

**Gender and Saskatchewan Social Democracy from 1900 to 2000**  
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**Introduction**

While there has been a limited amount of scholarly work done on women and the Saskatchewan Co-operative Commonwealth Federation (CCF) and New Democratic Party (NDP) within various time periods, there has been no systematic attempt to evaluate the place of gender and women's activism within the entire Saskatchewan social democratic tradition of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>1</sup> This paper seeks to correct this deficiency by dividing the history of women and Saskatchewan social democracy into four distinct periods: agrarian protest movements from 1900 to 1933, the CCF from 1933 to 1964, the NDP from 1964 to 1982 and the NDP from 1982 to 2000. My approach focuses on the ideas and activities concerning women within the social democratic organizations, parties and governments of these periods as well as examining the relationship between social democracy and the broader women's movement in the province.

It is shown that early agrarian protest movements within Saskatchewan displayed openness to women's concerns and participation during the first 30 years of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. However, the Saskatchewan CCF, which came directly out of this agrarian movement, had an unimpressive record of advancing women's issues, giving women positions of power within its party organization and increasing the representation of women in the Legislature. The NDP government of Allan Blakeney in the 1970s did illustrate a greater awareness of women's issues than the previous CCF government even if, judging by the demands of feminist groups of the time period, it made only moderate progress on women's concerns and fail to elect a single female MLA during its time in power. Under the leadership of Roy Romanow, the NDP was at the forefront of increasing women's representation in Saskatchewan Legislature and cabinet during the 1990s. However, the Romanow government made progress on only a select number of women's issues and adopted stances that disappointed the province's feminist movement in the areas of daycare, abortion and pay equity. Throughout these four historical periods, it is my argument that explanations regarding the relationship between gender and social democracy within the Saskatchewan should concentrate on women's participation within

the provincial economy, the ideas and militancy of women within social democratic organizations and non-partisan women's organizations, the perseverance of a social conservative political culture within the province and the persistence of male-dominated political institutions.

### **Women and Saskatchewan Agrarian Protest Movements (1900-1933)**

The Saskatchewan Grain Growers' Association (SGGA) was the province's largest agrarian organization at the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century and a major force in provincial politics. The SGGA had both liberal reformist and social democratic tendencies within it. The liberal reformist tendency saw tariffs as being discriminatory against the West and advocated co-operatives, free trade and the government regulation of railway and elevator companies in order to reduce the power of Central Canadian monopolies and ensure free competition (Laycock 1990, Chapter 4). The social democratic tendency of the SGGA promoted nationalization, graduated taxation and a rudimentary welfare state to combat the economic inequality created by the exploitation of western farmers by Central Canadian monopolies (Knuttila 1994). The newspaper of the SGGA started a women's section in 1910 and the SGGA passed a resolution calling for the enfranchisement of women in 1912. In 1913, a female section of the SGGA was formed under the name of Saskatchewan Women's Grain Growers' Association (SWGGA). The SWGGA adopted a platform which called for prohibition, suffrage, improvement of rural education and the establishment of social centers for farm women and youth (SWGGA 1914). While the creation of the SWGGA represented a consciousness of women's issues within the SGGA, women never formed more than 10% of the delegates to SGGA conventions, rarely held leadership positions and were expected to clean and cook for the men's meetings.

In 1913, the SWGGA partnered with the Women's Christian Temperance Movement to form the Provincial Equal Franchise Board (PEFB) to wage a campaign to convince the Saskatchewan provincial government to give women the vote and hold a referendum on the prohibition of bars (Menziez 1968). The Saskatchewan government reacted by abolishing bars in 1915 and gave women the vote in 1916. However, the PEFB did not disband once women got the vote and bars were abolished. Instead, it adopted an ambitious program calling for the nationalization of public utilities and

natural resources, complete prohibition of alcohol, equal property rights for women, maternity allowances, equal pay for equal work, abolition of party politics through direct legislation and reform of the criminal code and prison system (Kalmakoff 1994).

In the early 1920s, the SGGGA was supplanted by the more social democratic United Farmers of Canada (Saskatchewan Section) or the UFC (SS). Like the SGGGA, the UFC (SS) constitution created a women's section called the United Farm Women of Saskatchewan (UFWS) and specified that every local of the UFC (SS) had to have at least five women and gave women seats on the executive and board of directors of the central organization. The UFWS adopted the positions of the UFC (SS) condemning monopolistic grain and elevator companies owned by eastern business interests, calling for lower tariffs and advocating co-operative enterprise, socialization of medicine and nationalization of certain parts of the means of production. It declared that "We, women of Saskatchewan must not be content until every person is guaranteed economic security and equal opportunity. It is our responsibility" (Quoted in Jahn 1994, 190).

However, the UFWS also advocated policies that had not occurred to their male counterparts. They called for health and education policies such as free inoculation against contagious diseases, regular visits to schools by nurses, better training for school teachers and the establishment of scholarships for farm youth to go to university. The UFWS also argued for improved property rights for married women and encouraged farm women to "regard the profession of mother and homemaker as the greatest in the world" (Ibid., 198). Upon producing a study illustrating the overwork of farm women, the UFWS argued for labour saving devices in the home as well as running water to cut down the work created by having to haul all their water from wells. Finally, the UFWS attempted to pass a resolution at the UFC(SS) convention advocating the "supply of contraceptive instruction to needy women who ask for it where the public good would be served" but it was defeated by the predominantly male convention (Ibid.).

