Fraserview United Church in East Vancouver (7317 Victoria Drive), a group of neighbours organized to oppose the granting of a day care license. Although a 35-child kindergarten already operated in the church, these neighbours argued that the increased activity around the day care would infringe on their right for “peace and quiet.” “People are always saying hello and goodbye and slamming car doors,” one neighbour complained, and the new day care would mean noise “from day to night.” The 30 neighbours who came out in support of the day care as a “badly needed service” for working mothers received less press attention, but their views prevailed and Fraserview was granted a temporary license.⁷⁹

The accumulation of problems led the UCS to declare by the fall of 1967 that the day care situation in the province had devolved from “moderately encouraging” to

⁷⁸ *Vancouver Sun*, 13 October 1967, 16.

⁷⁹ *Vancouver Sun*, 5 July 1968, 10.

“urgent and explosive.”⁸⁰ Though each centre had its own unique challenges, Marpole became the fulcrum of the debate about the provincial government’s role in and responsibilities towards day care services. Provincial officials were eager to pin Marpole’s troubles on something other than their own inadequate financial commitments, and sent Gladys Maycock to evaluate the situation. Maycock found much to fault with Marpole’s operations. She noted “out of control” children and undertrained staff. She also suspected that the centre was undercharging parents, especially middle-class parents who could afford more than the standard fee. It was perfectly reasonable, Maycock argued, to expect those parents – here she singled out “two women doctors” whose children were in day care – to pay the full amount of what it actually cost to keep a child in day care for one week. According to Maycock, that amount was not reflected in the \$12.50 that the centre charged as a maximum, but was closer to \$80-100. Maycock accused the UCS Advisory Committee of sacrificing good care and responsible financial management in favour of “the getting of more funds.” The only thing “urgent and explosive” about the Marpole situation, Maycock concluded, was their lack of skill in “public relations.”⁸¹

The Advisory Committee defended itself against Maycock’s allegations at a meeting held on 8 December 1967 – a meeting that illustrated the degree to which the relationship between the UCS Advisory Committee and the provincial government had deteriorated. In large part, the meeting was the UCS’s attempt to refute Maycock’s false allegations: there were no doctors’ children at Marpole, committee member Emily Campbell declared, and Maycock’s unrealistic expectations about staff-children ratios

⁸⁰ UCS, “The Expansion of Day Care Services: Statement of the Advisory Committee on Day Care,” November 1967, BCA, GR 135, box 2, file 19.

⁸¹ Maycock to Bingham, 24 November 1967, BCA, GR 135, box 2, file 19.

would mean leaning heavily on volunteer labour.⁸² Since the UCS kept statistics about Marpole's client base and the provincial government did not, Emily Campbell was able to demonstrate that the centre was serving only families whom the provincial government would surely consider "deserving," among them three single mothers who earned \$200-\$380 per month,⁸³ children who had been recommended by psychiatrists because of "extra stresses within the family group," and several two-parent families with low incomes ranging from \$381-\$650 monthly. The average parent fee on the sliding scale hovered around \$10 per week per child.⁸⁴ But the details of Marpole's account books was more than just squabbling. The committee declared that without "major revision in the subsidy arrangements," Marpole's closure was inevitable.⁸⁵ Since Marpole was the resource- and expertise-rich demonstration project, its failure would reflect a broader failure of the provincial government's first experiment in day care services.

A small increase in government funding in April 1968 did little to quell the political controversy growing around Marpole.⁸⁶ Instead, the disputes evolved into a much wider-ranging political battle about day care. The inadequacies of the provincial program gained increasing press attention, with newspapers reporting that among the "most urgent" welfare needs was the "creation of child day-care centres – government-operated institutions providing supervision at a uniformly high level, freeing young

⁸² Emily Campbell was a key player in the Simon Fraser University Child Care battle, as the next chapter explains.

⁸³ For comparison, the one single father who used the centre earned \$540 per month.

⁸⁴ Emily Campbell to McCarthy, 2 April 1968, BCA, GR 135, box 2, file 19.

⁸⁵ Stewart to Behesti, 15 January 1968, BCA, GR 135, box 2, file 19. Under present financial arrangements, Marpole could only afford to stay open until February 1968.

⁸⁶ John Sexton to Dan Campbell, 6 April 1968, BCA, GR 135, box 2, file 18.

mothers to find jobs.”⁸⁷ The backroom meetings between welfare bureaucrats and UCS committee members became public confrontations between politicians, with NDP MLA (Vancouver South) Norm Levi taking the role of day care defender and supporter of the UCS and the Marpole Area Council. Levi accused Welfare Minister Dan Campbell of being “indifferen[t] to day care needs,” and suggested the provincial government’s unwillingness to reform subsidies would mean “the inevitable extinction of all day care.”⁸⁸ For his part, Minister Campbell remained unsympathetic to Marpole’s plight, and insisted that they had brought financial misfortune upon themselves. Self-interest and financial mismanagement, Campbell argued, were at the root of Marpole’s troubles. “I must point out to you,” he wrote to the Advisory Committee, “that out of the twenty day care centres which have been approved for subsidy since this program was initiated...Marpole is the only one reporting severe deficits and continuing inability to operate with the present subsidies.”⁸⁹

Pleas for help from other day care centres throughout the province suggested otherwise. Not surprisingly, they resented the government’s declaration that their operations were trouble-free. In Victoria, the Centennial Day Care Centre reported a budget shortfall of more than \$10,000 in 1967; while their staffing, programming, and facility costs totalled \$15,785, the revenue generated from parent fees and subsidies did not reach \$6000.⁹⁰ The financial troubles at Chatham Day Care in Prince Rupert demonstrated the flaws in the subsidy system even more clearly. Families from all three subsidy plans attended Chatham, but the “Schedule B” families were the most worrisome.

⁸⁷ *Vancouver Province*, 20 January 1968, 5.

⁸⁸ *Vancouver Sun*, 13 December 1968.

⁸⁹ Dan Campbell to Emily Campbell, 30 January 1968, BCA, GR 135, box 2, file 19.

⁹⁰ Centennial Day Care – Victoria, Budget, 1967, GR 135, box 2, file 18.

Those were the families of “sub-marginal income,” who were eligible for a \$2 per diem subsidy. The \$2 subsidy, however, was not nearly enough to supplement the parent fees, which were set quite low according to the parents’ ability to pay. In the absence of an increase to Schedule B subsidies, the committee declared, their only other option was to increase parent fees – which would result in an outcome desirable to no one (least of all the government): “they will stop being self-supporting and take Welfare.” The Chatham committee also asked, as did other centres, to receive subsidy payments based on a monthly rather than daily attendance record, which provide a more consistent revenue flow.⁹¹ In Vancouver, the Strathcona day care committee spoke out publicly about their inability to provide effective services:

Current provincial subsidies do help programs if the maximum fee is charged, but only if the better-off families can afford such fees. New centres trying to offer service to everyone regardless of income have been unable to establish such programs with the current subsidies.⁹²

Government support, the Strathcona council argued, had a limited impact that did not extend to those who most needed it.

Norm Levi launched a spirited defense of these centres and of Marpole. As Levi pointed out, the precedent for day care action up to that point had come not from the government, but from “public action” and “citizen action committees.”⁹³ It was these groups, not the government, who had the experience and commitment required to ensure success in day care centres, and they deserved support accordingly. Faced with increasing

⁹¹ Mr. H.W. Harding (Treasurer, Chatham Day Care Centre) to Hon. W.H. Murray, 8 March 1968, BCA, GR 135, box 2, file 19. There is some indication that the government did in fact approve an increase in Schedule B subsidies to Chatham, at least temporarily. Campbell to Harding, 8 April 1968, BCA, GR 135, box 2, file 19.

⁹² Mr. M.S. Wark (Chairman, Strathcona Area Council) to Evan Wolfe (MLA) and Dan Campbell, 21 February 1968, BCA, GR 135, box 2, file 19.

⁹³ *Vancouver Sun*, 5 October 1968.

pressure, Dan Campbell announced that the government would undertake a review of subsidy levels.⁹⁴ The “review,” however, seemed a half-hearted attempt to appease some of the controversy. For the most part, Campbell remained unsympathetic to the plight of day care centres and keen to shift the blame away from the government. He continued to accuse the UCS of failing to operate in good faith to ensure the success of the Marpole project; he suggested, for example, that they withdrew voluntary funds, thereby deliberately increasing the expectation for public funding.⁹⁵ According to Dan Campbell, the private sector, not the public sector, was failing in its responsibilities towards working mothers and their children.

“What, then, is day care?”

The announcement of a provincial review, however half-hearted, gave the Advisory Committee yet another opportunity to outline their position on day care. This July 1968 report, however, read more like an ultimatum than a series of recommendations: if the government was unwilling to improve the quality of day care services, the committee would resign. As Emily Campbell explained, the members of the committee felt like the work they were doing was completely in vain. They had been meeting regularly for two years to discuss problems and solutions, they had “talked to groups, prepared briefs, raised money,” and they had provided constructive solutions

⁹⁴ Campbell to Wolfe, 20 March 1968, BCA, GR 135, box 2, file 19.

⁹⁵ The example that Campbell gave was the Alexandra Neighbourhood Services Association in Vancouver, which considered cancelling a planned opening of a day care centre because the UCS could not commit to supporting their operational costs. The day care centre went ahead, largely because of private donations. From the Alexandra Neighbourhood Services Association’s view, however, their hope was not that the UCS would support them, but that “the Provincial Government would meet with basic operating costs.” Elmer J. Helm (Executive Director, Alexandra Neighbourhood Services Association) to Rickinson, 12 July 1968; Rickinson to Helm, 25 July 1968; Helm to Rickinson, 31 October 1968. All in BCA, GR 135, box 2, file 18.

while absorbing much of the “discontent and frustration” with day care policy. Despite the committee’s efforts, however, day care in the Greater Vancouver area remained “in a state of confusion.” The government had not established an “overall plan for starting new centres,” nor any “clear policy on subsidies.”⁹⁶ The relative failure of day care services, the committee argued, could be boiled down to a lack of administrative direction or leadership. The appointment of a single bureaucrat to oversee the entire provincial day care program, equipped with the “training, authority, and staff to do the job,” would go a long way towards putting the province on the right track.⁹⁷ So too would a complete overhaul of the subsidy system, including enrollment-based payments, subsidization of staff salaries, and increased payments to centres and homes.⁹⁸

A series of meetings in the late summer of 1968 saw the government willing to pay lip service to the Advisory Committee’s demands. Rickinson admitted that the attendance-based subsidy had been “a complete failure as a method of financing,” and the government tentatively committed to hiring a Day Care Director for the Vancouver area. There were also some indications that Rickinson would consider providing “conditional grants” to start-up centres.⁹⁹ When no concrete action was forthcoming by October, however, the Advisory Committee submitted its resignation to the UCS Board. As one committee member explained, the resignation was an act of protest designed to draw attention to the “appalling confusion” in provincial day care policy: “Dan Campbell

⁹⁶ UCS Advisory Committee on Day Care, “Day Care Services,” 16 July 1968, BCA, GR 135, box 2, file 18. The other gap in government policy was “a clear guide for teacher’s training programs.”

⁹⁷ Emily Campbell, “Presentation to the Welfare Institutions Licensing Board,” 13 June 1968, BCA, GR 135, box 2, file 18.

⁹⁸ UCS Advisory Committee on Day Care, “Day Care Services,” 16 July 1968, BCA, GR 135, box 2, file 18. Not only were the subsidies inadequate, but the “pattern of subsidy makes sound budgeting impossible,” since something like a “measles epidemic” could mean financial disaster for a centre that depended on a subsidy based on daily attendance.

⁹⁹ UCS, “Report on Special Meeting on Day Care,” 21 August 1968, BCA, GR 135, box 2, file 18.

doesn't buy day care. He has just dug his heels in... We are alarmed that the government is doing nothing to increase the budget for day care needs.”¹⁰⁰

For his part, Dan Campbell maintained indifference towards the fate of the UCS Advisory Committee. “[I]f the day care advisory committee... feels inclined to resign,” he declared, “that is their responsibility.” Campbell continued to insist that the blame for day care failures lay not with the provincial government, but with centres that failed to “practice budgetary constraint.”¹⁰¹ When Campbell announced a series of reforms -- including subsidy extensions to private centres and to more low-income families -- in November 1968, he suggested that they were necessary in part in order to clean up the mess created by the UCS and other mismanaged centres; he agreed, for example, to cover Marpole's 1968 deficit, which had reached almost \$9000 by the end of the year.¹⁰² These reforms were, as Campbell suggested, an “enlargement” of the provincial day care program in that they included broader subsidy coverage, but he was also quick to remind everyone that subsidies were still confined to those who were “economically disadvantaged....[T]hose who can afford to pay the full fee [will] be expected to do so.”¹⁰³

In many ways, the back-and-forth during the summer and fall of 1968 represents the beginning of BC's version of what Rianne Mahon has called the “never-ending story”

¹⁰⁰ *Vancouver Sun*, 23 October 1968; Emily Campbell, “Presentation to the Welfare Institutions Licensing Board,” 13 June 1968, BCA, GR 135, box 2, file 18.

¹⁰¹ *Vancouver Sun*, 28 October 1968; Dan Campbell to Biernes, 22 November 1968, BCA, GR 135, box 2, file 18.

¹⁰² Minister of Welfare, “Press Release,” 7 November 1968, BCA, GR 135, box 2, file 18; Biernes to Mr. Grant K. Moreton (President, Family Service Centres), 13 November 1968, BCA, GR 365, box 2, file 10; Belknap to Rickinson, “Memo Re: Marpole Day Care Centre,” 17 February 1969, BCA, GR 365, box 2, file 10. Once the government paid Marpole's deficit, the actual amount they ended up spending at the centre was \$6.17 per child.

¹⁰³ Minister of Welfare, “Press Release,” 7 November 1968, BCA, GR 135, box 2, file 18.

of day care struggles.¹⁰⁴ Each side in the battle about day care funding and policy had become entrenched. On one side were those who were deeply dissatisfied and frustrated with the government's unwillingness to take meaningful policy action. Day care providers, community groups, and local agencies like the UCS and the Advisory Committee (whose resignation had not been accepted by the UCS Board) argued that the government's piecemeal reforms did not address any fundamental flaws in the system. The Advisory Committee led the way in highlighting many of these flaws. Campbell, they argued, showed no interest in appointing a provincial child care director; the lack of start-up funding hindered the creation of new day care spaces; and the extension of subsidies was accompanied by a new means test that was "offensive to the dignity of parents," as well as a "regression to past methods" of welfare policy.¹⁰⁵ Furthermore, they argued, the entire system of subsidies was built on an economic fallacy: while the costs of care for a child in the custody of the welfare department could run close to \$800 per month, day care costs sat somewhere around \$75-\$122 per child per month. Providing day care was "vastly less expensive than the cost of rebuilding lives after not providing the services," in the words of Emily Campbell.¹⁰⁶

By the end of the decade it was clear that the most insurmountable barrier of all for day care supporters, even more than haggling over financial commitments, was the philosophical difference over the meaning and purpose of publicly-funded child care in BC society. Was day care an anti-poverty measure for poor women only? A right for all

¹⁰⁴ Rianne Mahon, "The Never-Ending Story," 583.

¹⁰⁵ Sadler to Maurice Egan (Director, Social Planning, City of Vancouver), 28 November 1968, BCA, GR 135, box 2, file 18; J. Alan Duncan (President, Kitsilano Area Council, UCS) to Dan Campbell, 10 February 1969, BCA, GR 365, box 2, file 10; Biernes to Dan Campbell, 25 October 1968, BCA, GR 135, box 2, file 18.

¹⁰⁶ Emily Campbell, "Presentation to the Welfare Institutions Licensing Board," 13 June 1968, BCA, GR 135, box 2, file 18.

women? In their 1968 report, the Business and Professional Women's Club of BC made the case that the benefits of day care extended to all parents and children, regardless of income or family situation. Certainly, they argued, day care services were important for "encourag[ing] husbandless mothers to become self-supporting," thereby reducing mothers' claims on social assistance and lowering taxes overall. Children would also benefit from safe, healthy, and supportive care. But publicly-funded day care services, the Club insisted, had become something much more than a service for disadvantaged mothers and children:

Since becoming enfranchised, women have advanced rapidly and progressively into equal rights with men for jobs and remuneration if they are qualified. Women take great pride in the security of being able to earn their own living or in supporting their dependents.

It is a fact that never again can we keep all women at home. We cannot take away the privilege of working outside the home from women anymore than we can take back their franchise, nor anymore than we can take back unions from working people or social assistance from the needy.¹⁰⁷

The Advisory Committee, the UCS, and their supporters made similar arguments.

Though they did not go so far as to suggest that day care be universally available -- "[c]ertainly, the parent who can afford to do so should pay up to the full cost of the service," the committee said -- they insisted that the existing subsidy program excluded thousands of deserving children and parents. Poverty was not the only reason why a family sought access to day care: "employment, study, health, or the particular need of the child himself" were also valid situations in which a subsidy should be granted.¹⁰⁸

¹⁰⁷ Business and Professional Women's Clubs of British Columbia and Yukon, "Brief on Need for Starting Grants for Child Day Care Centres," report presented to Daniel Campbell, 1968 (located in the BC Legislative Library). This report called specifically for increased funding for initial capital costs for day cares.

¹⁰⁸ UCS Advisory Committee on Day Care, "Day Care Services," 16 July 1968, BCA, GR 135, box 2, file 18.

Minister Dan Campbell, Sadler, and Rickinson remained unswayed by these campaigns, holding fast to their position that day care was a welfare program for poor families. Campbell, for one, took “great exception” to the Advisory Committee’s insistence that all children should have access to day care, regardless of family income:

[T]his was not the original intention of government support of day care centres. The Committee was advised that the policy of government was to support day care centres which were provided for children of social allowance families and marginal income groups where mothers were being rehabilitated, either through part-time employment or taking training fitting them for employment.¹⁰⁹

There was no room, in other words, in Campbell’s vision of day care services for mothers who considered it their right to choose to work outside the home.

The philosophical impasse between day care supporters and provincial government officials was highlighted at a Day Care Symposium hosted by the University Women’s Club at UBC in March 1969. Criticism of the particular failures of government policy was a central theme of the symposium, but so too was the question of the purpose of day care in a modern society. Panellists included representatives from the government, from the community of day care operators, and from interested citizens. Belknap, the Superintendent of Neglected Children, spoke on behalf of the provincial government, and his exchanges with Dorothy Behesti (of the Advisory Committee) and Deryck Thomson (of Family Service Centres), in particular, highlighted the unbridgeable gap between what working families wanted and needed, and what the government was willing to provide.¹¹⁰ Though Belknap was targetted repeatedly by frustrated child care advocates, he stood firm in relating the priorities of the provincial government with respect to the provision of

¹⁰⁹ Sadler to Rickinson, “Memo Re: Day Care Centres,” 23 August 1968, BCA, GR 135, box 2, file 18.

¹¹⁰ Other panellists included early childhood education experts and academics. Ruth Pestell (Day Care Symposium Committee) to Belknap, 28 February 1969, BCA, GR 365, box 2, file 10.

day care. First, he said, the government was responsible to protect the safety of children in day care centres and homes through WILB standards and regulations. The second priority was to serve families on social assistance, and third, to “recognize the role of prevention of social problems which operates intrinsically in good Day Care operations.” When asked, Belknap stated specifically that the provincial government considered that day care “would continue for some time to be a residual program.”¹¹¹

But the symposium also provided a platform for those who advocated a much different approach to day care, an approach that was gaining traction in public discourse: that it was not just a rehabilitative welfare service, but one with significant implications for the rights of all family members – especially mothers. Keynote speaker Barbara Chisholm, the Executive Director of Victoria Day Care Services in Toronto, framed day care not just in terms of children’s interests and welfare spending, but in terms of mothers’ rights and the development of a healthy citizenry. She accused society of have a “double standard when it comes to the working mother”:

On one hand, society looks at the mother on welfare and says she shouldn’t be a public drag; on the other hand, if she is working, it says she should be home taking care of her children.¹¹²

Provincial day care policy, Chisholm argued, was developed based on “myths” about motherhood, of which there were several. The most damaging, however, were that all women were instinctually programmed to be good mothers, and that separation equalled deprivation. As Chisholm pointed out, mothers were held to impossible standards of “the virtue of self-reliance and independence,” with no acknowledgement of the reality for

¹¹¹ *Vancouver Sun*, 29 March 1969, 32; “A Symposium on Day Care,” 28 March 1969, BCA, GR 365, box 2, file 10. Dan Campbell also explained this in a letter to Mrs. A., a concerned parent: if anyone had a “right” to day care, he said, it was the child of low-income and disadvantaged parents. 16 June 1969, BCA, GR 365, box 2, file 10.