In summary, early Saskatchewan women's organizations shared the sentiments of western alienation and populism of their male counterparts in their calls for direct legislation, lower tariffs and reduced freight rates. We can also see the confluence of social democracy and early feminism within these women's organizations as they promoted co-operative enterprises, a welfare state and the nationalization of railways and

natural resources alongside their advocacy of women's rights. These early women's organizations espoused what could be termed maternal feminism which accepted women's role as mother and homemaker on the farm. However, these maternal feminists wanted to fulfill their role as mother and homemaker on the family farm within a more equitable partnership with their husbands. Such an equitable partnership would start off with equal property and inheritance rights for women and female suffrage. Suffrage would allow women to have some influence in the affairs of their community and property and inheritance rights would give women some control over the farm which they had worked so hard to build and make successful. Maternal feminists regarded housework as a profession and were angered that, while new farm machinery was regularly bought to make men's jobs easier, the purchase of labour saving devices for women in the household was not a priority.

Traditional accounts of Saskatchewan history often ignored that the success of settlers' homesteads was heavily dependent upon the labour of women. As the wives of farmers, women's duties included cleaning, hauling water, gathering firewood, making clothes, preparing meals, tending to family food sources such as gardens, poultry and livestock, assisting their husbands with the production of market crops as was necessary and generating additional income through the sale of handicrafts and produce (Rollings-Magnusson 2000). Given the importance of women to farm operations, it is no surprise that early Saskatchewan farmer organizations displayed an openness to women's participation and concern for women's issues. However, as we have seen, women remained marginalized with the agrarian protest movement which reflected that these political institutions remained male-dominated and indicated the presence of a strong social conservative tendency within the political culture of the province.

### **Women and the CCF (1933-1964)**

In 1932, the UFC(SS) joined with the Independent Labour Party of Saskatchewan to form a political party which became the Saskatchewan section of the Co-operative Commonwealth Federation (CCF). Despite the openness to women within the Saskatchewan agrarian movement, women's issues were almost completely absent from Saskatchewan CCF platforms from 1934 to 1944. Following the ideas of early agrarian movements, the Regina Manifesto had called for a national labour code to ensure equal

pay for equal work and the Saskatchewan CCF platform for the 1934 provincial election demanded “equal pay for equal work irrespective of sex” (Farmer-Labour Group 1934, 2). However, this demand was mysteriously dropped from the Saskatchewan CCF platforms for the 1938 and 1944 provincial elections which made no mention of women or women’s issues. Instead, in the 1944 provincial campaign, the CCF stressed traditional family values and appealed to women in their role as mothers promising that the CCF would mean employment for their husbands, a better education for their children and adequate medical care for their families (Sangster 1989, 99).

Unlike other provincial sections of the CCF and the agrarian movements out of which it grew, the Saskatchewan CCF did not have a women’s section. Instead, it set up women’s clubs at the local level which had no voting rights or delegate status for conventions. These women’s clubs held study sessions to discuss social democratic literature and contributed recipes, household tricks and fashion tips to a women’s section within the Saskatchewan’s CCF’s magazine. The Saskatchewan CCF nominated only five women in the 1934 to 1944 provincial elections and all of these nominations were in unwinnable ridings such as those of the Premier and the Minister of Agriculture. In spite of her seat having been Liberal since 1917, the CCFer Beatrice Trew surprised many by beating the Liberal incumbent in Maple Creek in the CCF sweep of 1944 to become only the second women ever elected to the Saskatchewan Legislature.

Despite of the evident lack of attention that the Saskatchewan CCF paid to women’s issues, women participation was high in the party, especially compared to the Conservatives and Liberals whose party activists were almost exclusively male (Ibid., 108). However, CCF women were generally consigned to behind-the-scenes organizational roles. The CCF women’s clubs acted as women’s auxiliaries cooking and cleaning for meetings, performing secretarial work, going door to door at election time and fund-raising through bake sales, fowl suppers and sock knitting. Several women were elected to the provincial council and some, such as Louise Lucas who was known as ‘the mother of the CCF’, even found their way on to the party’s executive (Wright 1955). Further, numerous women, such as Elsie Gorius, developed well-deserved repudiations as excellent membership organizers and campaign managers (Melnyk, 199-207). Like the women activists within the agrarian movements that we examined above, early CCF

women were generally maternal feminists who accepted the role of women as homemakers and subscribed to a social gospel vision of the Co-operative Commonwealth bringing forth the 'Brotherhood of Man'.

Due to their maternal feminism, CCF women accepted the sexual division of labour that prevailed in the party's organization because it seemed natural to them. Further, these women were convinced that the achievement of the Co-operative Commonwealth and securing a fair price for grain were more important than gender issues and refused to classify themselves as 'feminists'. For the most part, questions concerning the systematic discrimination of women or their subordinate role within the party or society simply never occurred to the men or the women of the early CCF in Saskatchewan. A Saskatchewan CCF female activist later reflected that "The question of women just never came up. Economics and the war overshadowed everything else. I never thought about the woman question...except for resenting always being the stenographer of the group." (Quoted in Sangster 1989, 122). Nonetheless, in the era before tax exemptions for political donations and in a party with no corporate financing, the voluntary organizational and fund-raising activities of women were essential for the election of male CCF candidates.

The subordination of women within the Saskatchewan CCF party organization was reflected policies of CCF government when it was in power from 1944 to 1964 under the leadership of Tommy Douglas and Woodrow Lloyd. The Douglas and Lloyd governments did not have very impressive records in terms of women's issues. Throughout this time period, Saskatchewan CCF platforms during provincial elections never mentioned women. The CCF's 1947 Bill of Rights did not contain protection from discrimination based on sex although this was added a couple of years later at the behest of women in the party. Further, during its first term of the government, the CCF passed legislation prohibiting married women from being hired by the Saskatchewan government in order provide more employment for returning veterans which also was eliminated a couple of years later in response to opposition in the party. Besides increasing allowances for destitute mothers, the only real advances that 20 years of CCF government brought for women was the passing of legislation securing 'equal pay for

equal work irrespective of sex' for women working in the civil service and allowing women to drink in bars.

From 1944 to 1964, the Saskatchewan CCF only presented 3 women candidates- Beatrice Trew ran twice, Majorie Cooper ran four times and Gladys Strum ran three times. In the period from 1938 to 1964, 3.1% of CCF candidates in provincial elections were women compared to 1.9% for the Liberals and 1.6% for the Conservatives (Fenwick 2002, 25). The Liberals elected two women to the CCF's three over the same period. As we saw, Beatrice Trew was successfully elected in 1944 but she lost in the 1948 election. Cooper won in each of her four attempts starting in 1952 and Strum joined her in the legislature for one term in 1960 to 1964. Both Cooper and Strum ran in the multiple member ridings of Regina and Saskatoon where the party had to select three candidates making it easier for them to win the nomination and where CCF voters could vote for two men and a woman. Once elected, Trew was given the traditional women's role of caucus secretary. She did not play a prominent part in the development of policy in the CCF's first term and unsuccessfully attempted to amend the Civil Service Act to include a provision against "discrimination on account of sex or martial status" in the employment practices of the civil service (Shackleton 1975, 155). Cooper refused to be caucus secretary when asked but she remained a maternal feminist who believed that women should contribute to society through their traditional roles of mothers and homemakers and did not criticize women's position in the party or the CCF government's inactivity on women's issues (Fenwick 2002). While Strum was more outspoken than Cooper in her denunciation of women's subordinate position within the CCF and lobbied Douglas and Lloyd for the appointment of female cabinet minister, she was effectively marginalized within the CCF caucus during her four years in the legislature (Taylor 1986).

It is clear that the Saskatchewan CCF adhered to a liberal conception of individual rights in the passing of a Bill of Rights protecting individuals from discrimination based on race, religion and belatedly on the basis of sex. The entrenchment of these rights was primarily intended to protect non-British immigrants who had traditionally faced discrimination and hostility within Saskatchewan society. In terms of women, the Douglas and Lloyd governments displayed socially conservative attitudes which did not recognize the existence of patriarchy and sought to maintain traditional gender roles. The

overarching characteristic of the CCF's minimal policies towards women was that they were based on a notion of formal equality where the state treats all of its citizens exactly the same. The Saskatchewan CCF was unable to imagine a substantive equality where women were treated not only as equal citizens but different when appropriate so they could enjoy equal results from their citizenship.

There are multiple reasons for the lack of progress on women's issues by the Douglas and Lloyd governments and women's subordination within the CCF party and governments. While the CCF came directly out of the UFC (SS), there were considerable differences between being a lobbying organization and a political party. Politics was a male-dominated sphere and the early CCF was faced with the need to appeal to province's social conservative political culture in order to attract votes from a broad cross-section of Saskatchewan society. Electoral motivation may have been the primary factor in the CCF's dropping its demand for equal pay for equal work after the 1934 provincial election.<sup>2</sup> Further, upon achieving power in 1944, the CCF, which was already male dominated institution, entered into the male-dominated institution of the Saskatchewan state. The dominance of males within both the CCF party organization and state institutions controlled by the party while they were in government definitely did not create an atmosphere congenial to the advancement of women's issues.

As Saskatchewan came out of the depression, the wheat economy began to improve because of demand for grain generated by the war. Related to this newfound prosperity was the appearance of labour saving devices within Saskatchewan farm homes such as running water, electric stoves, washing machines and refrigerators whose use was made possible by the CCF government's rural electrification and plumbing programs. These modern household appliances made women's lives easier on the province's farms which made women's farm organizations less militant and farm women more content. Further, unlike other Canadian provinces, Saskatchewan women did not find increased employment due to World War II because wartime factories were not located in the province. As such, Saskatchewan women were slow to enter the workforce in the 1950s and those who did work were generally concentrated in the traditional female profession of teaching as the baby-boom created a large demand for that profession.



It should be noted that there was no intense pressure on the Douglas or Lloyd governments from Saskatchewan's women's groups to move forward on women's issues. During this time period, Saskatchewan women's groups such as the YWCA, Saskatchewan Provincial Council of Women, the Women's Co-operative's Guild and Homemakers Clubs concentrated on community theater, craft making, aid to British war victims, development projects in the Third World and charity work within Saskatchewan's First Nations reserves instead of lobbying the provincial CCF government on women's issues (Saskatchewan Women's Institute 1988, 23-60). Further, women within the CCF very seldom questioned established gender roles within society or the party. The conservative views of CCF women concerning their position in society may have come from their strong attachment to traditional Anglo-Protestant family values articulated in social gospel teachings which were at the root of the CCF's political philosophy. On the whole, the CCF era was a quiet one for women in Saskatchewan as an emphasis on home, family and traditional gender roles permeated the social, political and economic atmosphere of the province and the social conservative political culture of the province remained unquestioned (Leger-Anderson, 1033-1035).

### **Women and the NDP (1964 to 1982)**

The 1960s saw the emergence of a small urban women's movement in Saskatchewan with the founding of the Saskatchewan Section of the Voice of Women (VOW) in 1961 which was mainly centered in Regina. The Saskatchewan section of VOW was very much a maternalist women's organization who argued that women, due to their "maternal instinct" and unique viewpoint as mothers, could play an important function in preventing war and eliminating nuclear weapons (Lexier 2004). While the Saskatchewan VOW was officially a non-partisan organization, its membership was composed mostly of wives of NDP bureaucrats and politicians and its president was an active member of the NDP (Cotcher 2004). The Saskatchewan VOW wrote submissions to the Lloyd's government on issues of international peace and nuclear weapons but did not comment on specific issues respecting Saskatchewan such as natural resource development or Medicare.