¹¹² “A Symposium on Day Care,” 28 March 1969, BCA, GR 365, box 2, file 10.

most working mothers. High-quality, affordable day care was “a must,” she concluded, and not just because children and social welfare recipients deserved it – but because working mothers were entitled to a service that recognized and supported their right to earn an income. Other panellists drew attention to related implications, including the dismal wages of day care workers and the attitudes of men and fathers towards day care.¹¹³

Yet as the terms of the debate began the shift towards women’s rights rhetoric – a trend that would become of central importance in the immediate future -- groups around the province continued to struggle with the practical barriers of day care financing and operations. In Port Edward, a child care service for the mothers working in Nelson Bros. Fisheries requested financial assistance from the provincial government, since they expected a budget shortfall of \$2300.¹¹⁴ The Women’s Auxiliary of the United Fishermen and Allied Workers’ Union passed a resolution calling on the provincial government to provide financial support to address the “desperate need for Day Care Centres for children of working mothers.”¹¹⁵ Appeals to the provincial government came from community groups in cities from Quesnel to Courtenay.¹¹⁶ The government responded to these requests with anything ranging from a promise to look into the matter, to tentative offers to raise subsidy levels on a per-case basis, to an outright denial of responsibility. In

¹¹³ “A Symposium on Day Care,” 28 March 1969, BCA, GR 365, box 2, file 10.

¹¹⁴ Joan Taselaar (Board of Directors Port Edward Day Care Centre) to Loffmark, 1 May 1969, BCA, GR 365, box 2, file 10. This included a year-round day care centre for 3-5 year olds in the community hall, as well as a nursery for under-3s during canning season.

¹¹⁵ Marie McLean (Secretary, Central Council Women’s Auxiliaries to the United Fishermen and Allied Workers’ Union) to Ralph Loffmark, 22 April 1969, GR 365, box 2, file 10.

¹¹⁶ Rickinson to Mulder, 16 July 1969, BCA, GR 365, box 2, file 10; Rickinson to Mrs. P, 10 November 1969, BCA, GR 365, box 2, file 10.

Port Edward, Sadler suggested that Nelson Bros. was “basically responsible for the day care need,” since they were the ones that needed the mothers’ labour.¹¹⁷

As the 1960s drew to a close, frustration and dissatisfaction characterized BC’s day care policy scene. Officials in the Department of Social Welfare denied responsibility for mothers and children they did not consider eligible for public support: those that could afford to pay for their own day care, or mothers who did not really “need” to be working. Day care operators, local welfare organizations, and their advocates repeatedly drew attention to a flawed system of inadequate subsidies, inconsistent financial support, and continued reliance on unstable private donations. Though the number of day care centres had increased in number, their operation remained “chaotic” and their “finances uncertain.”¹¹⁸ The supply of licensed spaces in the province did not come close to the demand, resulting in a number of “bootleg” day care centres and family homes operating without licenses. As critics pointed out, the safety and health of children in those centres was beyond the government’s control.¹¹⁹ Furthermore, there was still no provision in the Welfare Institutions Licensing Act to allow for centre-based care for children under 3 years of age. Small tweaks to subsidy levels and the means test were introduced in 1969, but neither of those reforms represented any fundamental changes to the provincial day

¹¹⁷ Sadler to H.W. Murray, 3 July 1969, BCA, GR 365, box 2, file 10. In Vancouver’s Gordon House, for example, Belknap suggested that they might increase the per diem subsidy for Schedule C children, at least temporarily, to address the budget shortfalls. Belknap to Rickinson, “Memo Re: Gordon House Day Care Centre, Vancouver,” 2 June 1969, BCA, GR 365, box 2, file 10.

¹¹⁸ *Vancouver Sun*, 7 October 1968, 29. As of October 1969, there were 48 licensed day care centres in BC for 3-5 year olds, or 1306 spaces. “British Columbia Licensed Group Day Care Centres for Three to Five Year Old Children,” October 1969, BCA, GR 365, box 2, file 10.

¹¹⁹ *Vancouver Sun*, 5 October, 7 October, 8 October 1968. The *Sun* ran a series of articles surveying the “state of day care” in Vancouver and BC.

care program.¹²⁰ Even Gladys Maycock, the WILB official responsible for day care, characterized the day care situation as “from the sublime to the ridiculous.”¹²¹ As the turn of the decade approached, the state of day care affairs inspired renewed efforts to take stock of the relative failures of initial day care programming, and to make sense of what was needed.

* * *

Well into the 1960s, calls for enhanced day care services in BC were countered with threats about the destruction of “family life due to women...going back to work.”¹²² Policy-makers may have recognized the presence of mothers in the 1960s labour force, but that recognition did not necessarily translate into wholesale acceptance. Despite statistics that were beginning to suggest otherwise, working motherhood was still not considered a ‘normal’ part of middle-class family life. Neither was working mothers’ need for day care. Instead, the province’s first venture into day care subsidization was imprinted with an ideological adherence to the gendered division of labour in the work and the home, as well as the long-standing view that working motherhood indicated a family in crisis needing state support to get back to ‘normal.’

The absence of labour voices in 1960s day care debates is revealing. This was true at the level of policy-making; the provincial Department of Labour was virtually silent on day care throughout the 1960s. But it was also true among organized labour. The BC

¹²⁰ For more details, see N.S. Brooke (Supervisor, Social Assistance and Rehabilitation Division, Department of Social Welfare) to Rickinson, “Memo Re: Day Care-Homemaker Application Form,” 15 May 1969, BCA, GR 365, box 2, file 10.

¹²¹ *Vancouver Sun*, 8 October 1968.

¹²² *Victoria Daily Times*, 8 July 1965, 21.

Federation of Labour, for example, would not weigh in on the issue of working mothers' access to day care until 1973.¹²³ BC was not unique in this respect. Joan Sangster points out that in the 1950s and 1960s labour activists across the country largely "accepted the gendered division of labour as natural and inevitable," and thus when they supported working women's rights, did so in a way that "endorsed a shared vision of women as temporary, secondary, and decorative workers."¹²⁴ The notion of worker-citizenship – and, crucially, the social benefits that derived from worker-citizenship – remained out of reach for working mothers. At the same time, the assumption that women held primary responsibility for child care followed them into the labour force. Using their influence to call for state provision of child care, in other words, was not on the agenda for organized labour before the late 1960s.¹²⁵

Instead, day care was left to welfare bureaucrats and providers. Subsidies were offered to mothers who were obligated to work because of economic need or family breakdown -- mothers whose wage-earning indicated a principled commitment to preventing long-term dependency on social assistance. The first efforts at government-sponsored day care reinforced deeply-held patterns of welfarist intervention in the lives of mothers. As the BC women's movement grew in strength, however, women's rights activists offered an alternative vision for provincial day care policy, one premised upon a version of social citizenship for working mothers on par with that of male breadwinners.

¹²³ British Columbia Federation of Labour, "Submission of the Committee on Women's Rights to the Minister of Human Resources on Child Care Requirements," 1973 (can be found in the BC Legislative Library).

¹²⁴ Sangster, *Transforming Labour*, 51.

¹²⁵ As Sangster points out, politicians in the 1950s and early 1960s played on Cold War fears about the association between state-sponsored day nurseries and communism, insuring that unions left the matter alone: *Transforming Labour*, 80. See also Susan Prentice, "Workers, Mothers, Reds: Toronto's Postwar Day Care Fight," *Studies in Political Economy* 30 (Autumn 1989): 115-141.

Chapter 6

From Welfare to Women's Rights: Day Care Battles in the 1970s

*It's February 1st 1973
We're all here in Vancouver BC
There's a bunch of women all sittin' here
Trying to make the situation clear
About – daycare – 'cause there ain't no daycare*

*There's money been promised for you and me
But there ain't no money for the under threes
My kids are fine and they ain't no bore
And they can't help it if they're under three
They're 2 ½ and 1 1/3 and its about time their voice was heard
About daycare – 'cause there ain't no day care*

*You see on August 30th '72
The people of BC – that's me and you
We all went down to the polling stations
And we didn't give the Socreds congratulations
We voted them out. And we voted in
The Socialist hoards by a wide margin –
That's the NDP for you and me
But there's a lot of folks can't pay the fee
For daycare – and there ain't no daycare ...*

- Opening verses of “Talkin’ Day Care Blues,” written by the Child Care Occupation Forces during the February 1973 sit-in at the Day Care Information Office in Vancouver. Source: SFUA, F-111-7-1-23, “Childcare/Daycare, 1973-81.”

Perhaps more than any other time during the twentieth century, the early 1970s marked a moment when the potential existed to radically transform the meaning of public responsibility for child care. Challenges to the welfare orientation of day care, so firmly established in the 1960s, emerged from second wave women’s rights activism that swept across BC. Working both separately and in alliance with each other, feminist and welfare rights groups and individuals insisted that public day care was necessary for the

restructuring of work and caregiving that would erase women's inequality in the home and the labour force. Activists and advocates called for the inclusion of a universal day care program as part of a fully-realized version of social citizenship for working mothers.

The feminist-inspired battles of the late 1960s and early 1970s signalled important shift in the politics of work, motherhood, and the welfare state in twentieth-century BC. All the familiar debates were still evident to some degree, including, in the Wages for Housework campaign, the argument that women's social rights should be recognized through compensation for motherwork. But while this maternalist interpretation had previously been one of the principal terms of the women's welfare debate, by the 1970s it had been relatively sidelined in relation to the key issue: the state's responsibility to women *as workers*. Child care politics in this period were embedded in the fundamental reordering of dependency that defined postwar welfare states. "It no longer [went] without saying," Nancy Fraser and Linda Gordon explain, "that a woman should rely on a man for economic support, nor that mothers should not also be "workers.""¹ As a result, social programs built around the idea of women's household dependency were now shrouded in a "stigma," and lost their political cachet. Campaigns for women's independence, equality, and social rights, therefore, were understood to inseparable from their wage-earning. The challenge for advocates of women's equality was to reframe child care away from its welfarist orientation and have it included among the spectrum of social programs that recognized working mothers' rights.

British Columbia's day care battles in the late 1960s and early 1970s were very much part of a national story. Day care became part of the women's rights agenda across

¹ Nancy Fraser and Linda Gordon, "A Genealogy of Dependency: Tracing a Keyword of the U.S. Welfare State," *Signs* 19, 2 (Winter 1994), 324.

the country thanks largely to the Royal Commission on the Status of Women (RCSW), which was appointed by Prime Minister Lester Pearson in 1967 to address the growing concern with “women’s issues,” particularly those that had to do with women’s participation in the work force. In every corner of the country, hearings and briefs from women, mothers, and caregivers revealed the

[F]issures, contradictions, and stress points they sensed between constructions of women’s economic needs and their actual material predicament, between idealized stay-at-home domesticity and the reality that more women were going out to work, between the expectations placed on ‘good’ mothers and the constraints of the double day.²

Responding to this widespread feeling of tension between work and motherhood, the commissioners made recommendations about day care that at the time were quite radical. “We believe the Canada Assistance Plan is inappropriate,” they declared, “because it is limited to welfare measures. We contend that a day-care centre programme must be conceived on much broader lines. It must be designed for all families who need and wish to use it.” What was needed, the commissioners said, was a national day care act. “For the federal government to fail to proceed with a specific child-care programme, removed from welfare legislation of a more general nature,” the commissioners said, “would be to deny the claim which Canadian women have made for concrete assistance in the burden of responsibility which they have been compelled to carry.”³

The crucial message of the 1970 RCSW report, as Annis May Timpson argues, was that it “legitimiz[ed] women’s right to worker-citizenship.”⁴ The commissioners

² Joan Sangster, “Invoking Experience as Evidence,” *Canadian Historical Review* 92, 1 (March 2011): 150.

³ Florence Bird et al., *Report of the Royal Commission on the Status of Women in Canada* (Ottawa, September 1970), 270.

⁴ Annis May Timpson, *Driven Apart: Women’s Employment Equality and Child Care in Canadian Public Policy* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2001), 53.

insisted that women were entitled to equality of opportunity in the labour force, which included fairness in wages, promotions, and hiring. They also acknowledged, however, that gender equality would not be achieved simply by treating male and female workers identically. Instead, the commissioners argued that women were entitled to rights-based social benefits that recognized their distinct responsibility for reproduction and child-rearing. A national day care act was one of the key policies that would help to ensure fully-realized citizenship rights for women.

In the RCSW's report's immediate aftermath, there were tangible (if ultimately insubstantial) changes to the policy conversation about day care in Ottawa. Prime Minister Trudeau established the Interdepartmental Committee on the Status of Women, which contained several senior female public servants who had been intimately involved with the RCSW as members of mainstream feminist groups.⁵ A national plan for day care was on the Status of Women committee's agenda – though it was assigned to the working group on family life and community services, not that of women's economic participation, a decision that Timpson argues had long-term repercussions for the success of day care policy.⁶ There were also concerted efforts to gauge the status of day care across the country: what provincial day care legislation existed? How many day cares were there in each province, and how were they regulated? How extensive, exactly, were day care shortages, and how could more spaces be created? Over 350 people, including parents, day care operators, politicians, and public servants, explored these questions at a

⁵ Rianne Mahon, "The Never-Ending Story: The Struggle for Universal Child Care Policy in the 1970s," *The Canadian Historical Review* 81, 4 (December 2000): 582-622.

⁶ Timpson, *Driven Apart*, 55-6.

national day care conference held in Ottawa in June 1971.⁷ The Canadian Council of Social Development's 1972 report on day care was another effort to consolidate information about programs, legislation, and facilities across the country as a starting point for enhanced policy-making.⁸ Also in 1972, the federal government recognized that it had at least some responsibility for day care when it established the Child Care Programs Division housed in the department of national health and welfare.

Perhaps the most important effect of the RCSW, however, was that it provided a platform for second-wave feminist voices with respect to child care. The report signalled a key change in the messages of day care advocates: child care policy was not just about the rehabilitation of poor families. Instead, it was an issue of intrinsic importance to women's rights as social and economic citizens. Leading national women's rights voices – including the National Action Committee on the Status of Women (NAC), established in 1972 to secure implementation of the RCSW recommendations – indicated their support for a day care program on these grounds.⁹ These “relatively elite” actors were not the only ones assembling their forces for day care battles, however.¹⁰ In Toronto, a

⁷ Canadian Council on Social Development (CCSD), *Proceedings: Canadian Conference on Day Care, June 20-23, 1971* (Ottawa: CCSD and Department of Health and Welfare, January 1972).

⁸ Canadian Council on Social Development, *Day Care: Report of a National Study* (Ottawa, 1972).

⁹ See Nancy Adamson et al., *Feminist Organizing for Change: The Contemporary Women's Movement in Canada* (Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1988), 46-7; Timpson, *Driven Apart*, 67-8.

¹⁰ Deborah Dinner, “The Universal Childcare Debate: Rights Mobilization, Social Policy, and the Dynamics of Feminist Activism, 1966-1974,” *Law and History Review* 28, no. 3 (August 2010): 577-628. As Dinner points out, however, these national, elite groups are the ones who have received the most scholarly attention (see, for example, in Canada: Alvin Finkel, “Even the Little Children Cooperated: Family Strategies, Childcare Discourse, and Social Welfare Debates 1945-1975,” *Labour/Le Travail* 36 (Fall 1995): 91-118; and Mahon, “The Never-Ending Story” in Canada. In the United States: Sonya Michel, *Children's Interests/Mothers' Rights: The Shaping of America's Child Care Policy* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1999), and Emilie Stoltzfus, *Citizen, Mother, Worker: Debating Public Responsibility for Child Care After the Second World War* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2003). With the exception of Susan Prentice's and Wendy Atkin's studies of Toronto, little attention has been paid to grassroots efforts of second-wave feminists with respect to child care. Susan Prentice, “Workers, Mothers, Reds: Toronto's Postwar Daycare Fight,” *Studies in Political Economy* 30 (Autumn 1989): 115-141; Wendy Atkin, “‘Babies of the World Unite’: The Early Day-Care Movement and Family Formation in the

powerful “cross-class coalition” of feminist activists, parents, trade unionists, and public officials launched a widespread campaign for a new model of public child care, as Rianne Mahon has documented.¹¹ In British Columbia, grassroots feminist groups worked to transform the terms of day care debates in the late 1960s and early 1970s. In the process they ran up against politicians and bureaucrats firmly opposed to spending on programs they considered “social experiments or frills.”¹²

Feminist organizers on Simon Fraser University’s “radical campus” offered the first highly-visible challenge to prevailing attitudes towards day care in BC.¹³ Their child care co-op of the late 1960s drew attention not only to the shortage of day care spaces for working- and student-mothers, but to the capitalist, patriarchal social order which impeded gender equality in the family and the workplace. As these campus feminists moved down the hill from Burnaby at the turn of the decade, they began to form alliances with welfare rights activists in Vancouver who were engaged in their own battles with welfare officials about the inadequacy of the provincial subsidy program established in 1966. This overlap between feminism (largely socialist feminism) and welfare rights was the source of much of the early 1970s child care movement’s energy, strength, and optimism. The movement’s high point came in 1973 with the occupation of the government’s day care offices in Vancouver. Along the way, liberal feminist

1970s,” in *Family Matters: Papers in Post-Confederation Canadian Family History*, ed. Lori Chambers and Edgar-Andre Montigny (Toronto: Canadian Scholars’ Press Inc., 1998), 57-70.

¹¹ Rianne Mahon, “Challenging National Regimes from Below: Toronto Child-Care Politics,” *Politics and Gender* 3 (2007): 55-78.

¹² Cheryl Collier, “Governments and Women’s Movements: Explaining Child Care and Anti-Violence Policy in Ontario and British Columbia, 1970-2000” (PhD diss., University of Toronto, 2006), 116.

¹³ Hugh Johnston, *Radical Campus: Making Simon Fraser University* (Vancouver: Douglas & McIntyre, 2005).

organizations and labour groups indicated their support for a universal day care program that would ensure women's equality with men in the public sphere.

In all, the early 1970s represented a period of remarkable feminist-led consensus about the need for more government support for high-quality day care and for the involvement of mothers and parents in policy making and program development. For some of these groups, like the SFU socialist feminists, public and collective responsibility for child care supported the broader goal of ungendering caregiving and work, thus liberating women to pursue and achieve a fully-realized citizenship. For others, like the welfare rights feminists in More Opportunities for Mothers (MOMs), day care was needed simply to give struggling single mothers the freedom to work towards economic independence. Together, however, these grassroots efforts had the common goal of pulling day care out of its welfarist orientation. Together, these groups challenged the limited version of social citizenship that linked day care to poor women's obligation to work, and made day care an issue central to the recognition of women's social rights.

“More Than Just Baby-sitting”

Vancouver was a locus of activity for second-wave feminism in Canada, and like in other major urban centres such as Toronto and Montreal, university campuses provided the source of much of the activist energy. In Vancouver's case, that energy originated in large part at Simon Fraser University, the so-called “radical campus.”¹⁴ Frustrated with their unequal status in New Left student action, women at SFU created the Feminine Action League in 1968, which eventually changed its name to the SFU Women's Caucus.

¹⁴ Johnston, *Radical Campus*.

Child care was one of their premier issues. This “vanguard” of feminists indicated to the government and to the public that day care policy was an issue of significant importance to feminists and those concerned with the rights and interests of working mothers and their families.

The intersection of feminism and day care politics began with the occupation of a boardroom in the spring of 1968. Initially undertaken to protest faculty privilege, education student Gini Yorke proposed that the occupation could be used to politicize the lack of child care on campus. The occupiers turned the boardroom into an ad hoc child care centre, and though they were forced to vacate the room, the university administration could not dampen the enthusiasm and momentum that had been created around the need for day care. A group of students, most of them women and many of them mothers, seized the southwest corner of the student lounge and cafeteria on the second floor of the Academic Quadrangle, and declared that they were using the space for a child care co-operative. They received a \$500 grant from the Student Society, which they used to purchase toys and equipment, and they set up a system whereby each member, in return for their children being cared for during the day, was required to contribute a half-day of child care per week (in addition to a weekly \$1 fee, which went towards snacks and milk). Through the summer of 1968, the co-op cared for about 60 different children, an average of about 30 per day. Mothers provided most of the care. The co-op also garnered significant attention and support from other students and staff members on campus, who

volunteered their time towards outings and activities for the children, along with donations of toys and food.¹⁵

Though co-operative child care was not new in BC, the idea that it could be a vehicle for women's liberation was.¹⁶ Similar political actions were evident at the University of Toronto and York University, where child care co-ops were established as a means to promote "egalitarian and democratic" ideals in the social organization of care.¹⁷ For the mothers who organized the SFU co-op -- most accurately classified as socialist feminists -- collective child rearing was about much more than meeting practical child care needs.¹⁸ Instead, the co-op represented a new way to organize communities and families that counteracted the stifling inequalities created by a patriarchal and capitalist society. "[W]e reject," they declared, "the definition of the co-op as just a baby-sitting agency and see it is a genuine social movement."¹⁹ "An extended family has been formed," one spokesperson explained, "freeing each mother for part of each day from individual responsibility for the child."²⁰ Indeed, the group called themselves the SFU

¹⁵ The story of the SFU Family Co-op can be found in Marcy Cohen et al., *'Cuz There Ain't No Daycare (or Almost None She Said)* (Vancouver: Press Gang Publishers, 1973), 20. *The Peak*, the campus student newspaper, also reported extensively on the co-op. See, for example, 21 May 1968.