The activity of VOW provided the stimulus for the creation of a women's committee in the Saskatchewan NDP in 1965 by the two of the wives of MLAs: Anne

Blakeney and Pemrose Whalen.<sup>3</sup> The provincial executive appointed members of the women's committee and it reported directly to the provincial executive. The activities of the women's committee included the selling a centennial cookbook, holding annual women's conferences, a survey on women's participation in the 1967 provincial election and keeping track of food prices to allow NDP MPs to critique the federal government on how inflation was hurting Canadian families. Women's role as mothers was continually stressed within the committee. At its first conference there was a panel that was entitled 'How to develop political awareness in our teenagers' and at their second conference Woodrow Lloyd spoke to them about the need for better consumer protection to shield families from undue hardship. The women's committee's stress on motherhood is not surprising since the committee was dominated by wives and contained very few single women. In fact, there was only one single woman out of the 80 women who attended the committee's first conference in 1965.

Women's role as mothers was also forefront in a submission that the NDP Women's Committee submitted to the federal government's Royal Commission on the Status of Women in 1968 which had been the result of a consultation with its members.<sup>4</sup> The comprehensive document expressed the opinion that it is desirable for mothers to stay home to raise their children but recognized that a number of circumstances could arise which makes this impossible. Thus, it argues that welfare allowances should be raised to "a sum adequate to maintain mother and children at home" and part time work should be promoted for women with children. The submission advocated changes in legislation to improve women's right to their husband's property upon his death, give women half ownership of their home regardless of if they made cash payments towards it and expand the grounds of divorce to include "general marriage breakdown". It called for adequate sex education in school, birth control to be available to all women and abortions only in cases of "rape, damaged fetus, and danger to the physical or mental health of the mother." The submission concluded by expressing the maternal feminist idea that women are more interested with "welfare, health and family matters in general. By lack of female representation in legislatures, on hospital boards, and city councils, these matters sometimes get less attention than they need". The NDP women's committee did succeed in getting Pemrose Whelan elected as a vice-president of the party and the NDP ran two

women candidates in difficult-to-win ridings in the 1967 provincial election.<sup>5</sup> However, the activity of the NDP women's committee did not provoke the inclusion of women's issues within the 1967 provincial election platform nor were women's issues included in the speeches of Woodrow Lloyd during his time as leader (Quiring 2004, 16-17).

A Saskatchewan Waffle section was founded in 1970 which brought the American New Left's concern with women's liberation into the Saskatchewan NDP. The Saskatchewan Waffle put out a manifesto entitled "Towards a Socialist Saskatchewan in an Independent Socialist Canada" which adapted the ideas of the national Waffle's manifesto to the conditions of Saskatchewan.<sup>6</sup> The Manifesto critiqued the Saskatchewan NDP for marginalizing women within party structures and argued that women are discriminated against, treated as second-class citizens and that their labour within the home is not paid or even recognized. As such, the Saskatchewan Waffle proposed to eliminate "all sexual discrimination in society" through equal pay for equal work legislation, provision of free birth control and abortions, the establishment of universal, public and free daycare and "recognizing the productive labour done in the home with a living wage".

While the Waffle's candidate was defeated for the party's leadership, the Saskatchewan NDP 1971 election platform entitled a *New Deal for People* was nonetheless influenced by Waffle ideas. For instance, the platform contained a section on human rights which promised to enact a new Human Rights Code to "extend fair employment practices to prohibit discrimination because of sex, and to guarantee employed women a leave of absence for pregnancy" (NDP 1971, 20). This sentence on women was the first movement forward on women's issues in the CCF-NDP since the Douglas government inserted discrimination on the basis of sex into the Saskatchewan Human Rights Code and passed legislation guaranteeing equal pay for equal work irrespective of sex for women working in the provincial government in the early 1950s. During the 1971 provincial election campaign, the NDP's new leader, Allan Blakeney, recognized that women do not receive equal pay for equal work and face discriminatory employment practices and promised to establish a provincial committee to examine the status of women in the province (Blakeney 1971).

Upon winning the election, the first moves that the Blakeney government made on women's issues were the passing of an amendment to the Labour Standards Act ensuring an employer could not pay men and women different rates for "similar work performed in the same establishment under similar working conditions which require similar skills, similar effort and similar responsibility" and giving the Women's Bureau in the Department of Labour the power to initiate its own investigations concerning pay inequities leading to compensation for a number of women in the province (Saskatchewan Department of Labour 1974, 79 & Saskatchewan Department of Labour 1975, 47). Despite calls from women's groups and the trade union movement for the government to adopt an equal pay for work of equal value approach, the government did not move in this direction because it claimed that it was unable "to identify in a practical administrative way how to evaluate and measure work of equal value" (Snyder 2000, 125).

In 1973, the Blakeney government established a task force to study the recommendations of the final report of the federal government's Royal Commission on the Status of Women in order to discern which recommendations have already been implemented by the Saskatchewan government and which continued to be outstanding. While the taskforce noted that many of the Royal Commission's recommendations had already been implemented in Saskatchewan, it did identify a number of areas where more work was needed such as employment discrimination based on marital status, appointment of women to government boards, marital property, unified family courts, daycare and birth control (Saskatchewan Department of Labour 1973). The government appointed the Advisory Council on the Status of Women to work on the areas outlined by the taskforce.

The NDP's platform in the 1975 provincial election did display a greater awareness of women's issues than its 1971 platform through commitments to improving marriage property laws, "further steps" to eliminate discrimination based on sex and introducing a program to provide equal opportunities for women in the public service (NDP 1975, 22). Upon its re-election, the government established a career development office to upgrade the skills of women already employed in the public sector, attract women to senior positions in government and appoint more women to government

boards. The government replaced the Women's Bureau, which had been created by the Liberals in the 1960s, with the Women's Division that performed the same functions as the Bureau but had a greater focus on the continuing education of women and raising awareness of equal opportunity and rights for women. The government also legislated that employers provide 18 weeks of unpaid maternity leave and 6 weeks of unpaid paternity leave to all female employees. In 1977, the government responded to calls from women's groups and the United Church to fulfill a recommendation within the Royal Commission on the Status of Women for the establishment of unified family courts. As such, a three year pilot project was announced to lay the groundwork for the creation of unified family courts within the province. Finally, the government introduced the Matrimonial Homes Act which improved married women's control over their couple's farmland and property and thereby responded to a grievance of women's groups in Saskatchewan that had existed since the time period of the First World War

The Blakeney government was also forced to deal with the growing demand for abortions resulting from the federal government's easing of restrictions on abortion in 1969. Throughout its mandate, the government did not call for the further liberalization of abortion laws nor did it set up clinics which would facilitate access to abortion. Instead, the government simplified and rationalized the procedures for obtaining an abortion within Saskatchewan hospitals but maintained that "Our basic goal for abortions policy should be to reduce the demand for abortions by an active family planning program" (Saskatchewan Public Health Department 1973, 4). Thus, the basic policy consensus which formed within government was that abortions should be allowed but that the need for abortions would be lowered by more comprehensive family planning programs in schools. In the second half of the 1970s, the anti-abortion movement was beginning to surface in Saskatchewan politics. During the 1978 provincial election, an anti-abortion group ran a series of advertisements calling on the government to stop financing abortions through Medicare (Anonymous 1978). However, the NDP did not respond to demands of the anti-abortion groups during its last mandate even though its Minister of Health was a Catholic and publicly opposed to abortion on religious grounds.

After pressure from within the NDP party and citizen groups such as the Saskatoon Day Care Development Committee, the Blakeney government did implement

a program to increase establishment grants and operating subsidies for daycare centres in its 1974 budget (Martin 1995). Under the daycare policy established by the Liberal government in 1969, the provincial government created minimal criteria for licensing privately owned and non-profit daycare centres, gave out very small grants to daycare centres and provided modest subsidies to low-income parents based on a means test. The NDP's 1974 daycare policy provided more money but changed very little in the structure of government assistance to daycare except to increase parent control and favour non-profit centers. The government undertook a comprehensive review of daycare in the province in 1979. The report of the review committee was critical of every aspect of the government's day care policy except for its non-for-profit provisions (Saskatchewan Department of Social Services 1981). However, besides initiatives to encourage daycare co-operatives, the Blakeney government did not substantially change the structure of its daycare programs. Instead, it doubled the funding of daycare programs in the 1981 budget in order to expand the number of space available and provide larger subsidies to low-income families.

Unlike other universal social programs, universal daycare endangers the traditional family by enabling women to work outside of the home and this seemed to be the reason that the government did not move to establish a public system of universal free daycare. The government's logic was made clear in a debate over a motion presented by John Richards, the sole Waffle NDP MLA, to the Saskatchewan Legislature calling for the establishment of a public, universal and free day care system. No NDP member spoke in favour of Richards' resolution and the Education Minister made it clear that the first priority for the government's daycare program were single parents or parents whose income is "low and the other spouse must work to make ends meet" and went on to state "in all possible cases people who have children should raise them too".<sup>7</sup> The Minister of Social Services added that universal daycare would be an unfair subsidy for the rich. A NDP government MLA even argued that "the mother's place is in the home" while another NDP MLA went as far as to declare that universally accessible daycare "would really and truly promote family breakdown". Seven years later, when pressed by a women's group for universal day care the Minister of Health in the Blakeney government stated that "I categorically disagree that society has the responsibility for children. It is

the parent's responsibility. Society has the responsibility to step in if the parents are unable to be responsible" (Quoted in Morris 1982). Thus, the Blakeney government's stance was that, unlike the universal and free provision of Medicare, education, prescription drugs or children's dental care, daycare was primarily a private family matter and government should only provide financial assistance to reduce the cost of daycare for low-income parents and ensure that enough day care centres, preferably non-profit and parent controlled, were available for low-income working parents.

As we can see, the Blakeney government did illustrate a greater awareness of women's issues than the Douglas and Lloyd governments even if it made only moderate progress on women's concerns during its time in power. By the 1970s, women's participation in the workforce had increased dramatically compared to the CCF era. Indeed, by 1971, half of single women and 40% of married women in Saskatchewan were working outside of the home including a growing number of farm wives (Gruending 1990, 185). The greater participation of women in the workforce created a necessity for the NDP government to reduce wage discrimination based on gender, ensure maternity leave, entrench women's property rights and provide limited state support for daycares.

A more active women's movement emerged in Saskatchewan in the 1970s which also pushed the Blakeney government to be more aware of women's issues. The Saskatchewan Action Committee on the Status of Women (SAC) was founded as a branch of the National Action Committee on the Status of Women in 1973. During the 1975 provincial election, SAC pressed for affirmative action programs for women in the provincial public service, expanded powers for the Human Rights Commission to initiate investigations on its own and more resources for women's bureau within the Department of Labour (Anonymous 1975). Throughout the Blakeney government's second and third terms, SAC pushed the government towards public and universal daycare, removal of gender stereotypes from school textbooks, equal pay for work of equal value, abortion clinics, educational programs concerning birth control, inclusion of sexual harassment within the human rights code and improved services for victims of martial violence (SAC 1978 and SAC 1982). Some of the successes of SAC's advocacy were the inclusion of paternity and adoption leave in the Labour Standards Act in 1978, the Matrimonial Homes Act, government action on the promotion of daycare co-operatives, appointment

of more women on government boards and a unified family court. The awareness of the Blakeney government towards women's issues was also raised by the activity of the Waffle and the NDP women's committee before its election. However, once the NDP gained power, the NDP women's committee, who had always been maternal feminists, were satisfied with the government's moderate advances on women's issues and the Waffle was marginalized within the party until it decided to formally dissociate itself from the Saskatchewan NDP in 1973.