¹⁶ Since 1945 the Association of Co-operative Play Groups had been operating in Vancouver, and on Vancouver Island an organization of co-operative preschools was established in the late 1940s. These playgroup organizations, though, were not about providing essential day-time care for working mothers; rather, they were designed to give middle-class housewives a break during the day, and to provide their children a chance to socialize with others. Canadian Co-operative Association, *Child Care Co-operatives in Canada 2007: A Research Report*, prepared for the Co-operatives Secretariat and Human Resources and Social Development Canada in conjunction with the Co-operatives Secretariat, March 2007, 10-11.

¹⁷ Mahon, "Challenging National Regimes," 63; Atkin, "'Babies of the World Unite!'"

¹⁸ Although that was certainly an important motivation, given the number of mature students with families enrolled at SFU.

¹⁹ *The Peak*, 21 May 1968.

²⁰ Cohen, *'Cuz There Ain't No Daycare*, 20. The SFU Co-op was the inspiration for the U of T campus co-op. See Wendy Atkin, "Babies of the World Unite." The Family's grassroots approach to child care also allowed them to bring in other elements of what might be called the New Left counterculture: opposition to hierarchy, authority, and of course to rigid gender roles. The co-ops members did not want to reproduce in the next generation the institutions and ideas that engendered oppression. Children wore gender-neutral

Co-operative Family, or simply the Family. The child care provided by the co-op allowed mothers to go to school, participate equally in the paid work force, and pursue other interests. It allowed her, in other words, to participate equally and freely in all aspects of society as a rights-bearing citizen. The co-op organizers also encouraged the wives of students, faculty and staff to join – they were urged that “the time spent with the Family is time away from the neurosis-causing boredom and vacuity of the home...” “It was a way out,” another pamphlet declared, “a way for women...to become independent, their own person first, and not just somebody’s mother.”²¹

Through the summer and into the early fall, the Family insisted on preserving the grassroots, community-based, and parent-driven nature of their project. In their view, the best way to provide for women’s inclusion as a fully-participating citizen in public and private life was not through “impersonal institutions” and state structures, but through informal organizations that were responsive to the needs of the group. Eventually, however, they had to concede to the inevitability of government intervention. For one thing, they could not escape the web of bureaucratic requirements created by the provincial Welfare Institutions Licensing Board and the university administration. The corner of the lounge where the co-op was located did not have kitchen facilities, access to outside play areas, a dedicated washroom, nor a phone, and the university would not provide access to those things unless they were licensed. Eventually, however, the Family

clothes and took part in gender-neutral play, and were treated like “people” rather than “property.” Challenging authority was encouraged among the children – the Family parents were clearly proud of one three-year-old, who, when scolded by a “pompous university official” for peeing on the sidewalk, promptly told the official to ‘fuck off.’ In another example of the New Left ideology at work, a supportive community member brought in a bunch of toys to donate to the children, including a toy fort and soldiers. He was told the acceptance of the fort had to go before a committee of parents, who were deliberating whether or not, in the context of the Vietnam War, such a “war-like” gift could be accepted. It eventually was, but on the condition that it be called a “peace-keeping mission.” *The Peak*, 29 July 1970.

²¹ Cohen et al., *‘Cuz There Ain’t No Daycare*, 20.

obtained a license. Their cause was helped by the fact that university administrators were afraid of the public relations storm that these “tense and most crusadish” women could raise if they forced the closure of the co-op.²² Besides giving them access to better university resources, a license also made them eligible for government grants that would allow them to expand and update their facilities and materials.

Along with these practical concerns, it was also becoming increasingly clear that the co-op was an unrealistic and unsustainable way to provide child care to working mothers. Though they lamented the abandonment of the ideological commitment to co-operation and collective care work, the reality was that mothers, juggling school, work, and parenting, did not have the time nor the energy to take on extra unpaid care work during the day. Co-ops worked in theory, but only for a relatively exclusive middle-class group of mothers and children:

The strength and weakness of parent co-ops is that they place the burden of organizing facilities on the parents. In a growing number of families, both parents work an eight-hour day, often at very tiring jobs and simply do not have the time to participate actively in the day care centre. One result of demanding the day care centres be parent co-operatives would be that the people most in need of day care services – working parents – would be the last to obtain them.²³

As a licensed day care, the co-op would qualify lower-income mothers for provincial day care subsidies and allow them to hire trained child care workers, thus making their services more accessible to more people. Those involved decided to move towards a more formal institutional structure. With the support of licensing officer Gladys Maycock, the co-op secured a small amount of government funding and hired Emily

²² SFUA, F-149-1-1-0-1, “Early development, 1968-1998.” “Generally,” one memo to the president read, “it would be tough to be against motherhood and children and such a thing called the SFU Co-operative Family.”

²³ Barb Cameron et al., *The Day Care Book* (Toronto: Canadian Women’s Educational Press), 17. In SFUA, F-111-7-1-23, “Childcare/Daycare, 1973-81.”

Campbell as a co-ordinator.²⁴ Through the next several years Campbell worked with the university administration to acquire a more permanent space, and by 1973 the Burnaby Mountain Day Care Society had incorporated and moved into portable trailers, where licensed, subsidized child care was available to all campus mothers and families.²⁵

Ultimately, the co-operative model of child care in BC was a campus-based experiment that was not a long-term solution for most families. But for many feminists, the relative failure of the co-op model was beside the point. Above all, they argued, the action at SFU -- and a similar though less public one at UBC -- highlighted the cumbersome and stifling nature of the provincial day care bureaucracy. "While it's really encouraging to see people coming together to solve common-people needs," a group of BC feminists wrote, "it's also infuriating to see, again and again, that they *have* to do it all alone."²⁶ Despite its limitations, the SFU Family co-op offered a model of collective child care that provided the opportunity for women to pursue educational opportunities, work outside the home, and to be relieved of the sole responsibility for caregiving work without having to give up the fulfillment they derived from mother-work. "What we want," the co-op mothers explained,

[I]s day care that will help people BE with their kids and not just away from them; that will fill the gap between the kind of institutional (i.e. professional and standardized) centres we have now and the traditional nuclear family unit of mother-father-child; that is part of building a new definition of community, an extension of the family, a social sharing of child care responsibilities.²⁷

²⁴ Emily Campbell was fresh off of her experience with the UCS Advisory Committee on Day Care. Maycock was soon-to-be head of the provincial day care information office.

²⁵ In April 1977, the construction of an entirely new building for child care was completed. This is the current Child Care Centre on SFU campus.

²⁶ Cohen et al., *Cuz There Ain't No Day Care*, 13.

²⁷ Cohen et al., *Cuz There Ain't No Day Care*, 26.

In the sense that the SFU Family oriented child care activism towards women's liberation and citizenship rights, it marked the beginning of broader-based campaign of engagement with the state in the struggle for a reconceptualized system of public child care in BC.

Welfare Rights, Women's Rights, and Day Care

By 1969, several of the women involved with the SFU Women's Caucus were eager to expand their efforts beyond the campus and to engage all women in the city. As these feminists moved "down the hill" from Burnaby they joined with other women to become the Vancouver Women's Caucus. Containing currents of both socialist and radical feminist thought, the Women's Caucus developed into a dynamic group responsible for such major second-wave undertakings as the Abortion Caravan.²⁸ They also published the feminist newspaper *The Pedestal*. Along with the Women's Caucus, Vancouver was home to consciousness-raising groups, explicitly political liberal feminist organizations, feminist unions, and the Women's Bookstore on Davie Street. Together, these groups, organizations, and initiatives made Vancouver one of Canada's most significant breeding grounds for feminist thought and action in the late 1960s and early 1970s.²⁹

The Women's Caucus took up day care as one of its principal targets in the quest for women's liberation. In their day care "manifesto" they called for more child care centres in every neighbourhood in the city, at every place of work, and on every college

²⁸ Ian Milligan, "Coming off the Mountain: Forging an Outward-Looking New Left at Simon Fraser University," *BC Studies* 171 (Autumn 2011), 69-91; Christabelle Sethna, "Clandestine Operations: The Vancouver Women's Caucus, the Abortion Caravan, and the RCMP," *Canadian Historical Review* 90, 3 (September 2009), 466-69.

²⁹ Frances Wasserlein, "An Arrow Aimed at the Heart: The Vancouver Women's Caucus and the Abortion Caravan of 1970" (MA thesis, Simon Fraser University, 1990).

and university campus. Central to the provision of good day care, they said, was a high level of parent and family involvement. The Caucus's position stemmed from an analysis of the "mystique" of motherhood at the root of women's oppression, which they described as:

[T]he powerful idea that we belong at home with the children, that we deserve less because we should not be out working in the first place, that we are hard-bitten and unfeminine if we want anything but the mother's role and above all, that the children will suffer, will be warped, will grow up into criminals and monsters if we are not there with them at every moment.³⁰

Overcoming the motherhood mystique, the Caucus insisted, required a fundamental shift in society's attitudes towards working mothers. It also required social resources – like universal day care – that were offered in recognition of women's right to work, their right to equality in the home, their right to autonomy and independence, and "to seek fulfillment...as a full human being."³¹

Against the backdrop of the Caucus's ideological pronouncements, more concrete feminist-inspired day care initiatives also began to develop in Vancouver during the early 1970s. The most fertile of these campaigns emerged when feminist ideology met welfare rights activism. By the late 1960s, Vancouver had a well-organized welfare rights movement that included groups such as the Unemployed Citizens Welfare Improvement Council (UCWIC) and the Vancouver Welfare Rights Organization (VWRO). Both groups campaigned for higher social assistance rates, decent and affordable housing, and health and dental benefits for the welfare recipients. They also criticized the subtly pervasive attitudes that characterized the treatment of welfare recipients, and demanded

³⁰ UBCRBSC, Melody Kilian (Women's Caucus), "Day Care Manifesto," n.d.

³¹ Kilian, "Day Care Manifesto." See also *The Pedestal*, July 1970, 3; *The Pedestal*, Fall 1969, 4.

more respect from welfare agencies as well as the inclusion of their members on management and policy-making boards.³² As the influence of feminist thought and action spread throughout the city, these welfare rights groups began to incorporate into their activism an attention to the feminized nature of poverty. The UCWIC created alliances and partnership with feminist groups to protest unequal social assistance rates for women, which, they pointed out, were made even more disproportionate by the fact that women more often had dependents to support. They worked with the Women's Liberation Alliance, for example, on a brief to the provincial government which showed that women's average welfare rate was \$116.87 compared to men's \$124.21.³³

Feminist welfare rights activists pointed to many reasons why women had a harder time than men breaking free from the cycle of poverty and welfare dependency: unequal job opportunities, lack of power in labour negotiations, and low wages were among them. One of the biggest barriers to women's independence, however, was unaffordable and inaccessible day care. One report noted that of the 24,000 welfare cases in Vancouver as of December 1971 about one-third of them were "possible employables" -- "capable of supporting themselves." The women in that category cited lack of access to

³² The UCWIC, especially, was explicitly militant in approach: "the dispossessed people of Vancouver," it declared, "can unite and obtain their individual rights and to create a democratic and militant union to improve upon those rights." With the VWRO, the UCWIC staged a series of protests and demonstrations in the summer of 1971 to oppose proposed changes to welfare rates and administration. The very nature of public assistance, they said, denied the "fundamental rights of birth" and undermined the dignity, autonomy, and independence of welfare recipients in BC. See, in BCA, GR 2921, box 10, the files "UCWIC, Administration File," "Special Projects," and "Report to the Health and Welfare Committee of the Vancouver City Council from the Unemployed Citizens Welfare Improvement Council, 12 August 1971."

³³ Women's Liberation Alliance, "Brief Submitted to the Standing Committee of Council on Health and Welfare," 22 December 1971, BCA, GR 2921, box 10, file "Social Allowance Rates." The UCWIC also publicly declared their support of feminist demands: "We recognize and support the struggle of all women to gain dignity and equality as human beings. This includes legal, political and social rights and economic independence. We support the principle of equal job opportunity and equal work, equal pay for women. This is a struggle to be fought by both men and women. We support the general Women's Caucus and all other groups working towards the same ends." UCWIC, "Our Stand," in *The Voice of the Unemployed*, c. summer 1971, BCA, GR 2921, box 10, file "Special Projects."

day care as among the most significant barriers to self-support.³⁴ For advocates working on behalf of welfare mothers, the path to independence was therefore quite simple: more accessible and more affordable day care. They called on the provincial government to increase capital funding, loosen licensing regulations, and to run awareness campaigns to educate social assistance recipients about their access to day care subsidies.³⁵

Though day care awareness permeated many feminist organizations in early 1970s Vancouver, one group in particular embodied the overlap between feminist organizing and welfare rights activism. This group -- More Opportunities for Mothers, or MOMs -- made day care a central plank of their efforts on behalf of welfare mothers. MOMs was founded in 1968 by a group of six mothers who lived in the same public housing project. Longstanding frustrations with the provincial social assistance program inspired them to organize to find ways to “tackle the barriers” for mothers who felt “trapped” on social assistance. With the help of high-profile welfare activist Margaret Mitchell, MOMs developed a job-training program for mothers. Supportive community agencies created positions, most of them volunteer-based and in non-profit firms, in which mothers could gain access to work experience and on-the-job training, the intention being that this experience would be invaluable in mothers’ search for permanent employment.³⁶ Without day care, however, most MOMs mothers could not pursue these opportunities.

³⁴ Art Phillips, “Brief to Standing Committee on Health and Welfare,” 23 December 1971, BCA, GR 2921, box 10, file “Social Allowance Rates.”

³⁵ *The Pedestal*, July 1970, 3.

³⁶ “Vancouver Opportunity Program,” 30 August 1973, and City of Vancouver Welfare and Rehabilitation Department, “Recipients of Opportunities Incentive Allowance,” December 1973, BCA, GR 2921, box 10, file “Vancouver Opportunities Program v. V.”

Margaret Mitchell, a passionate advocate for welfare mothers as well as a savvy political operator, invited both Grace McCarthy (Socred MLA) and Grace MacInnis (NDP MP) to a meeting with MOMs leaders, the heads of the city's welfare and housing programs, and a sampling of private family agencies in the city who had been trying to set up day care services. While MacInnis had taken a public stance in support of day care for working mothers, McCarthy, a "particularly right-wing" member of the Socred government was less sympathetic.³⁷ Nevertheless, Mitchell and the MOMs women saw McCarthy, one of the few female Socred MLAs, as a potential ally, and assumed that under the watchful gaze of two politicians, welfare officials would take action. Indeed, the city social services department offered support to a child care centre established in donated Lutheran church space run by volunteers from the National Council of Jewish Women.³⁸

Encouraged by this evidence that "institutional change" was possible, Mitchell and MOMs decided to expand their efforts.³⁹ They moved into offices on Commercial Drive and sought out partnerships with other non-profit community agencies willing to provide placements for mothers. MOMs's work quickly gained the attention of senior city welfare officials, who approved of a work-based program to wean people off of social assistance. The city wanted to expand the program to all welfare recipients, not just mothers. As a result, MOMs morphed into the Vancouver Opportunities Program (VOP).⁴⁰ Like MOMs, VOP was run by women. Furthermore, two-thirds of its client

³⁷ Collier, "Governments and Women's Movements," 116."

³⁸ Margaret Mitchell, *No Laughing Matter: Adventure, Activism, and Politics* (Vancouver: Granville Island Publishing Ltd., 2008), 74-5.

³⁹ Mitchell, *No Laughing Matter*, 74-5.

⁴⁰ VOP was sometimes referred to as the Vancouver Incentive Program.

base remained women, who made up the majority of the city's 5000 single-parent welfare recipients.⁴¹ Mothers were able to gain work experience in schools, libraries, community information centres, food co-operatives, tenant and welfare rights offices, self-help programs, and a range of other community agencies – placements in which they would achieve “self-growth and the attainment of a measure of independence and self-support.”⁴²

Though the expansion of VOP was encouraging, the problem of inadequate day care remained. Without accessible and affordable child care, VOP opportunities were meaningless. As one city official pointed out, “[t]he problems of child care in Vancouver have been the foremost problems faced by Welfare Recipients who wish to take part in the Incentive Program we offer.”⁴³ The child care that could be found was often only temporary, overly expensive, or in the case of one mother who each walked “10 blocks to her baby-sitter with a 2 yr. old and a 10 mth. old,” highly inconvenient. “It’s a wonder,” the VWRO suggested, “this woman is still motivated to work even with the [Welfare and

⁴¹ Male heads of families could participate if they were “not readily placeable in employment.” Walter N. Boyd (City of Vancouver Welfare and Rehabilitation Department) to Alderman Rankin, “Memo Re: Vancouver Opportunities Program,” 18 October 1973, BCA, GR 2921, box 10, file “Vancouver Opportunities Program v. V.” VOP also included people on Handicapped Persons Income Assistance, up to a maximum of \$50 month. The single parent figure came from United Community Services, Social Policy and Research Department, *The Economics of Day Care* (UCS, February/March 1973), iii.

⁴² No author, “Vancouver Opportunity Program,” 30 August 1973, BCA, GR 2921, box 10, file “Vancouver Opportunities Program v. V.”; Walter N. Boyd (City of Vancouver Welfare and Rehabilitation Department) to Alderman Rankin, “Memo Re: Vancouver Opportunities Program,” 18 October 1973, BCA, GR 2921, box 10, file “Vancouver Opportunities Program v. V.” Eligibility for VOP was determined by SA regulations; in other words, eligibility was ultimately determined by the provincial government. Funding came to the city from the province (through CAP funds), but VOP was administered through the municipal welfare administration. VOP itself was at arms-length from the city government; it was a non-profit charitable organization. VOP staff did all of the management and administrative work with support from the city’s Welfare and Rehabilitation Department. In 1974 (January-December), VOP had a budget of \$1,858,594.72. About \$1,750,000 of that went towards the incentive payments, and the rest towards administration costs. VOP clients received an honorarium of \$50 per month, a rate that was later raised to \$100. Levi to Mitchell, 7 March 1974, BCA, GR 2921, box 10, file “Vancouver Opportunities Program – Day Care.”

⁴³ Correspondence between Boyd and Bingham, July 1972, BCA, GR 2921, box 4, file “Day Care Services – Child Welfare.”

Rehabilitation] Dept. against her. But, as she says, she cannot live without the extra \$100.00 she earns a month.”⁴⁴

Under pressure from VOP organizers, the city authorized a monthly \$25 “baby-sitting allowance” and made more of an effort to educate mothers about their eligibility for provincial day care subsidies. While this helped during the six-month VOP placement, many mothers were once again left scrambling for child care at the end of their program. Of the VOP graduates who sought to move into permanent paid work, 20 percent cited “reasons of small children” as their biggest barrier to employment.⁴⁵ The cumbersome and flawed provincial day care bureaucracy compounded the problem. “No one,” VOP personnel informed Minister of Social Welfare Norm Levi, “knows what to do with us, or can tell us how to correctly fill out our forms.... We require babysitters in our homes, some of us have to take our children out to babysitters, some are in out-of-school day care centres, and others have babysitters after school. Do we therefore tick everything in sight?”⁴⁶ Furthermore, not every type of child care was covered. Centre-based care for children under three was, of course, unlicensable and thus ineligible for subsidy coverage. Left over from a time when “institutional” care for children was deemed inappropriate, the refusal to license under-3 centres struck many mothers as among the most outdated and unresponsive of the government’s policies.

⁴⁴ Mrs. D (of the Lower Mainland Welfare Rights Organization) to Levi, 3 October 1973, BCA, GR 2921, box 10, file “Welfare Rights Organization – Lower Mainland.” Part of this mother’s conflict with the city social worker was that since she could not access child care closer to her home and work, she had requested help in purchasing a double stroller for her young children. The city was reluctant to assist her.

⁴⁵ City of Vancouver Welfare and Rehabilitation Department, “Recipients of Opportunities Incentive Allowance,” December 1973, BCA, GR 2921, box 10, file “Vancouver Opportunities Program v. V.” The majority – 60% -- did not enter into paid work because of “health reasons.”

⁴⁶ VOP Personnel to Levi, 26 September 1973, BCA, GR 2921, box 10, file “Vancouver Opportunities Program vol. V.”

A Growing Movement

In the early 1970s, VOP was joined by a growing chorus of voices opposed to the provincial government's dismissive attitude towards day care. Parent groups, day care providers, mainstream feminist groups, and labour organizations: together they provided an analysis of policy shortcomings that highlighted both the practical barriers to better day care, including insufficient subsidies and onerous licensing regulations, and the flawed ideological context in which policy was made.

Inadequate day care became such a difficult obstacle for VOP clients that administrators decided to use a portion of the staff salary budget to hire a day care organizer, Betsy Wood. With the needs of working mothers as her top priority, Wood did not overly concern herself with licensing regulations as she set about establishing day care facilities in the low-income neighbourhoods where most VOP mothers resided. Her efforts resulted in Grandview Terrace Day Care and South Hill Day Care, both located in east Vancouver. Neither centre met the provincially-mandated space and safety standards that Wood considered arbitrary and cumbersome. To the great consternation of licensing officials, Wood also indicated that she intended to care for children under 3 years of age, especially those whose older siblings attended the centres. Though Wood got "hassled... a lot," she considered her deliberate flouting of the rules to be an important political statement about government unresponsiveness.⁴⁷

Other day care centres throughout the province were similarly willing to confront provincial officials about the red tape that impeded more and better day care. In Victoria, the Jiminy Cricket Day Care, established in 1967, had to reduce staff salaries and

⁴⁷ *Growing Pains*, vol 1 no 2, December 1974.

increase parent fees in 1971 after they depleted their budget on renovations and programming changes they considered unnecessary, but without which Family and Children's Services (Victoria's administering agency for provincial policy) threatened to revoke their license.⁴⁸ In Williams Lake, the social welfare department declined to replace the funding of a day care centre that was unexpectedly denied a Local Initiatives Programme (LIP) grant, despite evidence that a day care centre would have allowed several Aboriginal mothers to participate in Canada Manpower job training designed to get them off of welfare.⁴⁹ In North Vancouver, welfare officials deemed that the NOVACO day care was relying too heavily on subsidies and not on parent fees, and the centre was forced, against the wishes of overburdened staff, to enroll more children and cancel their lunch program.⁵⁰ This growing litany of complaints painted a province-wide picture of a provincial welfare administration doing more to discourage than encourage high-quality and accessible day care.

The prohibition against licensing for under-3 centres emerged as one of the most fiercely contested aspects of provincial policy. For mothers who needed subsidized care for their infants and toddlers, home-based care remained their only option. But the foster day care system was coming under increased feminist scrutiny. A report from the Child Care and Day Care Study Group in the summer of 1971 argued that children in these homes often received no more than substandard custodial care, but for reasons beyond the

⁴⁸ Alfred Patterson (Jiminy Cricket) to Cownden (Family and Children's Service), 7 March 1972, BCA, GR 746, box 1, file 18.

⁴⁹ Mrs. A.G. to Alex Fraser (MLA Cariboo), 3 March 1972; Sadler to Mrs. A.G., 8 March 1972, BCA, GR 746, box 1, file 18. For a short period in the early 1970s, LIP grants were available from the federal government for physical improvements to day care centres.

⁵⁰ Mrs. G (NOVACO) to Maycock, 19 July 1972; M.E. (NOVACO) to Ellingham, 10 August 1972; Ellingham to Egan, 16 August 1972; Ellingham to Mr. D (NOVACO), 8 September 1972, all in BCA, GR 746, box 1, file 19. The government said that 65 cents per day per child for food was extravagant, and that NOVACO should be able to operate on 25 cents per day.

caregivers' control.⁵¹ The report noted that day care mothers were isolated and exploited by the provincial system of child care. Caregiving mothers bore the hidden costs of child care: they effectively “donated” their homes “to the system,” and they shouldered the costs of food, toys, and equipment -- yet the subsidies for home-based care were lower than those available for centre-based care. Furthermore, support systems and training were not made available to caregivers since, as the report point out, they were considered “mothers, not workers.”⁵² Because their job “satisfie[d] an emotional loyalty to an anachronistic mystique,” namely that of the devoted stay-at-home-mother, the family day care system essentially allowed the provincial government to look like they were assuming responsibility for child care without actually challenging the gendered division of labour.⁵³ The Study Group recommended above all the phasing out of the family day care system altogether to be replaced by state-funded, parent-involved group care, with trained workers who were treated fairly and equitably, reflecting the value of the service they provided to society.⁵⁴

Mainstream feminist groups also weighed in. The Status of Women Action and Co-ordinating Council submitted a brief to all BC MPs, MLAs, members of the licensing board, and to senior welfare bureaucrats J.A. Sadler, the Assistant Deputy Minister in the Department of Social Welfare, and T.D. Bingham, the department's director of programs

⁵¹ Opportunities for Youth Projects: Vancouver Community Co-operative Child Care and Day Care Study, “A Brief on Day Care For Children Under 3 Years,” presented to the Community Care Facilities Board, 15 September 1971, SFUA, F-111-7-1-22, file “Childcare/Daycare 1970-78.”

⁵² “A Brief on Day Care For Children Under 3 Years,” 6, 14.

⁵³ “A Brief on Day Care For Children Under 3 Years,” 15.

⁵⁴ In the meantime, though, they suggested creating a group like the Nelson Family Day Care Society – an agency to which all care-giving mothers belonged, with visitors to provide support and advice and substitute care, along with toy lending and workshops. *Growing Pains*, 2, no. 1 (circa Summer 1975).

and former Superintendent of Neglected Children.⁵⁵ “[W]hat women want,” the council explained, was that “child care be considered a bold instrument of social policy to care for, protect and develop Canadian children.”⁵⁶ Beyond simply criticizing the failings of policy mechanics, groups like Status of Women and others emphasized what they considered the fundamental flaw of the provincial day care program: that it was classified as a welfare service. Such an approach, they reiterated, “perpetuate[d] the notion that day care exists [only] for families who have in some way failed their family responsibility.”⁵⁷

Labour feminists also sought to divorce day care from discussions about welfare and rehabilitation. The BC Federation of Labour Committee on Women’s Rights surveyed a group of working women and found that one-third of them had “at some time or another turned down a promotion, a raise in pay or a better paying job because they were unable to make suitable arrangements for the care of their children.” Many more working women, and especially women who were new immigrants without extensive social networks, were stuck in a position whereby they earned just enough to make them ineligible for low-income subsidies, but their “exorbitant” child care fees wiped out any financial advantage to be gained through working. According to Vancouver Status of Women, many mothers ended up leaving work altogether because of the expense (or

⁵⁵ The Licensing Board (WILB) was now known as the Community Care Facilities Licensing Board (CCFLB).

⁵⁶ Status of Women Action and Co-ordinating Council of BC to CCFLB, 5 January 1971, BCA, GR 746, box 1, file 18. Vancouver Status of Women also released a report on immigrant women in the labour force, pointing out that day care was “one of the first” issues raised by these working women. They were totally unaware, in many cases, that they could get subsidies. “Most working women hired babysitters from their communities, or had their family members, usually grandparents living in the house, take care of the children. These women were not aware that the grandparents could receive a small subsidy for this work....The result of this confusing day care situation is that many women are spending a large proportion of their small income on childcare. At times, they have had to leave work altogether because of the lack of childcare services available or known to them.” Vancouver Status of Women and YWCA, “Immigrant Women in the Labour Force,” report to Norman Levi, n.d., BCA, GR 363, box 12, file 10.

⁵⁷ Collier “Governments and Women’s Movements,” 150-1.

lack) of child care, throwing them back into a state of dependency.⁵⁸ This “tragic and frustrating” structural inequality could be reversed, labour feminists urged, with universal 24-hour, 7-day-a-week child care that would also allow women to work higher-paying night shifts.⁵⁹

It became impossible for provincial officials to ignore the avalanche of day care grievances. In mid-1971 Rickinson, the deputy minister of Rehabilitation and Social Improvement (the new name of the social welfare department) ordered a complete review of the day care program, extending from subsidy rates to licensing regulations to a review of supply and demand.⁶⁰ The recommendations that emerged from this review, made public in March 1972, did more to aggravate the day care community than to appease their concerns. Emily Campbell, fresh from her battles with the Marpole day care centre, pulled together an Ad Hoc Committee on Day Care of Greater Vancouver, and organized a “Day Care Fair” at UBC in April, where parents and advocates could air their grievances.⁶¹ Over 200 parents, teachers, educators, labour representatives, businessmen, administrators, students and interested citizens gathered to share battle stories and propose solutions. The Day Care Fair resulted in three resolutions, which were by then becoming very familiar: 1) that government devote attention to hiring and training “competent staff for coordination and consultation of day care services,” 2) more capital

⁵⁸ Vancouver Status of Women and YWCA, “Immigrant Women in the Labour Force,” report to Norman Levi, n.d., BCA, GR 363, box 12, file 10.

⁵⁹ BC Federation of Labour, “Submission...on Child Care Requirements.”

⁶⁰ Rickinson to Bingham, 7 May 1971, BCA, GR 746, box 1, file 17.

⁶¹ Emily Campbell to Mayor T. Campbell, 10 March 1972; and Carole Anne Soong to Mayor Campbell, 12 June 1972, both in BCA, GR 2921, box 4, file “Day Care Services – Child Welfare.”

and start-up costs; 3) expanding and creating services to meet real community needs, among them under-3 licensed centres.⁶²

In the face of all this pressure from feminist welfare rights advocates, community groups, and day care practitioners, the Social Credit administration remained firmly attached to the status quo: only the “bare minimum” in terms of welfare spending.⁶³ Officials in the welfare department continued to insist “the primary aim of the policy was to meet the needs of the single parent.” At a meeting between provincial and municipal welfare officials in the spring of 1972,

Mr. Bingham suggested the main criteria was rehabilitation of parents – the person who needs to work to maintain his independence, the family with one parent incapacitated, the breadwinner obtaining vocational training. The case where employment of both parents still left the family income very low was also raised as a probably justifiable situation.⁶⁴

“The family which has a high debt structure merely because of excessive spending on luxuries,” as Bingham characterized the majority of day care users, were not a public responsibility.⁶⁵

**“Listen to the day care rumblings...”:
NDP Disappointment and the Child Care Occupation Forces**

While the Socred administration had proven unresponsive to their demands, as the 1972 election campaign unfolded child care advocates sensed a reason for optimism. The campaign created a province-wide discussion about public responsibility for day care,

⁶² Day Care Secretary to Premier, 15 April 1972; Gagliardi to Evan Wolfe (MLA), 29 June 1972, BCA, GR 746, box 1, file 18.

⁶³ Collier “Governments and Women’s Movements,” 116.

⁶⁴ Ellingham, “Record of Meeting of Lower Mainland and Municipal Administrators at Victoria,” 29 March 1972, BCA, GR 746, box 1, file 18. At the meeting: Ellingham, Bingham, Burnham, Price (Department Comptroller), and several others.

⁶⁵ Ellingham, “Record of Meeting of Lower Mainland and Municipal Administrators at Victoria,” 29 March 1972. BCA, GR 746, box 1, file 18.

and supporters thought they had found a sympathetic ally in NDP leader Dave Barrett, a former social worker. While Socred politicians continued to warn about the dangers of “Soviet-style” day care, Barrett at least appeared to take the arguments of day care advocates seriously. He promised a “rational, sensible, child welfare program in this province,” one built around a system of “government-supported daycare centres under the department of health.” Barrett stopped short of proclaiming day care a necessary emancipatory tool for all women – “the first priority,” he insisted, “is for those on welfare and low paid working groups” – but he nevertheless seemed to offer a more positive approach to provincial day care services.⁶⁶

The NDP narrowly achieved a majority government, and within a few months Barrett had installed Norm Levi, long an outspoken day care advocate from the opposition benches, as the new Minister of Rehabilitation and Social Improvement.⁶⁷ Soon Levi announced a series of reforms that together constituted the government’s “New Day Care.” From Levi’s perspective, the New Day Care accomplished three broad goals: it increased availability of spaces, it gave parents more choices, and it eliminated the complicated administrative structure that “hinder peoples’ attempts to obtain government services.”⁶⁸ In attempt to streamline administration, all day care policy and programs would be routed through the new Provincial Day Care Information office in Vancouver and satellite offices throughout the province.⁶⁹ The response from the day care community was cautious optimism. “If this program is tied to a swift and efficient

⁶⁶ *Vancouver Sun*, 8 August 1972, clipping from SFUA, F-111-7-1-22, “Childcare/Daycare, 1970-78.”

⁶⁷ See Collier, “Governments and Women’s Movements,” 125.

⁶⁸ Premier’s Office, Press Release, 13 December 1972, BCA, GR 746, box 1, file 19.

⁶⁹ *Vancouver Sun*, 28 March 1973. Sadler, “Serial Letter No. 425-342 – Addendum,” 5 October 1972, BCA, GR 746, box 1, file 19.

administration,” the UCS said, “it could remarkably increase the supply of good quality day care resources in the community.”⁷⁰

What the reforms really amounted to, however, was an infusion of funding into programs that otherwise remained virtually the same: increased subsidy rates, the distribution of subsidies on a monthly rather than daily basis, and the phasing out of a three-tier subsidy system to one determined solely on the basis of income and number of family members – the intrusive means test and interview process was eliminated.⁷¹ Perhaps the most significant aspect of New Day Care was the creation of one-time grants for groups who needed help with centre renovations and improvements.⁷²

Many more of advocates’ demands were overlooked in Levi’s New Day Care. The government made no indication of licensing for under-3 centres, let alone any discussion of universality. Levi continued to insist that family day care was preferable for under-3s, a position that proved very unpopular with Vancouver’s working mothers. The UBC Day Care Council released the results of a survey in the fall of 1972 in which more than 90 percent of working mothers who responded were dissatisfied with the quality of child care in the city and especially that available for under-3s.⁷³ Another report from the UCS indicated that even with Levi’s reforms, fewer than ten percent of the children under six of working mothers in the Greater Vancouver area would be served by the provincial

⁷⁰ United Community Services, Social Policy and Research Department, *The Economics of Day Care* (United Community Services of the Greater Vancouver Area, 1973), 2.

⁷¹ Premier’s Office, Press Release, 13 December 1972, BCA, GR 746, box 1, file 19.

⁷² Grants of up to \$20,000, as well as one-time \$2500 equipment grants. This was partly in recognition of the fact that federal Local Initiative Projects grants were no longer available.

⁷³ *Ragamuffin*, October 1974; University Daycare Council, UBC, “Childcare and the Provincial Government,” 6 November 1972, SFUA, F-111-7-1-22, “Childcare/Daycare 1970-78”; UCS, *The Economics of Day Care*.

day care program.⁷⁴ For those who had had high hopes around the election of a “people’s government,” the so-called reforms were especially disappointing. Levi could not have been surprised when familiar groups like UBC Day Care Council, the UCS, and Status of Women expressed renewed frustration. Unless Levi created a separate Child Care Department, one report argued, the “hopelessly confused” day care administration would continue to limit women’s opportunities for equality.

Betsy Wood, the VOP day care organizer, was especially vocal in her criticisms of the New Day Care. Nothing in the proposed reforms, she insisted, made things any easier for the mothers and staff of Grandview and South Hill day cares. In the meantime, her insistence on letting under-3 siblings into the centres had resulted in final ultimatums from provincial officials. Wood, “tired, angry, and depressed” over her dealings with health and welfare bureaucrats, warned Barrett in January 1973 to “[l]isten to the child care rumblings because they are powerful, people believed, the need is there...and now the N.D.P. is the stumbling block in the way of human progress...”⁷⁵

On 1 February 1973, at the opening of the Provincial Day Care Information Centre, a group of women and parents who were involved with Grandview Terrace and South Hill Day Cares gathered to express their long-standing grievances. Though originally intended simply as a rally and protest, as one participant recalled, “someone asked if it was a sit-in, so it became sit-in.” With that, the Child Care Occupation Forces were born.⁷⁶ A group of mothers, along with their children, occupied the day care office

⁷⁴ UCS, *The Economics of Day Care*, 9. This report outlined an alternative plan for a fee schedule, based on a progressive fee structure rather than an income test.

⁷⁵ Wood to Dennis Cocke (Minister of Health Services and Hospital Insurance) and Gorby, 4 January 1973, SFUA, F-111-7-1-22, “Childcare/Daycare 1970-78”; Betsy Wood to Premier Dave Barrett, 26 January 1973, SFUA, F-111-7-1-22, “Childcare/Daycare 1970-78.”

⁷⁶ *Growing Pains* 1, no. 2, December 1974.

and essentially transformed it into their own community child care information centre, complete with changing tables on the desks of bureaucrats. “We’ve been forced to take this action,” they argued, “because it is the only way open to the community for genuinely participating in the government’s decision-making on day care.” It was abundantly clear, they pointed out, that the NDP government had no intention of following through on their campaign promises on day care.⁷⁷

The occupation became a hive of activity over the eleven day sit-in, and between caring for the children and composing protest songs – “Talkin’ Day Care Blues” – the forces put together a detailed and comprehensive list of policy demands. The promise to look into 24-hour care had not been taken seriously, they argued, and under-3 group care seemed no longer to be on the government’s agenda. The red tape created by licensing regulations was an exercise in “absurdity”; there was more support for the problematic family day care system than there was for centre-based care; and nothing was being done to support community and parent participation.⁷⁸ “Changes in rhetoric,” they concluded, “are not producing changes in the program.”⁷⁹ Occupiers used the publicity generated by their actions to frame day care as an issue of women’s liberation. Adequate day care was not just about children’s interests, they said, but about creating equal opportunities in the labour force for BC’s working women, and not just for those whose work was a financial necessity. Half of the mothers doing paid work in Vancouver did so as a choice, according to a UCS report, and those mothers deserved day care too.⁸⁰ Beyond simply providing a “stop-gap charity service,” social agencies should “be helping mothers and

⁷⁷ SFUA, F-111-7-2-5, “Childcare Occupation Forces, 1973.”

⁷⁸ SFUA, F-111-7-2-5, “Childcare Occupation Forces, 1973.”

⁷⁹ SFUA, F-111-7-2-5, “Childcare Occupation Forces, 1973.”

⁸⁰ UCS, *The Economics of Day Care*, 8.

other working women to organize to secure better wages and time off to create and run cooperative child care themselves.”⁸¹

As support from other child care groups flooded in, the Occupation Forces began to outline their specific demands.⁸² At the top of list was a meeting with Norm Levi and the minister of health (Dennis Cocke) and education (Dailly). The three ministers along with five backbenchers agreed to meet with the occupiers within 48 hours of the start of the sit-in. The meeting was not hugely productive. The only “concrete” result was Levi’s request that the group write “3 one to two page proposals outlining its demands more specifically.” Within a day or two, occupiers had put forward three demands. First, they proposed a one-year pilot project for a community-based under-3 centre. Their related second demand was for a government-funded community organizers to oversee and support parent initiatives. Finally, and not surprisingly, they called for more funding and the loosening of licensing regulations.⁸³

The health minister did not attend the second meeting, and though Levi appeared he was not “receptive” to the proposals. For the occupiers, this indicated the government was not negotiating “in good faith.” Furthermore, Levi would not allow observers (the press and other interested parties) into this second meeting. The only proposal that he was willing to discuss in any detail was the one that dealt with funding, though his concessions went only so far as to offer to arrange a meeting with the civil servants responsible for such issues. The occupiers grew increasingly frustrated, and “insisted that

⁸¹ Cohen et al., *Cuz There Ain't No Day Care*, 35.

⁸² See, for example, UBC Day Care Council, “Press Release,” 7 February 1973, SFUA, F-111-7-1-22, “Childcare/Daycare 1970-78.”

⁸³ Childcare Occupation Forces, “Press Release – Proposal Number One,” “Proposal No. 2,” and “Proposal No. 3,” February 1973. SFUA, F-111-7-2-5.

Levi give us an answer on our first proposal [regarding the under-3 pilot project] by the following Monday.”⁸⁴

In a press release a week later, Levi announced that the government was not interested in supporting the pilot project. His grounds were that “no group without sufficient, recognized training would be permitted to ignore the licensing regulations per se.” His words seemed especially harsh to the occupiers, among them Betsy Wood and other “highly recognized, innovative day care supervisors” who had a long history in Vancouver’s day care scene. Levi tried to soften the blow by announcing a small payment to Grandview and South Hill centres, and he promised to begin investigations into a revamped subsidy program. He indicated, however, that the government would not budge on issues around licensing regulations despite protestors’ insistence that “archaic” rules discouraged many parent-run centres.⁸⁵ In the end, while the feminist-inspired occupation may have changed the public conversation about day care, it did little to effect change in terms of policy and programming. The government held to the position that their support of day care was appropriate only insofar as welfare families and single mothers needed it, and that for children under 3, “in-home day care” was the best and cheapest approach.⁸⁶

“‘Cuz There Ain’t No Daycare”: The Occupation’s Aftermath

Despite its limited results, the occupation generated a certain degree of energy and enthusiasm in the ranks of BC’s feminist child care advocates. Not long after the sit-

⁸⁴ Childcare Occupation Forces, “Press Release,” 13 March 1973. SFUA, F-111-7-2-5.

⁸⁵ ‘*Cuz There Ain’t No Day Care*, 2-3; Childcare Occupation Forces, “Press Release,” 15 March 1973. SFUA, F-111-7-2-5.

⁸⁶ *Ragamuffin* 1, no. 1, October 1974.

in, members of the Women's Caucus released and widely distributed a book entitled *'Cuz There Ain't No Daycare (or almost none she said)*, which served as a practical guide for setting up day cares as well as a feminist manifesto calling for universal child care. *'Cuz* represented the culmination of several years of advocacy efforts, and offered, yet again, a vision for future policy directions. Alongside its step-by-step instructions for dealing with the provincial licensing bureaucracy and its analysis of subsidy reforms, *'Cuz* provided a forum for the synthesis of the critiques of welfare rights activists, feminist groups, parents, and day care practitioners. Its publication amounted to the clearest articulation of the ideological underpinnings that explained day care inadequacies in the province. Day care, the authors wrote, was "[n]ot ... a way for women to forego child care responsibilities but ... a way for women to have children and not "end" every other part of their lives, ... a way for mothers to continue to grow themselves so that they have something of themselves left to give to society."⁸⁷ Day care, they said, should not be wielded as a regulatory tool for poor families, but provided as a necessary and normal part of a well-functioning society, one in which men and women shared equality in paid work as well as in caring work. *'Cuz There Ain't No Day Care's* central message was that women had the right to pursue satisfaction and independence through participation in the public sphere, but that she did not have to "abandon" motherhood in order to do so. A universal day care system, shaped and directed with input from mothers, was a long overdue ingredient of women's full social citizenship.⁸⁸

The occupation also solidified the sense of community among day care advocates. In recognition of their "commonality of interest[s]," a group of parents, organizers, and

⁸⁷ Cohen et al., *'Cuz There Ain't No Day Care*, 9.