Part of the Blakeney's government's moderation in regard to women's issues may have stemmed from the fact that it did not elect a single women MLA and the government's bureaucracy continue to be dominated by men. Not only did the Liberals and Conservatives run more women candidates in provincial elections than the NDP during the 1970s, they also elected three women to the Legislature in 1971 to 1981. The NDP ran only one woman candidate against a Liberal cabinet minister in the 1971 provincial election.<sup>8</sup> The NDP fielded 3 women in the 1975 election (two in winnable ridings and one in an unwinnable riding).<sup>9</sup> An interesting NDP candidate in 1975 was Anne Boulton who was a SAC member and ran against a Liberal woman candidate in the progressive area of Saskatoon which contained the University of Saskatchewan. Boulton's riding had been won in 1971 by the Blakeney government's sole Waffle MLA who had quit the government caucus sit as an independent and was not running again in the 1975 election. Boulton was characterized in the *Regina Leader-Post* as an "outspoken feminist" and she called for half of the Saskatchewan Legislature's seats to be designated for women. She stated that her aim was to "focus attention on some priorities which have been neglected by the male-dominated legislature" which included "child care, improved recreation areas for children and the channelling of boys and girls into different directions in school" (Shervill 1975, 4). While the NDP ran no female candidates in the 1978 provincial election, it did make an effort to run three women in winnable ridings in the 1982 election but they all lost in the Conservatives' landslide victory.<sup>10</sup>

The fact that women's issues disappeared from the NDP's discourse and platforms during the 1978 or the 1982 provincial elections may be indication that they were reacting to an enduring social conservatism within Saskatchewan's political culture. Indeed, social conservatism was an important part of the discourse and appeal



of Grant Devine's Progressive Conservatives who supplanted the NDP in 1982. It is also important to note the Saskatchewan state apparatus remained male-dominated in the 1970s. While the NDP made some commendable efforts to promote the advancement of women within the provincial bureaucracy, their record in electing women as MLAs and running women candidates was abysmal. The endurance of a social conservative political culture and the persistence of male dominated institutions were undoubtedly important factors constraining the Blakeney government's adoption of the more feminist women's policies advocated by SAC during the 1970s.

### **Women and the NDP (1982 to 2000)**

Grant Devine's Conservatives elected a record number of women to the Saskatchewan Legislature in their 1982 victory over the NDP and even appointed the first two women to cabinet in the history of the province. However, the Conservative female MLAs were publicly anti-feminist and several were members of REAL women. Affirming the Conservatives' traditional view of women, the Devine government slashed daycare subsidies for low-income parents and daycare operating grants while setting up a pension scheme for homemakers. The Devine government also eliminated the Women's Division within the Department of Labour in 1982 only to replace it with a free standing Women's Secretariat in 1984 and abolished the programs designed to promote women within the public service. The NDP's small caucus was openly critical of the Conservative's abolition of these women's programs (NDP 1983a). While the Conservative government could not legally limit access to abortions, it did publicly oppose abortion and gave public funds to the Saskatchewan Pro-Life Association.

After the 1982 defeat, the women's committee of the NDP was expanded into the Saskatchewan New Democratic Women (SNDW) which was recognized as an independent organization within the party's constitution and given delegates to provincial council, annual conventions and a position on the party's executive. The SNDW even achieved the entrenching of gender parity on the provincial executive and provincial council. However, on the whole, the SNDW displayed a moderate form of feminism that called for such advances as equal pay for equal work but did not make any specific recommendations in the area of abortions (NDP 1983b & NDP 1985). Indeed, there was still opposition to abortion within the Saskatchewan NDP party in the mid-1980s as

illustrated by the formation of a committee of anti-abortion New Democrats who sought to make the prohibition of abortions a party policy.<sup>11</sup> Reflecting the strength of the SNDW, the NDP ran 11 women candidates in the 1986 provincial election and elected three female MLAs. The NDP platform's section on women in that election was inspired by the SNDW's moderate version of feminism in its calls for pay equity in the public service, strengthening of the Matrimonial Property Act, increased funding for daycare, support for the elimination of pornography and improved funding for battered women's shelters.

After Blakeney's resignation due to the NDP's defeat in the 1986 provincial election, Roy Romanow won the leadership of the Saskatchewan NDP by acclamation. In his acceptance speech, Romanow promised to put women in positions of influence in his government (NDP 1987). Romanow appointed a Women's Advisory Committee to the Leader to encourage women to be involved in politics, created a fund to reimburse female candidates for the costs of their nominations and set a target of having 33 women candidates in the next provincial election. Further, the NDP's 1989 policy commissions recommended pay equity and affirmative action programs in the public sector (NDP 1989). However, a female NDP MLA claims that she was pushed out of caucus because of her feminist views when a young male lawyer successfully contested her nomination for the 1991 election (Smart 1992). Further, the party also confirmed its opposition to free standing abortion clinics which would offer abortions outside of hospitals and women were not mentioned in the NDP's short and vague platform for the 1991 provincial election.<sup>12</sup>

The 1991 provincial election was a watershed for the representation of women in the Saskatchewan Legislature as the percentage of female MLAs jumped from 8% to 18% (Carbert 1997, 156). While it fell short of its target, the NDP did run 14 women in the 1991 provincial election and elected 11 which was the highest number of women elected by any party in Saskatchewan history. Romanow went on to appoint four women to his first cabinet which was again the highest number in the history of the province and he appointed the first female Finance Minister in the history of Canada. In the 1995 election, the NDP ran 14 women as candidates and elected 10 while three women were appointed to cabinet after the election. Throughout Romanow's time in power, women

consistently made up approximately 20% of the cabinet, the NDP caucus and the Legislature (Ibid., 157). Further, female NDP MLAs made up the vast majority of female members of the Legislature during the 1990s.<sup>13</sup> Clearly, women, especially NDP women, had never been so well represented in Saskatchewan politics.

The new Romanow government did not expand the Women's Secretariat into a full blown Department of Women's Affairs preferring instead to restructure the Secretariat (Weston 1991). The Romanow government put in place a formal policy to increase the number of women on government boards and created employment equity programs which addressed the under-representation of women in managerial and non-traditional occupations throughout the public service. While 44% of the Romanow government's appointments to boards were women, the efforts of some female NDP MLAs failed to ensure guaranteed representation of women on newly created health district boards (Saskatchewan Women's Secretariat 1996 & Carbert 1999, 169-170). The Saskatchewan Public Service Commission's employment equity program made some modest gains during the 1990s. By 1999, 50% of the employees of the Saskatchewan public service were women but only 35% of managerial jobs and 21% of designated non-traditional jobs were held by women (Saskatchewan Public Service Commission 2000). Under instructions from the Romanow government, the Saskatchewan Human Rights Commission worked with Crown corporations, school boards, municipal governments, post-secondary education institutions, NGOs and private companies to create employment equity plans to increase their hiring of women and other underrepresented groups. However, participation in the Human Rights Commission's employment equity program was voluntary and just two private sector corporations had joined up by 2000.<sup>14</sup> Under this program, 48% of employees within participating organizations were women by 1999 but only 35% of managerial positions were held by women (Saskatchewan Human Rights Commission 2000). It should be noted that both the Public Service Commission's and the Human Rights Commission's employment equity programs depended upon a system of goals to be strived for and not a system of quotas and that they covered only 11% of the total provincial workforce.<sup>15</sup>

The Romanow government attempted to increase the number of women in non-traditional jobs in the private sector through a grant to women doctoral students in the

sciences, initiatives to provide specialized computer training for women and a program to encourage the training of women in skilled trades (Saskatchewan Post-Secondary Education 1996). The Romanow government also released a strategy to ensure that curriculum, instruction materials and evaluation practices in Saskatchewan's primary and secondary schools were non-sexist (Saskatchewan Education, 1997). In the area of justice, the government passed legislation to recognize sexual harassment as a threat to the health and safety of workers, created the Sexual Harassment Prevention Program and developed an anti-harassment policy for all government employees. The NDP increased funding to programs to help victims of family violence and passed the Victims of Domestic Violence Act which created emergency intervention orders to provide immediate protection for women against their abusers. The government also expanded unified family courts across province and strengthen provisions to collect child support from parents who defaulted on their payments.

At the same time as the 1991 provincial election, the Conservative government held a plebiscite which had voted 63% in favour of ending public funding for abortions. In response to the numerous anti-abortion protesters which showed up to his 1991 campaign events, Romanow had repeated that he was personally opposed to abortion but did not specify how the NDP would act if the plebiscite passed (O'Connor 1991). Once in power, the NDP government claimed that it was not constitutionally possible to follow the instructions of the plebiscite. While the NDP government opposed the creation of free-standing abortion clinics and did not restore funding to Planned Parenthood that been cut by the Conservatives, it did create a Women's Health Center which ensured reliable access to abortions in Regina and covered the use of the Morgentaler Clinic in Edmonton and the Kensington Clinic in Calgary under Medicare. Following the Blakeney government, the Romanow government improved family planning programs in order to "reduce the incidence of unintended pregnancies in the province" (Saskatchewan Health 1993, 1). The government also had other important initiatives in the area of women's health such as a province wide breast cancer screening program, screening for cervical cancer, better counselling services for teenage mothers, improved treatment for eating disorders, more prevention and treatment of osteoporosis and the legalization of midwifery.

The two largest women's issues facing the Romanow government were daycare policy and the question of pay equity. Despite the overall austerity of the 1992 budget, it did increase operating grants to licensed child care centres by 21% which was the first increase since 1986-1987 (Government of Saskatchewan 1992, 16-17). However, similar to the Blakeney government, the Romanow government dismissed calls from the province's women's movement for the establishment universal, free and public daycare. Instead, under the Action Plan for Children, the government concentrated on targeting its improvements in childcare to low-income and 'at-risk' children.<sup>16</sup> As such, a recent report depicts the generally poor record of the Romanow government in the area of child care. The report found that the number of regulated child care spaces in Saskatchewan increased by only 1.8% from 1992 to 2004 and that regulated child care spaces in 2004 were available for only 4.9% of the province's children ages 0-12 (Friendly 2005). Similarly, Statistics Canada found that during the 1990s only 10% of Saskatchewan children ages six months to five years old who received child care were in daycare centres while the remaining 90% were in unregulated home care arrangements with relatives or non-relatives (Statistics Canada 2005). Evidently, the Romanow government did not move away from the Blakeney government's idea that, for all but society's poorest citizens, daycare was a private responsibility of the family.

Both the labour movement and the Pay Equity Coalition (formed in April 1991) had begun to lobby the NDP caucus before the 1991 election to obtain their commitment to legislation ensuring pay equity in both the private and public sectors (CUPE Saskatchewan Division Equal Opportunities Committee 1991 & Pay Equity Coalition of Saskatchewan 1991). Unlike the Blakeney government, the Romanow government accepted the principle of 'equal pay for work of equal value'. In response to continued pressure from the labour movement and the Pay Equity Coalition, the government adopted the Equal Pay for Equal Value Policy Framework which required all government departments and Crown corporations to negotiate wage adjustments within a five year period and jointly develop gender neutral job evaluation systems with public sector unions (Saskatchewan Women's Secretariat 1997). The Pay Equity Coalition and the labour movement continued to lobby for some form of pay equity legislation for the

private sector but were unsuccessful in their efforts (Pay Equity Coalition of Saskatchewan 1999 & Saskatchewan Federation of Labour 1997).