⁸⁸ Cohen et al., *'Cuz There Ain't No Day Care*, 6-9.

day care workers came together in the summer of 1973 as the Child Care Federation.⁸⁹ Their mandate was to encourage “communication and mutual support among child care groups,” and to act as “a vehicle for putting collective pressure on the government to improve child care conditions.”⁹⁰ About 80 people attended the first Federation meeting, and with the help of a grant from United Community Services, they were able to establish a permanent office in Vancouver. Subcommittees were formed to focus on funding, day care centre design, and government engagement. The Federation’s first concerted advocacy efforts insured that parents and day care providers had a voice in changes to licensing regulations in 1973.⁹¹ Another subcommittee provided a common forum for debate and discussion among all those with a vested interest in child care through the newsletter *Ragamuffin*, later known as *Growing Pains*.⁹²

⁸⁹ *Growing Pains* 1, no. 2, December 1974. The founding members were West Point Grey Day Care Society, South Hill Child Care Society, Kitsilano Area Child Care Society, Surrey Day Care Society, Neighbourhood Services Association.

⁹⁰ *Growing Pains* 1, no. 2, December 1974.

⁹¹ *Growing Pains* 1, no. 2, December 1974.

⁹² Another policy area that seemed to be positively affected by the occupation was that of staffing, training, and employment in day cares. In May 1973, Levi called together a group of representatives from colleges, day cares, and the provincial government to talk about what kind of training/education requirements should be made available and required of day care staff. In large part, this was due to pressure from day care workers themselves, who (along with their feminist allies) were tired of the low pay and long hours that defined their undervalued work. They wanted to increase the status of day care work through more formal training, which would help to challenge the common perception that day care work was “more a hobby than a career.” The workshop resulted in the striking of an Ad Hoc Committee, which was supposed to limit its investigation to training and education questions. The committee took it upon itself to expand its mandate, and instead released a comprehensive report outlining the “priority of needs” for day care services, calling for locally-based decision making about what kinds of day care services should be provided, and, closest to their original mandate, outlining a “career ladder.” Though a fairly conservative report – the committee did not even touch the issue of licensing for under-3s – like the others before it, this committee’s recommendations fell on deaf ears. Early Childhood Education College Committee, “Child Development: A Proposal for The Regional Colleges of British Columbia,” June 1972; Burnam, “Memo Re: Canada Manpower – Special Job Finding Service for Day Care Personnel,” 1 August 1973, BCA, GR 746, box 3, file 35; George Wellwood, “Report of Day Care Conference,” 9 May 1973, BCA, GR 2667, box 1, file “Ad Hoc Committee”; “Report of Ad Hoc Committee on Care for Children 0-5,” presented to Levi 1 June 1973, BCA, GR 2667, box 1, file “Ad Hoc Committee.” For more about the professionalization of day care workers, including unionization, see the entire file at BCA, GR 2667, box 1, file “Ad Hoc Committee”; Hannah Polowy (Professor, UBC) to Levi, 21 November 1973, BCA, GR 2667, box 1, file “Ad Hoc Committee.”

But while the Child Care Federation sought to maintain an active presence in child care politics, it also represented, by the mid-1970s, another reality in the movement: the slippage between child care advocacy and feminism. Certainly, the Child Care Federation and their allies kept up pressure on the provincial government to improve the quality and quantity of care. In the mid- and late-1970s, for example, they were involved in a protest at the Legislature to protest the cancellation of South Hill day care's hot lunch program, they protested franchised day care – “Kentucky Fried Day Care” – and they continued to fight for improvements in funding and licensing.⁹³ VOP personnel and mothers summed up the ongoing frustrations:

[I]f you can find a babysitter who charges under 75 cents an hour or anyone who will do day care for under \$4.00 a day, please let us know. We have to give our sitters your cheque plus money out of our V.O.P. cheque or welfare cheque or we don't have a sitter. Please, we want to join the work force again, and we want to be able to hold our heads up in society once again. Why are you making it so hard for us, when we're trying to better ourselves and get off Social Assistance etc?⁹⁴

There were indications, however, that the Child Care Federation, VOP, and others were conceding the ideological battle over child care. Instead of framing their child care advocacy in terms of women's liberation, they began to focus on the ins and outs of program details. “We all seem,” the Child Care Federation explained, “to have moved past the stage of active criticism of Government policies (lack of policies) to the

⁹³ See: *Growing Pains*, no. 4, April 1975; *Growing Pains*, 2, no. 1, n.d. (but probably Summer 1975); SFUA, F-82-4-0-6, “South Hill Child Care Centre Statement of Purpose,” 1975, and Ellen Frank, “Now what?,” *Vancouver Province*, 18 April 1975, 1; *Growing Pains*, no. 7, December 1975; *Western Voice*, 7 May 1975, 3; No author, “Franchised Day-Care or the Kentucky-Fried Children Special,” n.d. (estimated c. December 1975); BCA, GR 2667, box 1, file “Regulations – Standards and Guidelines”; D.S.S. Marshall, for the United Community Services of the Greater Vancouver Area, “Issues in Day Care in Greater Vancouver,” December 1973, UBC RBSC.

⁹⁴ VOP Personnel to Levi, 26 September 1973, BCA, GR 2921, box 10, file “Vancouver Opportunities Program vol. V.”

realization that the time has come now for constructive suggestions as to direction for child care.”⁹⁵

Developments in the BC Federation of Women (BCFW) suggested a similar disconnect between feminism and child care advocacy. Founded in 1974, the BCFW’s original policy statement included a commitment to “the creation of high quality, non-sexist, 24 hour a day childcare, available and accessible to all children from infancy onwards, in all parts of the province.”⁹⁶ To work towards that goal, a Child Care Interest Group was formed, and under the leadership of Ellen Frank remained relatively active in 1975, even hosting a child care conference in Vancouver. A group of enthusiastic women and men publicized the BCFW’s child care message through public events, publications and leaflets, and organizational support for parent-run day cares.⁹⁷ But the child care interest group enjoyed only a brief period of support. Before long, Ellen Frank announced that the “child care Interest group is in DESPERATE !!! need of new energy. In other words, NO NEW ENERGY – NO SUBCOMITTEE!!!! [sic].”⁹⁸ Child care did not remain near the top of the BCFW’s priority list. By January 1976, the BCFW admitted that the “committee appears to be defunct in spite of Ellen’s tremendous efforts to keep it going.”⁹⁹ By the 1979 annual convention, there was no mention at all of child care policy

⁹⁵ Child Care Federation, “Childcare News and the Red Tape Rag,” 1974, SFUA, F-111-7-1-23.

⁹⁶ British Columbia Federation of Women, “Constitution and Policy Handbook, Volume III,” 1977, SFUA, F-82-2-0-3.

⁹⁷ *Growing Pains*, no. 7, December 1975; “BCFW – Childcare Interest Group, 1975,” SFUA, F-82-2-0-4. Concern emerged from the conference that the parent-driven day cares “just aren’t working out.”

⁹⁸ *Growing Pains*, no. 6, September 1975.

⁹⁹ “Minutes of the Standing Committee of the BC Federation of Women, 31 January 1976,” SFUA, F-82-2-0-4.

discussions. Other issues had taken priority in the feminist movement, including abortion, rape, sexual harassment, and women and unions.¹⁰⁰

The disengagement between feminist activism and child care activism in the 1970s must be set in the context of feminists' struggle with the "vexing meaning and politics of motherhood," to borrow a phrase from Susan Prentice.¹⁰¹ By the latter part of the decade, feminist debates about motherhood and work were also informed by an emerging "wages for housework" movement, whose adherents argued that domestic and caring labour in the home should be considered equally as liberating -- and deserving of compensation -- as women's labour force participation.¹⁰² In Vancouver, this line of thought was evident in the Welfare Rights Organization and the local branch of the national Wages for Housework group, and it pointed to fissures within Vancouver's second wave movement around issues of care work and dependency. The BCFW's child care representative Ellen Frank, for example, adopted a practical stance towards family day care homes that did not sit well with the Vancouver Community Co-operative Child Care and Day Care Study Group. Frank suggested that family day care could be a "positive alternative" to group care for children as well as for mothers who valued staying home to care for their children and the children of others. For the study group, the family day care system was nothing more than an exploitative system that placed an undue burden of care work, in both a financial and ideological sense, on certain

¹⁰⁰ "British Columbia Federation of Women 1978 Convention - Schedule of Workshops." SFUA, F-82-2-0-4.

¹⁰¹ Susan Prentice, "Introduction: Changing Child Care: Looking Back, Moving Forward," in *Changing Child Care: Five Decades of Child Care Advocacy and Policy in Canada*, ed. Susan Prentice (Halifax: Fernwood Publishing, 2001), 20.

¹⁰² For a fuller discussion of "wages for housework," see Lynne Marks and Margaret Little, "Discourses of Motherhood and Second Wave Women's Movements in English Canada," paper presented at the CHA Annual Meeting, Fredericton, 31 May 2011; and Jill Vickers et.al, *Politics as if Women Mattered: A Political Analysis of the National Action Committee on the Status of Women* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1993).

mothers.¹⁰³ Though wages for housework advocates did not deny the need for day care, their distinct take on work and motherhood did help contribute to the absence of a coherent and sustained feminist campaign for universal child care.

Even more importantly, however, by the mid- to late-1970s there was a perceptible gap between child care advocacy and campaigns for women's employment equality. While the groups like the Child Care Federation, the Coalition for Improved Day Care Services, and, later, the BC Day Care Action Coalition lobbied for increased funding and more day care spaces, they did so with rhetoric that focused on the educational and developmental benefits for children.¹⁰⁴ "The care of children is the rule of thumb, not the well-being of parents as such," declared yet another ad hoc day care committee in 1977, though they admitted that "the system works best when both needs are met."¹⁰⁵ Women's employment equality was considered, as Annis May Timpson explains, a policy and advocacy issue distinct from day care and early childhood education.¹⁰⁶ While Timpson's analysis focuses on the national context, the pattern was repeated in BC. Julia Smith has shown that the socialist feminist union SORWUC, which had roots in the Vancouver Women's Caucus's Working Women's Association, included free parent-controlled child care among its list of proposals that included community-controlled schools and health services, price and rent controls, and the end to discrimination in hiring, wages, and promotions. There was little indication, however, that unions like SORWUC overlapped with child care advocacy groups like the BC Day

¹⁰³ *Growing Pains*, 1, no. 2, Dec 1974; *Growing Pains*, no. 4, April 1975.

¹⁰⁴ Collier, "Governments and Women's Movements," 151.

¹⁰⁵ Vancouver Resources Board, Ad Hoc Committee on the Status of Day Care, "Day Care: 1977: A Report," (Vancouver, June 1977), 13, UBCRBSC. Emily Campbell was also on this committee.

¹⁰⁶ Timpson, *Driven Apart*, 92.

Care Action Coalition.¹⁰⁷ By the end of the 1970s, the two advocacy issues – children’s interests and mothers’ rights – had effectively been “driven apart.”¹⁰⁸

This advocacy gap was reflected in and reinforced by provincial policy-making processes. In her analysis of BC child care policy, political scientist Cheryl Collier describes the 1970s and 1980s as a period of “small improvements” rather than “major feminist change.”¹⁰⁹ Under Barrett’s NDP government, there were indeed marginal improvements. The number of children in subsidized day care programs increased by more than 350 percent between September 1972 and December 1973 under “New Day Care,” and over the same time period almost 100 new group day care centres were licensed or in the process of being licensed.¹¹⁰ Yet responsibility for day care remained firmly lodged in the welfare bureaucracy as a “preventive social service” and one for families who are “experiencing serious social problems.”¹¹¹ Furthermore, even these small improvements were reversed when a Social Credit government returned to power in 1975; in the second half of the decade the number of new group day care centres plateaued, and the number of subsidized child care spaces also began to decline (see

¹⁰⁷ Julia Smith, “Organizing the Unorganized: The Service, Office, and Retail Workers’ Union of Canada (SORWUC), 1972-1986,” (MA thesis, Simon Fraser University, 2009), 26-8; “Working Women’s Association: A Short History,” SFUA, F-166-0-0-0-8. For a discussion of union efforts to ensure women’s equality with respect to their reproductive capacities, see Joan Sangster, “Debating Maternity Rights: Pacific Western Airlines and Flight Attendants’ Struggle to “Fly Pregnant” in the 1970s,” in *Work on Trial: Canadian Labour Law Struggles*, ed. Judy Fudge and Eric Tucker (Toronto: Irwin Law, 2010), 283-314. For more on the gender politics of the labour movement, see Meg Luxton, “Feminism as Class Act: Working-Class Feminism and the Women’s Movement in Canada,” *Labour/Le Travail* 48 (Fall 2001): 63-88; and Pam Sugiman, *Labour’s Dilemma: The Gender Politics of Auto Workers in Canada, 1937-1979* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1994).

¹⁰⁸ This phrase, of course, is borrowed from Annis May Timpson. In her argument, Timpson is referring to the policy developments of the 1980s, but I suggest that in BC the so-called driving apart began to happen earlier.

¹⁰⁹ Collier, “Governments and Women’s Movements,” 216.

¹¹⁰ British Columbia, *Services for People: Annual Report of the Department of Human Resources*, 1973, 19. Subsidized programs included group day care, family day care, kindergartens, playschools, and services for special needs children.

¹¹¹ British Columbia, *Services for People: Annual Report of the Department of Human Resources*, 1973, 21.

Tables 4 and 5). This administration was also marked by day care's absorption into the Family and Children's Services division of the department of human resources, "with increased emphasis being placed on the preventive and family aspects the service."¹¹² Despite their best efforts earlier in the decade, feminist alliances in BC, as in Ottawa, were unable to "wrest control of the issue from the social policy bureaucracy."¹¹³

* * *

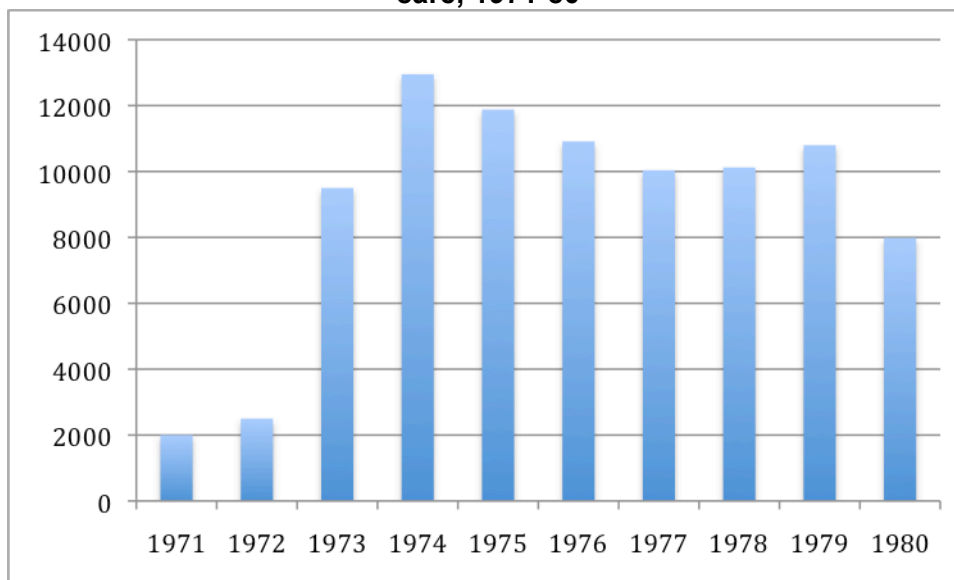
The feminist-inspired day care advocacy of the late 1960s and early 1970s offered a profoundly different reading of public responsibility for the child care of working mothers than that which had defined social policy in the previous five decades. The demands of child care advocates in this brief period spoke to something more than simply better welfare policy, but to a realignment of women's relationship to the workplace and to the family. A complete and meaningful version of working mothers' social citizenship, they said, included a universal, 24-hour, parent-involved day care system that allowed for women's full and equal participation in the work force, that did not alienate women from their caring role but supplemented it, and that made the rearing of children a collective responsibility in recognition of the value of care work to society.

The efforts of SFU's child care co-operative, the welfare rights feminists in MOMs, and the range of day care practitioners and families willing to engage the state in pursuit of a better deal for working mothers and their children resulted, to be sure, in positive changes: incremental increases in funding, improved subsidy rate, and the

¹¹² British Columbia, *Services for People: Annual Report of the Department of Human Resources*, 1977.

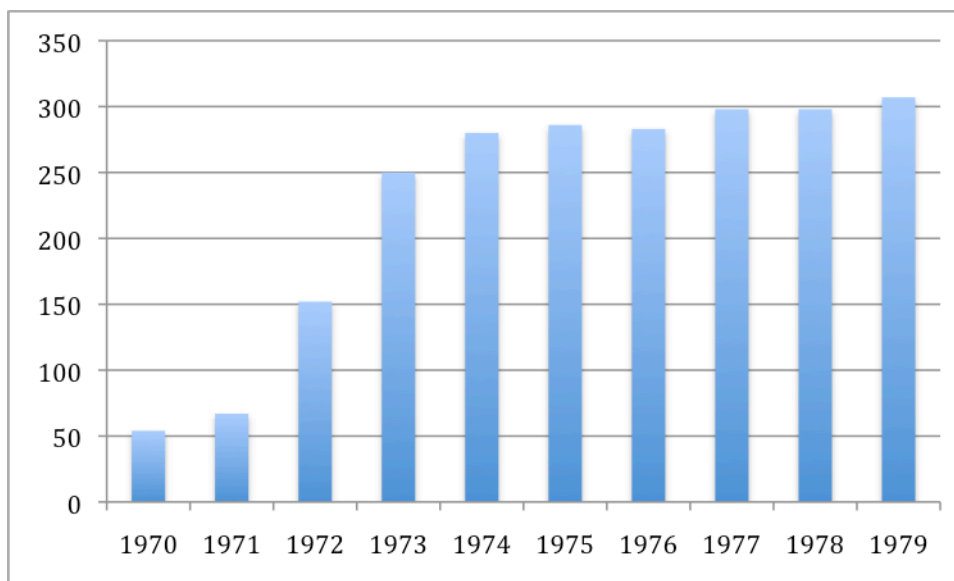
¹¹³ Mahon, "The Never-Ending Story," 584.

Table 4: Number of Children Receiving Subsidized Child Care in BC, all types of care, 1971-80



Source: British Columbia, *Services for People: Annual Report of the Department of Human Resources*, 1975-1980.

Table 5: Number of Licensed Group Day Care Centres in BC, 1970-79



Source: British Columbia, *Services for People: Annual Report of the Department of Human Resources*, 1975-80.

growth in number of child care spaces. Ultimately, none of these reforms actually moved policy towards feminists' vision of a child care system that recognized equality for women in the home and the workplace. Child care advocates focused on policy reforms within the context of welfare and education at an increasingly greater distance from the campaigns of women's employment equity, diminishing the capacity of a movement to frame child care as an instrument of women's liberation. As a result of their efforts, however, public responsibility for child care has been ensured a permanent, if contested, place on the provincial social policy agenda. Their vision for a fully-realized version of social citizenship for working mothers endures in advocacy today.

Chapter 7

The Aftermath: Federal and Provincial Child Care Policy since the 1970s

After three years of an NDP government in British Columbia, the Social Credit party was returned to power in 1975. Led by Bill Bennett, the son of W.A.C. Bennett, this administration was deeply suspicious of any women-led initiatives and had a “deep loathing for the welfare state.”¹ Shortly after his election Bennett cut the woman’s program budget and did away with the Provincial Coordinator of the Status of Women unit, prompting the Women Rally for Action in 1976. When it came to child care initiatives, the actions of Bennett and Human Resource Minister Bill Vander Zalm reflected the government’s suspicions of “welfare bums,” especially those with “feministic [sic] viewpoints.”² Though Vander Zalm increased the maximum subsidy to \$140 in mid-1976, at the same time he tightened eligibility requirements and increased the ceiling on the amount that centres could charge to parents.³ The overall effect was fewer families receiving subsidies and fewer families able to afford day care. In fact, by 1977 day care centres began to report alarmingly high vacancy rates, which they attributed to the stringent subsidy requirements.⁴ For many families, it was simply more financially prudent for one parent to stay home when child care expenses were so high. A

¹ Cheryl Collier, “Governments and Women’s Movements: Explaining Child Care and Anti-Violence Policy in Ontario and British Columbia, 1970-2000” (PhD diss., University of Toronto, 2006), 117. Collier refers in this discussion to Allen Garr’s description of Bennett; see Allen Garr, *Tough Guy: Bill Bennett and the Taking of British Columbia* (Toronto: Key Portner Books, 1985).

² Collier, “Governments and Women’s Movements,” 117, 121.

³ *Vancouver Province*, 2 April 1976.

⁴ *Vancouver Sun*, 3 February 1977.

high unemployment rate in the late 1970s also meant that many mothers were “no longer...eligible for day care subsidy, having exceeded the time allowed for job seeking.”⁵ The government indicated that it had no intention to increase operating or capital funding to child care institutions, or to intervene to make child care more affordable. “All day care centres in the province are run privately or by societies and that’s the way it should be,” Vander Zalm explained in 1978.⁶

The Social Credit Party remained in power throughout the 1980s, during which time British Columbia “did not experience ideal conditions for feminist policy gains,” according to political scientist Cheryl Collier.⁷ Things reversed somewhat during the 1990s under several years of NDP administrations. In the wake of the national report on child care in the late 1980s (the Katie Cooke task force), Vander Zalm had softened somewhat on his anti-feminist stance and appointed a nineteen-member Child Care Task Force as a gesture towards “woman-friendliness.” The result was *Showing We Care: A Child Care Strategy for the 1990s*, released in 1991. Though Vander Zalm was defeated before his government had a chance to respond to the report, the NDP government under Mike Harcourt was favourable to many of its recommendations.⁸ Harcourt created the Ministry for Women’s Equality that included a Child Care Branch, and spending on day care subsidies and grants increased significantly in the early 1990s.⁹ Advocates suggested, however, that many of those potential gains were curtailed when child care

⁵ *Vancouver Province*, 4 March 1977.

⁶ *Vancouver Sun*, 3 July 1978.

⁷ Collier, “Governments and Women’s Movements,” 106.

⁸ Collier, “Governments and Women’s Movements,” 224-5; British Columbia Task Force on Child Care, *Showing We Care: A Child Care Strategy for the 90s* (1991).

⁹ Collier, “Governments and Women’s Movements,” 225-26.

was made the responsibility of the Ministry of Children and Families in 1996, where it was downgraded in importance in comparison to child welfare and child protection.¹⁰

A more promising policy move came in 2001, when NDP Premier Ujjal Dosanjh introduced a \$7-a-day before- and after-school care program for all children under 12, and a \$14-per-day all-day kindergarten program. This was intended to be the first step in a four-part plan, outlined in the *Child Care BC Act* (March 2001), that would introduce a publicly-funded child care program for all children aged 3-5 in licensed group and family care. Before the plan could come to fruition, however, Gordon Campbell's Liberals defeated the NDP government. Since 2001, child care policy in BC has been characterized by a haphazard and patchwork network of services, fluctuating levels of funding, and adjustments to subsidy eligibility and levels.¹¹

British Columbia's child care advocates have maintained an active presence in policy debates since the mid-1970s, though at times more active than others. The BC Child Care Federation, established in the aftermath of the Day Care Occupation, dissolved in 1976, and in the meantime the Coalition for Improved Day Care Services emerged on the advocacy scene. This organization, too, had a short tenure due to "lack of commitment by the grass roots" in the face of Socred cutbacks.¹² The late 1970s was a particularly difficult time for advocates for reasons best summed up in a 1977 article in the *Vancouver Sun*: "The feeling lingers that day care just isn't nice. It's a threat to the home." The article continued: "[S]ociety somehow feels that day care, along with

¹⁰ Collier, "Governments and Women's Movements," 228.

¹¹ For more details, see Jane Beach, Martha Friendly, Carolyn Fearn, Nina Prabhu, Barry Forer, *Early Childhood Education and Care in Canada 2008*, 8th ed. (Childcare Resource and Research Unit, June 2009), 139-41.

¹² Sandra Griffin et.al, "British Columbia Report," in *Canadian Child Care in Context: Perspectives from the Provinces and Territories*, ed. Alan Pence (Ottawa: Department of Health and Welfare Canada, August 1992), 30.

working mothers, sabotages the traditional family unit.”¹³ Vancouver Alderwoman Darlene Marzari was one of the public figures working to challenge these attitudes. “We’ve got to start looking at quality day care as a right,” Marzari declared in a statement that largely echoed advocates’ agenda from the previous ten years. “The parents should have the right to choose. And day care must be viewed as a vital a part of life as school, both for the children’s sake and the parents’.”¹⁴

Advocacy organization was revived in 1981 with the creation of the BC Day Care Action Coalition, as well as the Western Family Day Care Association. These groups emerged just as the United Way released a report that called attention to the long waiting times of parents in need of child care in Vancouver.¹⁵ Through the 1980s and 1990s, both organizations worked to pressure governments to provide more funding, more efficient administration, and more support for parents and child care providers. In an effort to consolidate a number of small, grassroots organizations into a more cohesive advocacy body, the Westcoast Child Care Resource Centre was created in 1988.¹⁶ Yet another effort to rework advocacy organizations came in 1995, when the BC Daycare Action Coalition became the Coalition of Child Care Advocates of BC (CCCABC), and though this organization was given a limited voice in provincial policy debates, they were still

¹³ *Vancouver Sun*, 12 September 1977.

¹⁴ *Vancouver Sun*, 12 September 1977. The other significant development in terms of child care in the 1970s was the unionization of day care workers. Two unions in particular, the Social Services Employees Union (SSEU) and the Service, Office, Retail Workers Union of Canada (SORWUC) were part of the “climate of activism” that inspired unionization, primarily among Victoria and Vancouver day care workers. Members of both of these unions engaged in a brief strike in November 1976 (*Vancouver Province*, 19 November 1976). For more details on unionization of day care workers, see Griffin et.al, “British Columbia Report,” 28-9.

¹⁵ *Vancouver Province*, 19 July 1981, B4.

¹⁶ This group included Information Daycare, Early Childhood Multicultural Services, Early Childhood Educators of BC, Children’s Services Employees of BC, School Age Child Care Association, as well as the Western Family Day Care Association and the BC Daycare Action Coalition. See Collier, “Governments and Women’s Movements,” 152-3.

“poorly funded and working in isolation from other established child care groups in the province.”¹⁷ Sensing the opportunity offered by the NDP’s action on child care as the new millenium approached, the CCCABC joined with five other advocacy groups in 1999 to form the Child Care Advocacy Forum. Though their hopes for universal child care ended with the NDP’s defeat in 2001, in the decade since the CCCABC has continued to release studies, reports, and advocacy materials, and to engage with policy-makers and the public, in pursuit of more meaningful, quality, accessible child care in the province. In the fall of 2011, in conjunction with the Early Childhood Educators of BC, the CCCABC released a *Community Plan for a Public System of Integrated Early Care and Learning*, a comprehensive plan for a \$10-per-day child care program housed in the Ministry of Education.¹⁸

Since the mid-1970s, the development of BC child care policy and advocacy has also been closely intertwined with the national story. The federal government’s most consistent role in child care has been through the creation of tax credits and deductions, as well as limited cash benefits for working poor families, most of them income-tested. In 1971, Trudeau’s Liberal government introduced the Child Care Expense Deduction (CCED), which allowed parents to deduct a portion of their child care expenses. The CCED did not easily apply to low-income working families, who often relied on unregulated (and therefore unclaimable) care. It did not apply at all, furthermore, to families in which only one parent worked. The federal government tried to target those families with the Child Tax Credit, introduced in 1978. The Child Tax Credit was not a

¹⁷ Collier, “Governments and Women’s Movements,” 155.

¹⁸ Coalition of Child Care Advocates of BC, *Community Plan for a Public System of Integrated Early Care and Learning* (April 2011). <http://www.cccabc.bc.ca/cccabcdocs/integrated.html> (Accessed 18 March 2012).

deduction for child care expenses, but a “supplement to low-income families,” who received a larger credit than those with higher incomes.¹⁹ Conservative Prime Minister Brian Mulroney tightened the eligibility for the Child Tax Credit in 1988, and in 1992, the federal government established the Child Tax Benefit (CTB) program. The CTB was a “tax-free, income-tested monthly payment” for children under 18 years, and was meant to replace the cancelled Family Allowances program as well as the old Child Tax Credit.²⁰ Shortly after, in 1996, CAP was replaced with the Canada Health and Social Transfer (CHST), a block payment to provinces with no specific provisions for child care funding.²¹

Yet another new program was implemented in 1998, the Canada Child Tax Benefit (CCTB), a federal-provincial program that included the National Child Benefit (NCB) Supplement, an “anti-child poverty program.” Besides cash benefits to low-income families, the NCB included health, dental, and vision care, recreational programs, and parental supports.²² Most recently, in 2006 the federal government introduced the Universal Child Care Benefit, a \$100 monthly cash benefit specifically for child care costs.²³ As Linda White and others have argued, none of these programs can be

¹⁹ Rebecca Kelley Scherer, “Federal Child Care Policy Development: From World War II to 2000,” in *Changing Child Care: Five Decades of Child Care Advocacy and Policy in Canada*, ed. Susan Prentice (Halifax: Fernwood Publishing, 2001), 190.

²⁰ Linda White, “Child Care, Women’s Labour Market Participation, and Labour Market Policy Effectiveness,” *Canadian Public Policy* XXVII, 4 (2001), 398. In 1999 the benefit was \$1020 per child per year. This varied according to whether parents claimed the CCED, and based on parents’ income.

²¹ Under the CHST, no money was specifically earmarked for child care. “Indeed, provinces do not have to spend any of the allotted transfer on child-care programs and may choose instead to direct funds to health care or postsecondary education.” The implications of this, as Linda White explains, are that it is more likely that governments will focus on child care subsidies only for welfare-to-work programs – not for all families/children, “because the provinces and territories will benefit 100 percent by moving someone off welfare, rather than just 50 percent under CAP.” White, “Child Care,” 397.

²² White, “Child Care,” 398.

²³ Canada Revenue Agency, “Universal Child Care Benefit (UCCB),” <http://www.cra-arc.gc.ca/bnfts/uccb-puge/menu-eng.html> (Accessed 17 March 2012).

considered anything close to a “comprehensive child care program,” let alone part of “comprehensive labour market policy” that ensures full and equal employment for women.²⁴

Alongside these developments, the federal government’s commitment to a comprehensive child care system has waxed and waned. After the second National Day Care Conference in 1982,²⁵ there was a certain amount of momentum around child care issues that culminated in Trudeau’s appointment of the Katie Cooke Task Force. Cooke’s report, released in 1986, called for a universal child care system, funded jointly by the federal and provincial governments. In the meantime, however, Brian Mulroney’s Conservative government was elected, and Mulroney appointed his own Special Committee on Child Care who pre-empted the Cooke report by shooting down any suggestion of a universal program.²⁶ In response, Mulroney’s government developed their own “National Strategy” on child care (Bill C-144), which critics pointed out was just a re-packaging of existing tax benefits with some additional – yet still inadequate – funding for new spaces.²⁷ Bill C-144 disappeared from the federal government’s agenda when the 1988 election was called. The next significant move towards a national child care program did not come until 2004, when the newly-elected Liberal government pledged to develop a program in coordination with the provinces. This initiative died with the election of a Conservative minority government in 2006.²⁸

²⁴ White, “Child Care,” 398.

²⁵ See Judy Rebick, *Ten Thousand Roses: The Making of Feminist Revolution* (Toronto: Penguin Group, 2005), 65-68.

²⁶ Martha Friendly, “It was twenty years ago today...March 8, 1986” (Childcare Resource and Research Unit Briefing Note, 8 March 2006).

²⁷ Scherer, “Federal Child Care Policy,” 192.

²⁸ Beach et.al, *Early Childhood Education and Care in Canada 2008*, xiv.

Today, as Martha Friendly notes, across the country universal, high-quality, publicly-funded child care is “part of many social agendas – anti-poverty, labour force, economic prosperity, women’s equality, social justice and health promotion.”²⁹ Current child care debates are often framed within discussions about Early Childhood Education (ECE), with advocates in this fields focusing the interests of young children. They argue that early public intervention into children’s education can “set all kids on a path to a healthy and successful life.”³⁰ While certainly an important policy goal, this focus on children’s interests has potential pitfalls. Indeed, some -- though certainly not all -- contemporary activists refuse the label “feminist,” instead insisting that they are working in the interests of children and families.³¹ The danger in this approach, as Annis May Timpson has shown, is that child care is separated from issues of women’s employment equity and citizenship.³²

Many advocates, on the other hand, favour a more “holistic” approach to child care, encapsulated in the campaigns for Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC): “inclusive and integrated services that play multiple roles for children and their families.”³³ As evidence that such a policy arrangement is possible, advocates often point to Quebec’s \$7 per day universal early childhood care and education system.³⁴ In this

²⁹ Martha Friendly, “Canada’s Legacy of Inaction on Early Childhood Education and Child Care,” *Policy Options* 29, 8 (September 2008), 62.

³⁰ Martha Friendly and Susan Prentice, *About Canada: Childcare* (Black Point, NS: Fernwood Publishing, 2009), 4. Friendly and Prentice are quoting a *Toronto Star* article.

³¹ Kelly Pasolli, “Child Care Advocacy in Alberta,” Honours thesis, University of Lethbridge, 2010.

³² Annis May Timpson, *Driven Apart: Women’s Employment Equity and Child Care in Canadian Public Policy* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2001).

³³ Friendly and Prentice, *About Canada*, 4.

³⁴ Pierre Lefebvre, Phillip Merrigan, and Francis Roy-Desrosiers, “Quebec’s Childcare Universal Low Fees Policy 10 Years After: Effects, Costs, and Benefits” (Childcare Research and Resource Unit, October 2010) <http://www.childcarecanada.org/documents/research-policy-practice/11/04/quebecs-childcare-universal-low-fees-policy-10-years-after> (Accessed 18 March 2012).

analysis, children's interests and mothers' rights are not pitted against each other -- each is essential to the other. As one recent report from the Childcare Resource and Research Unit (CRRU) explains:

ECEC programs designed around children's interests, development and wellbeing can also support women's equality -- if they are well-designed and publicly supported. Programs that are universally accessible and of high quality can satisfy the multiple goals of maternal employment, child development, social solidarity, social and human capital development -- and both women's and children's rights.³⁵

In this version of ECEC, a universal child care program would enable women's full social and economic citizenship and all that entails.

Today, though more than two-thirds of Canadian working women have pre-school aged children, most of them still struggle to find adequate child care services. A CCRU report from 2000 suggested that existing child care services met only 12 percent of the need, and services that existed were "inadequately funded so that they [were] often too expensive for ordinary parents."³⁶ In BC, figures from 2006/7 indicate that more than two-thirds of mothers with children under 12 years of age were in the labour force, which translated to 358,700 children needing care, 40 percent of whom were under 5.³⁷ The province, however, only had 87,358 licensed child care spaces.³⁸ Despite the persistent efforts of advocates, however, the possibility of a universal child care system remains uncertain.

³⁵ "Early childhood education and child care -- STILL central to women's equality" (Childcare Resource and Research Unit) <http://www.childcarecanada.org/resources/issue-files/early-childhood-education-and-child-care-%E2%80%93-still-central-women%E2%80%99s-equality> (Accessed 11 May 2012).

³⁶ Martha Friendly, *Child Care and Federalism in the 1990s: Canary in a Coal Mine* (Toronto: Childcare Resource & Research Unit, Occasional Paper 11, 2000), 6.

³⁷ Beach et.al, *Early Childhood Education and Care in Canada 2008*, 124, 131.

³⁸ Beach et.al, *Early Childhood Education and Care in Canada 2008*, 124. The regulated spaces were in centres and family homes. There were also another 1600 small-scale family day homes that do not require licenses because they are attended by two or fewer children. Workforce participation of mothers in BC by age of youngest child (2007): 6-15: 81%; 3-5: 71.4%; 0-2: 64.7%.

Conclusion

Why has there never been universally-accessible, affordable, high-quality public child care in British Columbia, or in the rest of Canada? This study suggests that the answer to that question lies in a fundamental discomfort around working motherhood. The presence of mothers in the labour force challenged -- and continues to challenge -- the dominant notions of family, work, and welfare. From the perspective of policy-makers, a working mother was a “problem.” The “solutions” offered by government programs were a reflection of the uneasiness inherent in working mothers’ relationship to their families, the labour market, and to the state. On the one hand part of a welfare paradigm that encouraged stay-at-home motherhood, working mothers also had to navigate the expectations of welfare programs that assigned them the responsibility of preserving the work ethic and maintaining their families’ independence. The gendered and classed model of an ideal social citizen did not allow for the realities of working mothers’ lives. As a result, a universal child care program -- one of the “gender-encompassing social rights” required of citizenship for women¹ -- remained, and continues to remain out of reach. Instead, British Columbia’s child care policy has consistently been welfare-oriented, reserved for the “neediest” families, and from the state’s perspective, better left to private market sources.

Prominent child care scholars Rianne Mahon and Susan Phillips suggest that today’s inadequate child care policy is the legacy of CAP-era subsidy programs. CAP,

¹ Alice Kessler-Harris, *In Pursuit of Equity: Women, Men, and the Quest for Economic Citizenship in 20th-Century America* (Madison, NY: Oxford University Press, 2001), 13.

they argue, “instituted a liberal bias” in day care policy that has “proved difficult to throw off.”² *Talkin’ Day Care Blues*, however, shows that the contours of British Columbia’s child care system can be traced in patterns of policymaking established well before CAP-era programs. Beginning with the Vancouver City Creche in the 1910s, state-sponsored child care programs have operated at the margins of public welfare – if they were offered at all. Both provincial and municipal governments preferred to let working mothers arrange for their own child care needs through family, neighbours, and private welfare agencies, since they were reluctant to devote resources to policies that might undermine the male-breadwinner/female-homemaker family ideal. If the state needed to step in to support families, according to this line of reasoning, it should be done in such a way as to maintain a mother’s connection to the home – as mothers’ pensions did, in theory – or to compensate male breadwinners for their loss of a family wage. The suggestion of any sort of universal, publicly-funded care programs for working mothers was clearly in conflict with this welfare logic that pervaded much of twentieth-century BC.

But if public child care was not appropriate for “normal” BC families, it was considered a necessary evil for some. Throughout the years under study, both municipal and provincial governments provided residual child care services to working-class and working poor families that were considered to have suffered some sort of family breakdown or crisis. Providing assistance in the form of child care was thought to be the best way to keep those families off the relief rolls, to preserve work ethic, and to allow

² Rianne Mahon and Susan Phillips, “Dual-Earner Families Caught in a Liberal Welfare Regime? The Politics of Child Care Policy in Canada” in *Child Care Policy at the Crossroads: Gender and Welfare State Restructuring*, ed. Sonya Michel and Rianne Mahon (New York: Routledge, 2002), 210. Here Mahon and Phillips classify Canada (both federally and provincially) as a liberal or residual welfare state according to Gosta Esping-Andersen’s typology: social assistance is targeted only towards the poorest and most needy, the state encourages the private sector to take over many social services, and the provision of welfare is means- or income-tested. Gosta Esping-Andersen, *The Three Worlds of Welfare Capitalism* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1990).

the family to preserve some semblance of self-sufficiency – even if that meant that the family’s breadwinner was the mother. At the same time, those mothers could fill much-needed roles in the labour force. The same logic applied to mothers’ pensions, which in practice were kept low enough that, for many mothers, wage work was required to supplement the family income. Just because a mothers’ wage work was an obligation of her welfare receipt, however, did not entitle her to the same protections and claims as male worker-citizens. Mothers, like all women, were second-class workers. Their work signalled that there was a “problem” with the family, whether poverty, desertion, single motherhood, or the like. The child care policy that developed in response to these situations was therefore conceived as a temporary stopgap measure on the road to the restoration of a “normal” family. It was not designed to recognize a mother’s right to work, nor her right to equality within the labour force.

BC’s history of child care, of course, cannot be entirely separated from prevailing notions about child welfare and early childhood education, subjects which appear with some regularity throughout this study. *Talkin’ Day Care Blues* suggests, however, that child care policy in BC, as well as mothers’ pensions administration, was intimately tied to expectations about whether mothers should work and what kind of work they should do. This conclusion has broader implications for our understanding of the historical development of social citizenship in Canada – social citizenship understood as an ever-shifting boundary-marker that opened only on specific terms. Through the lens of child care policy and programs, we see the boundaries of social citizenship opening for certain mothers based on gendered and classed notions of work. Even in the early-twentieth century, a period normally associated with maternally-based welfare policies, work

conditioned the boundaries of social citizenship, setting the pattern for the postwar emphasis on work-based social entitlements. Worker-citizenship, however, is not, and never was, a neutral category. The ideal worker-citizen was a male breadwinner, not a working-class or poverty-stricken mother trying to keep her family together.

Working mothers and their allies resisted the dominant prescriptions of gendered work and citizenship throughout the twentieth century. For the creche mothers, for the recipients of mothers' pensions, for the mothers on social assistance who received day care subsidies, and for the feminist activists who challenged child care policy in the 1970s, wage work -- as well as the work they performed caring for their families -- signalled their status as productive, contributing citizens. In this framing, public support for child care was their right. In the postwar years, especially, advocates painted a picture of full social citizenship for women that included not only publicly-funded child care, but generous maternity/parental leave, flexible work arrangements, and the recognition that the often part-time, temporary, and otherwise "irregular" work of mothers should not disqualify them from the rights-based social provision typically linked to male breadwinner work.

Advocates and scholars continue to point out the inconsistencies, contradictions and inadequacies of child care policy today, and indeed in many of the work-family policies offered by different levels of government. Though maternity benefits have increased since they were first introduced in 1971, they still exclude many mothers who do not engage in full-time, regular work. Though child care tax benefits are in place, they do "nothing to lower the costs of child care services," and continue to be targeted at low-

income families.³ The lack of affordable child care “creates a huge disincentive to employment” for mothers, especially those in middle-class families who do not qualify for child care subsidies yet are not able to afford the high cost of child care.⁴ In BC, for example, median monthly child care costs can reach \$1033; 2-parent, 2-child families are eligible for partial subsidy only if their annual income is below approximately \$50,000 or a full subsidy below \$35,000.⁵

Today, the social rights of citizenship are intimately linked to wage-earning, a situation that has long-established roots in BC. This suggests that access to social citizenship for women requires equal participation in the work force, with a universal child care system operating as the central component of a “woman-friendly” state. But this raises deeper questions about the true nature of “woman-friendliness” -- the true nature of liberation, equality, and citizenship for women. Are equal citizenship claims to be found in policies that support women’s full-time caregiving? Or in women’s labour market participation?⁶ How can a system be developed that allows mothers the choice; that allows them to move between caregiving and wage-earning without penalty? That these questions are still contentious, and that policymakers are still so reluctant to broach them, suggests just how deeply-rooted are the gendered and classed cultural expectations around work and motherhood.

³ White, “Child Care,” 398.

⁴ White, “Child Care,” 395-6.

⁵ Coalition of Child Care Advocates of British Columbia, “Submission to the BC Select Standing Committee on Finance and Government Services,” (Coalition of Child Care Advocates of British Columbia, September 2011) <http://www.cccabc.bc.ca/cccabedocs/briefs.html> (Accessed 11 May 2012); Beach et.al, *Early Childhood Education and Care in Canada 2008*, 138, 135.

⁶ For a discussion of these issues, see Ann Shola Orloff, “From Maternalism to “Employment for All”: State Policies to Promote Women’s Employment across the Affluent Democracies,” in *The State after Statism: New State Activities in the Age of Liberalization*, ed. Jonah D. Levy (Boston: Harvard University Press, 2006), 230-68.

Bibliography

Manuscript Primary Sources

British Columbia Archives (Victoria):

Government Records

GR 0128: Department of Social Welfare Executive Records 1936-1966

GR 0135: Department of Social Welfare Executive Records 1966-1968

GR 0344: Provincial Secretary Correspondence 1918-1926

GR 0363: Community Resources Board Records 1973-1977

GR 0365: Social Welfare Department Executive Records 1963-1969

GR 0441: Premier's Records 1883-1933

GR 0496: Provincial Secretary Executive Records 1929-1947

GR 0684: Royal Commission on Labour 1912-1914

GR 0706: Commission on Health Insurance 1919-1921

GR 0746: Department of Social Rehabilitation and Social Improvement Executive Records 1966-1976

GR 0883: Records with Regard to Child Welfare 1919-1963

GR 1323: Attorney-General Correspondence 1902-1937

GR 2667: Provincial Child Care Facilities Licensing Board Records 1968-1979

GR 2738: Neglected Children Case Files 1919-1943

GR 2921: Vancouver Resources Board Records 1953-1975

Manuscript Collections

MS 0431: Family and Children's Aid Service fonds

City of Vancouver Archives (Vancouver):*Public Records*

City Council and Office of the City Clerk fonds

- Public Records Series 20: Subject Files – including Council Supporting Documents
- Public Records Series 31: Council Minutes
- Public Records Series 33: Standing Committee Minutes

City Social Service Department fonds

- Public Records Series 447: Associated Charities of Vancouver
- Public Records Series 449: Director's Subject Files

Vancouver Health Department fonds

- PDS 11: Annual Reports of the Medical Health Officer

Pamphlet Collection

PAM 1935-53: Lilian Nelson

PAM 1938-16: Vancouver Women's Building Directory

Private Sector Records

Add. Mss. 124: Vancouver City Crèche fonds

Add. Mss. 556: Imperial Order Daughters of the Empire, Valcartier Camp Chapter fonds

Simon Fraser University Archives (Burnaby):

F-82: Ellen Frank fonds

F-111: Women's Bookstore Collection

F-149: Simon Fraser University Childcare Society fonds

F-166: Women's Movement Collection (Anne Roberts collector)

University of British Columbia Rare Books and Special Collections (Vancouver):

Foster Day Care Association of Vancouver, *Annual Report*, 1955.

New Democratic Party of British Columbia. Vancouver-Kingsway Constituency Association fonds 1956-1975.

- Cohen, Marcy, Nancy Duggan, Carol Sayre, Barbara Todd, and Nikki Wright. *'Cuz There Ain't No Daycare (or Almost None She Said)*. Vancouver: Press Gang Publishers, 1973.

Vancouver and District Labour Council fonds 1889-1983.

Vancouver Day Nursery Association, *Annual Report*, 1932-1944.

Social Work Collection

P1009174: Marshall, David S.S. *Issues in Day Care in Greater Vancouver*. Vancouver: United Community Services of the Greater Vancouver Area, 1973.

P1012269: United Community Services, Social Policy and Research Department, *The Economics of Day Care* (Vancouver: United Community Services of the Greater Vancouver Area, 1973).

P1014562: Ad Hoc Committee on the Status of Day Care. *Day Care: 1977: A Report*. Vancouver: Vancouver Resources Board, 1977.

Pamphlet files

SPAM 27572: Kilian, Melody. "Day Care Manifesto," Women's Caucus, n.d.

British Columbia Legislative Library (Victoria):

British Columbia Federation of Labour. *Submission of the Committee on Women's Rights to the Minister of Human Resources on Child Care Requirements*. Victoria, 1973

Business and Professional Women's Clubs of British Columbia and Yukon. *Brief on Need for Starting Grants for Child Day Care Centres*. Report presented to Daniel Campbell, Minister of Social Welfare. Victoria, 1968.

Whitton, Charlotte. *Report of Miss Charlotte Whitton, Executive Director of the Canadian Council on Child and Family Welfare, on Mothers' Pensions and Social Service work in the Province of British Columbia*. Prepared for the Honourable S.L. Howe, Provincial Secretary. Victoria, 1 December 1931.

Newspapers

British Columbia Federationist

Growing Pains

The Peak

The Pedestal

Ragamuffin

Vancouver Daily World

Vancouver Province

Vancouver Sun

Victoria Daily Colonist

Victoria Daily Times

Published Primary Sources

Beach, Jane, Martha Friendly, Carolyn Fearn, Nina Prabhu, Barry Forer. *Early Childhood Education and Care in Canada 2008*, 8th edition. Childcare Resource and Research Unit, June 2009.

Bird, Florence. *Report of the Royal Commission on the Status of Women in Canada*. Ottawa, September 1970.

British Columbia. Department of Human Resources. *Services for People: Annual Report of the Department of Human Resources, 1977-80*.

British Columbia. Department of Labour. *Annual Report, 1920-1967*.

British Columbia. Department of Social Welfare/Department of Rehabilitation and Social Improvement. *Annual Report, 1960-69*.

- British Columbia. Legislative Assembly. *Sessional Papers*, 1921.
- British Columbia. Mothers' Pensions Board. *Annual Report made under The Mothers' Pensions Act, 1922-1944*.
- British Columbia. Social Welfare Branch of the Department of Health and Welfare. *Annual Report, 1948-1958*.
- British Columbia. Statutes. "An Act to Provide Pensions for Mothers," 1920.
- British Columbia. Statutes. "An Act to Amend the Mothers' Pensions Act," 1921.
- British Columbia. Task Force on Child Care. *Showing We Care: A Child Care Strategy for the 90s*, 1991.
- Canada. *Census of Canada*, 1901, 1911.
- Canada. Department of Labour. *The Labour Gazette*, 1914-1915.
- Canada. Department of Labour. Women's Bureau. *Working Mothers and Their Child Care Arrangements*. Ottawa: Queen's Printer, 1970.
- Canadian Co-operative Association. *Child Care Co-operatives in Canada 2007: A Research Report*. Ottawa: Co-operatives Secretariat and Human Resources and Social Development Canada in conjunction with the Co-operatives Secretariat, March 2007
- Canadian Council on Social Development. *Day Care: Report of a National Study*. Ottawa: Canadian Council on Social Development, January 1972.
- Canadian Council on Social Development. *Proceedings: Canadian Conference on Day Care, June 20-23, 1971*. Ottawa: Canadian Council on Social Development and Department of Health and Welfare, January 1972.
- Coalition of Child Care Advocates of British Columbia, "Child Care is a Women's Issue." February 2009.
- Coalition of Child Care Advocates of British Columbia, "Submission to the BC Select Standing Committee on Finance and Government Services." September 2011.
- Community Chest and Councils of the Greater Vancouver Area, Welfare and Recreation Council. *Report on Day Care Needs*. Vancouver: Community Chest and Councils of the Greater Vancouver Area, June 1965.

Crompton, Susan and Michael Vickers. "One Hundred Years of Labour Force." *Statistics Canada: Canadian Social Trends*, no. 57 (Summer 2000).

Friendly, Martha. "It was twenty years ago today...March 8, 1986." Childcare Resource and Research Unit Briefing Note, 8 March 2006.

Friendly, Martha. *Child Care and Federalism in the 1990s: Canary in a Coal Mine*. Toronto: Childcare Resource & Research Unit, Occasional Paper 11, 2000.

Henderson's City of Vancouver Directory. Vancouver: Henderson's Publishing Company Ltd., 1909, 1912.

Lefebvre, Pierre, Phillip Merrigan, and Francis Roy-Desrosiers. "Quebec's Childcare Universal Low Fees Policy 10 Years After: Effects, Costs, and Benefits." Childcare Research and Resource Unit, October 2010.

Websites

"Advocacy Resources." *Coalition of Child Care Advocates of British Columbia*.
<http://www.cccabc.bc.ca/res/index.html> (28 March 2012).

"Universal Child Care Benefit." *Canada Revenue Agency*.
<http://www.cra-arc.gc.ca/bnfts/uccb-puge/menu-eng.html> (17 March 2012).

"Rural and Urban Population of Canada, by province and sex, 1911." *Statistics Canada*
http://www65.statcan.gc.ca/acyb02/1917/acyb02_191700849a-eng.htm
(25 February 2011).

"Early childhood education and child care -- STILL central to women's equality."
Childcare Resource and Research Unit
<http://www.childcarecanada.org/resources/issue-files/early-childhood-education-and-child-care-%E2%80%93-still-central-women%E2%80%99s-equality>
(11 May 2012).

Secondary Sources

Abbott, Ruth K. and R.A. Young. "Cynical and Deliberate Manipulation? Child Care and the Reserve Army of Female Labour in Canada." *Journal of Canadian Studies* 24, 2 (1989): 22-38.

Abel, Emily. "Valuing Care: Turn-of-the-Century Conflicts between Charity Workers and Women Clients." *Journal of Women's History* 10, 3 (Autumn 1998): 32-52.

- Abramovitz, Mimi. *Regulating the Lives of Women: Social Welfare Policy from Colonial Times to the Present*. Boston: South End Press, 1996.
- Adamoski, Robert, Dorothy E. Chunn, and Robert Menzies, eds. *Contesting Canadian Citizenship: Historical Readings*. Peterborough, ON: Broadview Press, 2002.
- Adamoski, Robert. "Persistence and Privilege: Boarding and Single Fathers in the Practice of Child Rescue: 1901-1930." In *Child and Family Welfare in British Columbia: A History*, edited by Diane Purvey and Christopher Walmsley, 29-52. Calgary: Detselig Enterprises, 2005.
- Adamoski, Robert. "The Child-The Citizen-The Nation: The Rhetoric and Experience of Wardship in Early Twentieth-Century British Columbia." In *Contesting Canadian Citizenship: Historical Readings*, edited by Robert Adamoski, Dorothy E. Chunn, and Robert Menzies, 315-336. Peterborough, ON: Broadview Press, 2002.
- Adamson, Nancy, Linda Briskin, and Margaret McPhail. *Feminist Organizing for Change: The Contemporary Women's Movement in Canada*. Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1988.
- Anderson, Robin John. "Domestic Service: The YWCA and Women's Employment Agencies in Vancouver, 1898-1915." *Histoire Sociale/Social History* XXV, 50 (November 1992): 307-333.
- Atkin, Wendy. "'Babies of the World Unite': The Early Day-Care Movement and Family Formation in the 1970s." In *Family Matters: Papers in Post-Confederation Canadian Family History*, edited by Lori Chambers and Edgar-Andre Montigny, 57-70. Toronto: Canadian Scholars' Press Inc., 1998.
- Atkin, Wendy J. "Playing Together as Canadians: Historical Lessons from the West End Crèche." In *Changing Child Care: Five Decades of Child Care Advocacy and Policy in Canada*, edited by Susan Prentice, 27-38. Halifax: Fernwood Publishing, 2001.
- Baillargeon, Denyse. *Making Do: Women, Family and Home in Montreal During the Great Depression*. Waterloo: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 1999.
- Barman, Jean. *The West Beyond the West: A History of British Columbia*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2007.
- Blake, Raymond. *From Rights to Needs: A History of Family Allowances in Canada*. Vancouver: UBC Press, 2009.
- Boris, Eileen. "What About the Working of the Working Mother?" *Journal of Women's History* 5, 2 (Fall 1993): 104-109.

- Boris, Eileen and S.J. Kleinberg. "Mothers and Other Workers: (Re)Conceiving Labor, Maternalism, and the State." *Journal of Women's History* 15, 3 (Autumn 2003): 90-117.
- Bradbury, Bettina. *Working Families: Age, Gender, and Daily Survival in Industrializing Montreal*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2007.
- Brandt, Gail Cuthbert. "'Pigeon-Holed and Forgotten': The Work of the Subcommittee on the Post-War Problems of Women, 1943." *Histoire Sociale-Social History* 15, 29 (May 1982): 239-259.
- Brodie, Janine. "The Social in Social Citizenship." In *Recasting the Social in Citizenship*, edited by Engin F. Isin, 20-43. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2008.
- Bryden, P.E. *Planners and Politicians: Liberal Politics and Social Policy, 1957-1968*. Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1997.
- Bucur, Maria. "Gender and Citizenship: Difference and Power in the Modern State." *Journal of Women's History* 20, 4 (2008): 160-170.
- Campbell, Lara. *Respectable Citizens: Gender, Family, and Unemployment in Ontario's Great Depression*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2009.
- Campbell, Marie. "Sexism in British Columbia Trade Unions, 1900-1920." In *In Her Own Right: Selected Essays on Women's History in British Columbia*, edited by Cathy Kess and Barbara Latham, 167-186. Victoria: Camosun College, 1980.
- Carter, Connie and Eileen Daoust. "From Home to House: Women in the BC Legislature." In *Not Just Pin Money: Selected Essays on the History of Women's Work in British Columbia*, edited by Barbara K. Latham and Roberta J. Pazdro, 389-405. Victoria: Camosun College, 1984.
- Christie, Nancy. *Engendering the State: Family, Work, and Welfare in Canada*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2000.
- Creese, Gillian. "The Politics of Dependence: Women, Work and Unemployment in the Vancouver Labour Movement Before World War II." In *British Columbia Reconsidered: Essays on Women*, edited by Gillian Creese and Veronica Strong-Boag, 364-390. Vancouver: Press Gang Publishers, 1992.
- Creese, Gillian. "Sexuality Equality and the Minimum Wage in British Columbia." *Journal of Canadian Studies* 26, 4 (Winter 1991-92): 120-140.
- Daly, Mary and Katherine Rake. *Gender and the Welfare State: Care, Work and Welfare in Europe and the US*. Cambridge, UK: Polity Press, 2003.

- Davies, Megan. "Services Rendered, Rearing Children for the State?: Mothers' Pensions in British Columbia." In *Not Just Pin Money: Selected Essays on the History of Women's Work in British Columbia*, edited by Barbara Latham and Roberta J. Pzdro, 249-263. Victoria: Camosun College Press, 1984.
- Davies, Megan. "Welfare Amazons or Handmaidens of the State?: Welfare Field Workers in Rural BC, 1935-42." In *Child and Family Welfare in BC: A History*, edited by Diane Purvey and Chris Walmsley, 195-234. Calgary: Detselig Press, 2006.
- Davis, Chuck. *The Greater Vancouver Book: An Urban Encyclopedia*. Surrey, BC: The Linkman Press, 1997.
- Dinner, Deborah. "The Universal Childcare Debate: Rights Mobilization, Social Policy, and the Dynamics of Feminist Activism, 1966-1974." *Law and History Review* 28, 3 (August 2010): 577-628.
- Dobrowolsky, Alexandra Z. and Jane Jenson, "Shifting Representations of Citizenship: Canadian Politics of "Women" and "Children."" *Social Politics: International Studies in Gender, State and Society* 11, 2 (Summer 2004): 154-180.
- Esping-Andersen, Gosta. *The Three Worlds of Welfare Capitalism*. Cambridge: Polity Press, 1990.
- Fay, Jeanne. "The 'Right Kind' of Single Mothers: Nova Scotia's Regulation of Women on Social Assistance, 1956-77." In *Mothers of the Municipality: Women, Work, and Social Policy in Post-1945 Halifax*, edited by Judith Fingard and Janet Guildford, 141-168. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2005.
- Finkel, Alvin. "Changing the Story: Gender Enters the History of the Welfare State." *Tijdschrift Voor Sociale Geschiedenis* 22, 1 (1996): 67-81
- Finkel, Alvin. "Even the Little Children Cooperated: Family Strategies, Childcare Discourse, and Social Welfare Debates 1945-1975." *Labour/Le Travail* 36 (Fall 1995): 91-118.
- Finkel, Alvin. *Social Policy and Practice in Canada: A History*. Waterloo: Wilfrid Laurier Press, 2006.
- Finkel, Alvin. "The State of Writing on the Welfare State: What's Class Got to Do With It?" *Labour/Le Travail* 54 (Fall 2004): 151-74.
- Fraser, Nancy. "After the Family Wage: Gender Equity and the Welfare State." *Political Theory* 22, 4 (November 1994): 591-618.

- Fraser, Nancy and Linda Gordon, "A Genealogy of Dependency: Tracing a Keyword of the U.S. Welfare State." *Signs* 19, 2 (Winter 1994): 309-336.
- Fraser, Nancy and Linda Gordon. "Contract Versus Charity: Why Is There No Social Citizenship in the United States?" *Socialist Review* 22, 3 (July-September 1992): 45-67.
- Friendly, Martha and Susan Prentice. *About Canada: Childcare*. Black Point, NS: Fernwood Publishing, 2009.
- Friendly, Martha. "Canada's Legacy of Inaction on Early Childhood Education and Child Care." *Policy Options* 29, 8 (September 2008): 62-67.
- Garr, Allen. *Tough Guy: Bill Bennett and the Taking of British Columbia*. Toronto: Key Portner Books, 1985.
- Goodwin, Joanne. *Gender and the Politics of Welfare Reform: Mothers' Pensions in Chicago*. Chicago: The University Chicago Press, 1997.
- Gordon, Linda. *Heroes of Their Own Lives: The Politics and History of Family Violence, 1880-1960*. New York: Viking, 1988.
- Gordon, Linda. "The New Feminist Scholarship on the Welfare State." In *Women, the State, and Welfare*, edited by Linda Gordon, 9-35. Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1990.
- Gordon, Linda. *Pitied But Not Entitled: Single Mothers and the History of Welfare, 1890-1935*. New York: Free Press, 1994.
- Gordon, Linda, ed. *Women, the State, and Welfare*. Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1990.
- Gough, Lyn. *As Wise as Serpents: 1883-1939, Five Women and An Organization that Changed British Columbia*. Victoria, BC: Swan Lake Publishing, 1988.
- Griffin, Sandra, Penny Coates, Gayle Davies, Hillel Goelman, Judy Pollard, and Larisa Tarwick. "Canadian Child Care in Context: Perspectives from the Provinces and Territories: British Columbia Report." In *Canadian National Child Care Study*, ed. Alan Pence. Ottawa: Department of Health and Welfare, 1992.
- Hernes, Helga Maria. *Welfare State and Women Power: Essays in State Feminism*. Oslo: Norwegian University Press, 1987.
- Hobbs, Margaret. "Equality and Difference: Feminism and the Defence of Women Workers During the Great Depression." *Labour/Le Travail* 32 (Fall 1993): 201-223.

- Hobbs, Margaret. "Rethinking Antifeminism in the 1930s: Gender Crisis or Workplace Justice? A Response to Alice Kessler-Harris." *Gender & History* 5, 1 (Spring 1993): 4-15
- Hobson, Barbara. "Feminist Strategies and Gendered Discourses in Welfare States: Married Women's Right to Work in the United States and Sweden." In *Mothers of a New World: Maternalist Politics and the Origins of Welfare States*, edited by Seth Koven and Sonya Michel, 369-429. New York: Routledge, 1993.
- Howard, Irene. "The Mothers' Council of Vancouver: Holding the Fort for the Unemployed, 1935-1938." In *Vancouver Past: Essays in Social History*, edited by Robert A.J. McDonald and Jean Barman, 249-287. Vancouver: UBC Press, 1986.
- Howard, Irene. *The Struggle For Social Justice in British Columbia: Helena Gutteridge, the Unknown Reformer*. Vancouver: UBC Press, 1992.
- Irving, Allan. "The Development of a Provincial Welfare State: British Columbia 1900-1939." In *The "Benevolent" State: The Growth of Welfare in Canada*, edited by Allan Moscovitch and Jim Albert, 155-174. Toronto: Garamond Press, 1987.
- Isitt, Benjamin. *Militant Minority: British Columbia Workers and the Rise of a New Left, 1948-1972*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2011.
- Jenson, Jane. "Representations of Gender: Policies to "Protect" Women Workers and Infants in France and the United States." In *Women, the State, and Welfare*, edited by Linda Gordon, 152-177. Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1990.
- Johnston, Hugh. *Radical Campus: Making Simon Fraser University*. Vancouver: Douglas & McIntyre, 2005.
- Jones, Andrew and Leonard Rutman. *In the Children's Aid: J.J. Kelso and Child Welfare in Ontario*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1981.
- Keshen, Jeff. "Revisiting Canada's Civilian Women During World War II." *Social History/Histoire Sociale* 30, 60 (1997): 239-266.
- Kess, Cathy and Barbara Latham, eds. *In Her Own Right: Selected Essays on Women's History in British Columbia*. Victoria: Camosun College, 1980
- Kessler-Harris, Alice. "Gender Ideology in Historical Reconstruction: A Case Study from the 1930s." *Gender & History* 1, 1 (Spring 1989): 31-49.
- Kessler-Harris, Alice. *In Pursuit of Equity: Women, Men, and the Quest for Economic Citizenship in 20th-Century America*. Madison, NY: Oxford University Press, 2001.

- Koven, Seth and Sonya Michel, "Introduction: 'Mother Worlds.'" In *Mothers of a New World: Maternalist Politics and the Origins of Welfare States*, edited by Seth Koven and Sonya Michel, 1-42. New York: Routledge, 1993.
- Ladd-Taylor, Molly. *Mother-Work: Women, Child Welfare, and the State, 1890-1930*. Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1994.
- Langford, Tom. *Alberta's Day Care Controversy: From 1908 to 2009 and Beyond*. Edmonton: Athabasca University Press, 2010.
- Latham, Barbara K. and Roberta J. Pazdro, eds. *Not Just Pin Money: Selected Essays on the History of Women's Work in British Columbia*. Victoria: Camosun College, 1984.
- Lewis, Jane. "Gender and the Development of Welfare Regimes." *Journal of European Social Policy* 2, 3 (1992): 159-173.
- Light, Beth and Ruth Roach Pierson. *No Easy Road: Women in Canada 1920s to 1960s*. Toronto: New Hogtown Press, 1990.
- Lind, Loren and Susan Prentice. *Their Rightful Place: An essay on children, families and childcare in Canada*. Toronto: Our Schools/Our Selves Education Foundation, 1992.
- Lister, Ruth. "Dilemmas in Engendering Citizenship." In *Gender and Citizenship in Transition*, edited by Barbara Hobson, 33-83. New York: Routledge, 2000.
- Little, Margaret Hillyard. "Claiming a Unique Place: The Introduction of Mothers' Pensions in B. C." *BC Studies* 105-106 (Spring/Summer 1995): 80-102.
- Little, Margaret Jane Hillyard. *No Car, No Radio, No Liquor Permit: The Moral Regulation of Single Mothers in Ontario, 1920-1997*. Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1998.
- Luxton, Meg. "Feminism as Class Act: Working-Class Feminism and the Women's Movement in Canada." *Labour/Le Travail* 48 (Fall 2001): 63-88.
- Heidi MacDonald, Heidi. "Maritime Women, the Great Depression, and the Dominion-Provincial Youth Training Program." In *Making Up the State: Women in 20th Century Atlantic Canada*, edited by Janet Guildford and Suzanne Morton, 131-150. Fredericton: Acadiensis Press, 2010.
- MacGill, Elsie Gregory. *My Mother the Judge: A Biography of Judge Helen Gregory MacGill*. Toronto: Ryerson Press, 1955.

- Madsen, Lene. "Citizen, Worker, Mother: Canadian Women's Claims to Parental Leave and Childcare." *Canadian Journal of Family Law* 11 (2002): 11-74.
- Magnusson, Warren. "The local state in Canada: theoretical perspectives." *Canadian Public Administration* 28, 4 (Winter 1985): 575-99.
- Mahon, Rianne. "Challenging National Regimes from Below: Toronto Child-Care Politics." *Politics and Gender* 3 (2007): 55-78.
- Mahon, Rianne. "Gender and Welfare State Restructuring: Through the Lens of Child Care." In *Child Care Policy at the Crossroads: Gender and Welfare State Restructuring*, edited by Sonya Michel and Rianne Mahon, 1-27. New York: Routledge, 2002.
- Mahon, Rianne. "The Never-Ending Story: The Struggle for Universal Child Care Policy in the 1970s." *The Canadian Historical Review* 81, 4 (December 2000): 582-622.
- Mahon, Rianne and Susan Phillips. "Dual-Earner Families Caught in a Liberal Welfare Regime? The Politics of Child Care Policy in Canada." In *Child Care Policy at the Crossroads: Gender and Welfare State Restructuring*, edited by Sonya Michel and Rianne Mahon, 191-218. New York: Routledge, 2002.
- Mann, Jean, Beverley New, and Cathy Barford. *Women Lead the Way: A History of the University Women's Club of Vancouver, 1907-2007*. Vancouver: Ray Hignell Services Inc., 2007.
- Marks, Lynne. "Leaving God Behind When They Crossed the Rocky Mountains': Exploring Unbelief in Turn-of-the-Century British Columbia." In *Household Counts: Canadian Households and Families in 1901*, edited by Peter Baskerville and Eric W. Sager, 371-404. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2007.
- Marshall, T.H. "Citizenship and Social Class." In *Class, Citizenship, and Social Development: Essays by T. H. Marshall*. Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1964.
- Matters, Diane L. "Public Welfare Vancouver Style." *Journal of Canadian Studies* 14, 1 (Spring 1979): 3-12.
- McDonald, Robert A.J. *Making Vancouver: Class, Status, and Social Boundaries, 1863-1913*. Vancouver: UBC Press, 1996.
- McDonald, Robert A.J. "Victoria, Vancouver, and the Economic Development of British Columbia, 1886-1914." In *British Columbia: Historical Readings*, edited by W. Peter Ward and Robert A.J. McDonald, 369-395. Vancouver: Douglas and McIntyre Ltd, 1981.

- McDonald, Robert A.J. "Working Class Vancouver, 1886-1914: Urbanism and Class in British Columbia." In *Vancouver Past: Essays in Social History*, edited by Robert A.J. McDonald and Jean Barman, 33-69. Vancouver: UBC Press, 1986.
- McKeen, Wendy. *Money in Their Own Name: The Feminist Voice in Poverty Debate in Canada, 1970-1995*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2004.
- Michel, Sonya. *Children's Interests/Mothers' Rights: The Shaping of America's Child Care Policy*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1999.
- Michel, Sonya. "The Limits of Maternalism: Policies Toward American Wage-Earning Mothers During the Progressive Era." In *Mothers of New World: Maternalist Politics and the Origins of Welfare States*, edited by Seth Koven and Sonya Michel, 277-320. New York and London: Routledge, 1993.
- Milligan, Ian. "Coming off the Mountain: Forging an Outward-Looking New Left at Simon Fraser University." *BC Studies* 171 (Autumn 2011): 69-91.
- Mink, Gwendolyn. "The Lady and the Tramp: Gender, Race, and the Origins of the American Welfare State." In *Women, the State, and Welfare*, edited by Linda Gordon, 92-122. Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1990.
- Mink, Gwendolyn. *Welfare's End*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2002.
- Mitchell, Margaret. *No Laughing Matter: Adventure, Activism, and Politics*. Vancouver: Granville Island Publishing Ltd., 2008.
- Mitchinson, Wendy. "Early Women's Organizations and Social Reform: Prelude to the Welfare State." In *The "Benevolent" State: The Growth of Welfare in Canada*, edited by Allan Moscovitch and Jim Albert, 77-92. Toronto: Garamond Press, 1987.
- Morgan, Kimberly J. *Working Mothers and the Welfare State: Religion and the Politics of Work-Family Policies in Western Europe and the United States*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2006.
- Morton, Desmond. *Fight or Pay: Soldiers' Families in the Great War*. Vancouver: UBC Press, 2004.
- Morton, Suzanne. "From Infant Homes to Day Care: Child Care in Halifax." In *Mothers of the Municipality: Women, Work, and Social Policy in Post-1945 Halifax*, edited by Judith Fingard and Janet Guildford, 169-188. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2005.

- Nelson, Barbara. "The Origins of the Two-Channel Welfare State: Workmen's Compensation and Mothers' Aid." In *Women, the State, and Welfare*, edited by Linda Gordon, 123-151. Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1990.
- Norcross, Elizabeth. "Mary Ellen Smith: The Right Woman in the Right Place at the Right Time." In *Not Just Pin Money: Selected Essays on the History of Women's Work in British Columbia*, edited by B. Latham and R. Pazdro, 357-364. Victoria: Camosun College Press, 1984.
- Orleck, Annaleise. *Storming Caesar's Palace: How Black Mothers Fought Their Own War on Poverty*. Boston: Beacon Press, 2005.
- Orloff, Ann Shola. "Gender and the Social Rights of Citizenship: The Comparative Analysis of Gender Relations and Welfare States." *American Sociological Review* 58, 3 (June 1993): 303-328.
- Orloff, Ann Shola. "Gendering the Comparative Analysis of Welfare States." *Sociological Theory* 27, 3 (September 2009): 318-319.
- Orloff, Ann Shola. "From Maternalism to "Employment for All": State Policies to Promote Women's Employment across the Affluent Democracies." In *The State after Statism: New State Activities in the Age of Liberalization*, edited by Jonah D. Levy, 230-268. Boston: Harvard University Press, 2006.
- Parr, Joy. *The Gender of Breadwinners: Women, Men, and Change in Two Industrial Towns, 1880-1950*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1998.
- Pateman, Carol. "The Patriarchal Welfare State." In *Democracy and the Welfare State*, edited by Amy Gutman, 231-260. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1988.
- Pearce, Diana. "Welfare Is Not for Women: Why the War on Poverty Cannot Conquer the Feminization of Poverty." In *Women, the State, and Welfare*, edited by Linda Gordon, 265-279. Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1990.
- Pierson, Ruth Roach. "Gender and the Unemployment Insurance Debates in Canada, 1934-1940." *Labour/Le Travail* 25 (Spring 1990): 77-103.
- Pierson, Ruth Roach. *"They're Still Women After All": The Second World War and Canadian Womanhood*. Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1986.
- Porter, Ann. *Gendered States: Women, Unemployment Insurance, and the Political Economy of the Welfare State in Canada, 1945-1997*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2003.

- Prentice, Susan. "Changing Child Care: Looking Back, Moving Forward." In *Changing Child Care: Five Decades of Child Care Advocacy and Policy in Canada*, edited by Susan Prentice, 15-26. Halifax: Fernwood Publishing, 2001.
- Prentice, Susan, ed. *Changing Child Care: Five Decades of Child Care Advocacy and Policy in Canada*. Halifax: Fernwood Publishing, 2001.
- Prentice, Susan. "'Kids are Not for Profit': The Politics of Childcare." In *Social Movements/Social Change: The Politics and Practice of Organizing*, edited by Frank Cunningham, Sue Findlay, and Marlene Kadar, 98-128. Toronto: Between the Lines, 1988.
- Prentice, Susan. "Workers, Mothers, Reds: Toronto's Postwar Day Care Fight." *Studies in Political Economy* 30 (Autumn 1989): 115-141.
- Prochner, Larry. "A History of Early Education and Child Care in Canada, 1820-1966." In *Early Childhood Care and Education in Canada*, edited by Larry Prochner and Nina Howe, 45-51. Vancouver: UBC Press, 2000.
- Purvey, Diane Barbara. "Alexandra Orphanage and Families in Crisis in Vancouver, 1892-1928." In *Child and Family Welfare in British Columbia: A History*, edited by Diane Purvey and Christopher Walmsley, 53-75. Calgary: Detselig Enterprises, 2005.
- Rebick, Judy. *Ten Thousand Roses: The Making of Feminist Revolution*. Toronto: Penguin Group, 2005.
- Rooke, Patricia T. and R.L. Schnell. *Discarding the Asylum: From Child Welfare to the Welfare State in English Canada, 1800-1950*. Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1983.
- Rooke, Patricia and R.L. Schnell. *No Bleeding Heart: Charlotte Whitton, A Feminist on the Right*. Vancouver: UBC Press, 1987.
- Ross, Kathleen Gallagher, ed. *Good Day Care: Fighting for It, Getting It, Keeping It*. Toronto: Women's Press, 1978.
- Roy, Patricia and John Herd Thompson. *British Columbia: Land of Promises*. Don Mills: Oxford University Press, 2005.
- Roy, Patricia. *A White Man's Province: British Columbia Politicians and Chinese and Japanese Immigrants, 1858-1914*. Vancouver: UBC Press, 1989.
- Sager, Eric W. "Women in the Industrial Labour Force: Evidence for British Columbia, 1921-53." *BC Studies* 149 (Spring 2006): 39-62.

- Sangster, Joan. "Invoking Experience as Evidence." *Canadian Historical Review* 92, 1 (March 2011): 135-161.
- Sangster, Joan. "Debating Maternity Rights: Pacific Western Airlines and Flight Attendants' Struggle to "Fly Pregnant" in the 1970s." In *Work on Trial: Canadian Labour Law Struggles*, edited by Judy Fudge and Eric Tucker, 283-314. Toronto: Irwin Law, 2010.
- Sangster, Joan. *Earning Respect: The Lives of Working Women in Small-Town Ontario, 1920-1960*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1995.
- Sangster, Joan. "The Role of Women in the Early CCF." In *Beyond the Vote: Canadian Women and Politics*, edited by Linda Kealey and Joan Sangster, 118-138. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1989.
- Sangster, Joan. *Transforming Labour: Women and Work in Postwar Canada*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2010.
- Scherer, Rebecca Kelley. "Federal Child Care Policy Development: From World War II to 2000." In *Changing Child Care: Five Decades of Child Care Advocacy and Policy in Canada*, edited by Susan Prentice, 187-200. Halifax: Fernwood Publishing, 2001.
- Schulz, Patricia Vandebelt. "Day Care in Canada: 1850-1962." In *Good Day Care: Fighting For It, Getting It, Keeping It*. Toronto: The Women's Press, 1978.
- Sethna, Christabelle. "Clandestine Operations: The Vancouver Women's Caucus, the Abortion Caravan, and the RCMP." *Canadian Historical Review* 90, 3 (September 2009): 463-496.
- Shklar, Judith. *American Citizenship: The Quest for Inclusion*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1991.
- Simmons, Christina. "'Helping the Poorer Sisters': The Women of the Jost Mission, Halifax, 1905-1945." *Acadiensis* 14, 1 (Autumn 1994): 3-27.
- Skocpol, Theda. *Protecting Soldiers and Mothers: The Political Origins of Social Policy in the United States*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1992.
- Srigley, Katrina. *Breadwinning Daughters: Young Working Women in a Depression-Era City, 1929-1939*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2010.
- Srigley, Katrina. "'In Case You Hadn't Noticed!': Race, Ethnicity, and Women's Wage-Earning in a Depression-Era City." *Labour/Le Travail* 55 (Spring 2005): 69-105.

- Stephen, Jennifer. *Pick One Intelligent Girl: Employability, Domesticity, and the Gendering of Canada's Welfare State, 1939-1947*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2007.
- Stoltzfus, Emilie. *Citizen, Mother, Worker: Debating Public Responsibility for Child Care After the Second World War*. Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2003.
- Strong-Boag, Veronica. "Canada's Wage-Earning Wives and the Construction of the Middle Class, 1945-60." *Journal of Canadian Studies* 29, 3 (1994): 5-25.
- Strong-Boag, Veronica. "The Girl of the New Day: Canadian Working Women in the 1920s." *Labour/Le Travail* 4 (1979): 131-164.
- Strong-Boag, Veronica. "'Wages for Housework': Mothers' Allowances and the Beginnings of Social Security in Canada." *Journal of Canadian Studies* 14, 1 (Spring 1979): 24-34.
- Struthers, James. "A Profession in Crisis: Charlotte Whitton and Canadian Social Work in the 1930s." *Canadian Historical Review* 62, 2 (1981): 169-185.
- Struthers, James. "'In the Interests of the Children': Mothers' Allowances and the Origins of Income Security in Ontario, 1917-1930." In *Social Fabric or Patchwork Quilt: The Development of Social Policy in Canada*, edited by Raymond Blake and Jeffrey A. Keshen, 59-87. Peterborough: Broadview Press, 2006.
- Struthers, James. *The Limits of Affluence: Welfare in Ontario*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press and Ontario Historical Studies Series, 1994.
- Struthers, James. *No Fault of Their Own: Unemployment and the Canadian Welfare State*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1983.
- Sugiman, Pam. *Labour's Dilemma: The Gender Politics of Auto Workers in Canada, 1937-1979*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1994.
- Tillotson, Shirley. "Citizen Participation in the Welfare State: An Experiment." *The Canadian Historical Review* 75, 4 (1994): 511-542.
- Tillotson, Shirley. "Relations of Extraction: Taxation and Women's Citizenship in the Maritimes." In *Making Up the State: Women in 20th-Century Atlantic Canada*, edited by Janet Guildford and Suzanne Morton, 93-109. Fredericton: Acadiensis Press, 2010.
- Timpson, Annis May. *Driven Apart: Women's Employment Equality and Child Care in Canadian Public Policy*. Vancouver: UBC Press, 2001.

- Valverde, Mariana. *The Age of Light, Soap, and Water: Moral Reform in English Canada, 1885-1925*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2008.
- Varga, Donna. *Constructing the Child: A History of Canadian Day Care*. Toronto: James Lorimer, 1997.
- Vickers, Jill, Pauline Rankin, and Christine Appelle. *Politics as if Women Mattered: A Political Analysis of the National Action Committee on the Status of Women*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1993.
- Walsh, Sue. "The Peacock and the Guinea Hen: Political Profiles of Dorothy Gretchen Steeves and Grace MacInnis." In *British Columbia Reconsidered: Essays on Women*, edited by Gillian Creese and Veronica Strong-Boag, 73-89. Vancouver: Press Gang Publishers, 1992.
- White, Linda. "Child Care, Women's Labour Market Participation, and Labour Market Policy Effectiveness." *Canadian Public Policy* XXVII, 4 (2001): 385-405.

Theses and Dissertations

- Adamoski, Robert. "Their Duties Towards the Children: Citizenship and the Practice of Child Rescue in Early Twentieth Century British Columbia." PhD dissertation, Simon Fraser University, 1995.
- Brown, Lorraine. "Domestic Service in British Columbia, 1850-1914." MA thesis, University of Victoria, 1995.
- Collier, Cheryl. "Governments and Women's Movements: Explaining Child Care and Anti-Violence Policy in Ontario and British Columbia, 1970-2000." PhD dissertation, University of Toronto, 2006.
- Hobbs, Margaret. "Gendering Work and Welfare: Women's Relationship to Wage-Work and Social Policy in Canada during the Great Depression." PhD dissertation, University of Toronto, 1994.
- Pasolli, Kelly. "Child Care Advocacy in Alberta." Honours thesis, University of Lethbridge, 2010.
- Prentice, Susan. "Reds, Mothers, Militants: A History of the Postwar Daycare Campaigns in Toronto." PhD dissertation, York University, 1993.
- Prochner, Larry W. "Themes in the History of Day Care: A Case Study of the West End Crèche, Toronto, 1909-1939." PhD dissertation, University of Toronto, 1994.

- Smith, Julia. "Organizing the Unorganized: The Service, Office, and Retail Workers' Union of Canada (SORWUC), 1972-1986." MA thesis, Simon Fraser University, 2009.
- Stewart, Donald Granville. "Strathcona Nursery School: Its Contributions for Working Mothers." MA thesis, University of British Columbia, 1956.
- Ulmer, Catherine Mary. "The Report on Unemployment and Relief in Western Canada, 1932: Charlotte Whitton, R.B. Bennett and the Federal Response to Relief." MA thesis, University of Victoria, 2009.
- Venables, Kenneth A. "The Making of Protective Labour Legislation in British Columbia: The 1912 Royal Commission on Labour and its Aftermath." MA thesis, Simon Fraser University, 1996.
- Walsh, Susan. "Equality, Emancipation, and a More Just World: Leading Women in the B.C. CCF." MA thesis, Simon Fraser University, 1984.
- Wasserlein, Frances. "An Arrow Aimed at the Heart: The Vancouver Women's Caucus and the Abortion Caravan of 1970." MA thesis, Simon Fraser University, 1990.
- Weiss, Gillian. "'As Women and As Citizens': Clubwomen in Vancouver, 1910-1928." PhD dissertation, University of British Columbia, 1983.

Unpublished Conference Papers

- Marks, Lynne and Margaret Little. "Discourses of Motherhood and Second Wave Women's Movements in English Canada." Paper presented at the Canadian Historical Association Annual Meeting, Fredericton, 31 May 2011.