Several factors pushed the Romanow government to enact the women's policies that it did. By 2000, 46% of people in Saskatchewan's paid workforce were women and there had been a substantial increase in number working mothers over the last decade (Saskatchewan Status of Women Office 2005a). Further, the education levels of Saskatchewan women had increased to the point where they were slightly more educated than the province's men but women still generally earned 25% less than men, were more likely to have part-time or insecure jobs and remained underrepresented in the areas of manufacturing, construction, agriculture, forestry, mining and energy while being over-represented in the areas of health, social services, education services, accommodation and food services (Saskatchewan Status of Women Office 2005b & 2005c). The increased participation of women in the Saskatchewan workforce under these conditions pushed the Romanow government to act on issues such pay equity, sexual harassment in the workplace, employment equity and promoting the participation of women in non-traditional professions. On a political and social level, awareness of violence against women in Saskatchewan emerged in the 1990s. An important step in this process was the release of a Statistics Canada Study in 1993 that found that 25% of Saskatchewan women reported being attacked by their spouse over their lifetime (Statistics Canada 1993). In response to this study and growing public concern, the Romanow government did implement a number of programs to help battered women. Finally, the growth in the number of women in cabinet, the Legislature and the provincial bureaucracy began to alter the male-dominated culture of Saskatchewan political institutions leading to a more intense awareness and action on women's issues.

On the other hand, the Romanow government disappointed the province's feminist groups with its policies concerning daycare, abortions and pay equity for the private sector. There were several elements which may have been responsible for this moderation within the Romanow government's policies on women. The large debt of the government prohibited it from creating new and expensive social programs such as a universal, public and free daycare system. The NDP government's dedication to attracting external private investment instead of pursuing the expansion of public

enterprise as Blakeney had done may have worked against the establishment of pay equity in the private sector which could be perceived as driving up business costs. The moderate nature of the NDP's feminism before getting into power should also be taken into account. As we have seen, the Romanow inherited a very cautious stance towards women's issues from the CCF and the Blakeney government and its women's wing had developed moderate women's policies prior to the 1991 election. Indeed, many of the same women who formulated those moderate women's policies before the election found themselves as cabinet ministers or members of the NDP caucus after the election. After a series of interviews with Saskatchewan NDP female MLAs in 1996, Carbert argues that they were "unabashed, self-proclaimed feminists who speak directly to sexism, violence against women and the feminization of poverty" (Carbert 1999, 157). Nonetheless, only one of the NDP female MLAs in the 1990s was a member of SAC before her election and there was considerable criticism of NDP female MLAs from women's groups. Thus, it would be safe to say that the female NDP MLAs and its women's wing espoused a left-leaning liberal feminist as compared to radical feminist outlook during the 1990s.

It should also be realized that the general weakness of the feminist movement in Saskatchewan reduced the pressure on the Romanow government to take aggressive stances on women's issues. During the 1990s, SAC was centered mostly in Regina and had a small membership while most other Saskatchewan women's groups were concentrated on community organizing and did not lobby the provincial government. If we look at SAC's recommendations during the 1991 provincial election, we can see that it did succeed in securing better access to abortions, public sector pay equity and more programs for battered women but that it failed getting the government to create free-standing abortion clinics, a universal, free and public daycare, a Department of Women's Affairs, pay equity in the private sector and mandatory affirmative action programs (Draaisma 1991). Finally, it is obvious the weakness of the feminist movement and moderate nature of women's policies of the NDP reflected the endurance of a social conservative political culture in Saskatchewan during the 1990s. Indeed, through the analysis of Canada-wide polling between 1992 to 2000, Michael Adams found that the three Prairie provinces displayed the most patriarchal and traditional political cultures in Canada (2003).

## Conclusion

Despite an initial openness to women's concerns and participation in early agrarian protest organizations, feminism cannot be said to be a dominant characteristic of Saskatchewan social democracy. The CCF had a singularly unimpressive record on women's issues while the NDP governments of Allan Blakeney and Roy Romanow made only moderate progress on issues of concern to women judged against the demands of feminist groups during their time periods. The persistence of a social conservative political culture and male dominated political institutions within Saskatchewan were strong factors which mediated against the adoption of feminist stances by the Saskatchewan CCF-NDP. However, increased female participation in the provincial workforce, a greater number of female NDP MLAs and the militancy of the women's groups outside the NDP and women activists within the NDP party organization encouraged the adoption of moderate women's policies by the Blakeney and Romanow governments. Thus, it would seem that the lesson from 100 years of Saskatchewan social democracy is that a militant women's movement outside of the party as well as strong women activists and female elected representatives within the party is what is needed to push social democratic parties towards more feminist positions.

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## Notes

<sup>1</sup> There have only been four published articles on women and the Saskatchewan CCF-NDP: Georgina Taylor's "'The Women... Shall Help Lead the Way': Saskatchewan CCF-NDP Women Candidates in Provincial and Federal Elections, 1934-1965" and "'Should I Drown Myself Now or Later?: The Isolation of Rural Women in Saskatchewan and their Participation in the Homemakers' Clubs, the Farm Movement and the Co-operative Commonwealth Federation, 1910-1967'", Marie Fenwick's "'Building the Future in a Steady but Measured Pace': The Respectable Feminism of Marjorie Cooper" and Louise Carbert's "'Governing on 'The Correct, The Compassionate, The Saskatchewan Side of the Border'". There is also some analysis and information about women and the Saskatchewan CCF within certain parts of the two following books: Joan Sangster's *Dreams of Equality women on the Canadian left, 1920-1950* (see pages 80-103 & 105-123) and Olenka Melnyk's *Remembering the CCF: No Bankers in Heaven* (see pages 78-80, 90-95 & 199-207).

<sup>2</sup> Electoral motivation seems to have been behind the moderation of the CCF's platform in other areas such as its elimination of its lease-use land policy whereby the government would secure tenure for farmers by owning their land and leasing it back to them for use. This policy had been vigorously criticized by the provincial Liberals as leading towards communism.

<sup>3</sup> For further information see various documents, Woodrow Lloyd Papers, Saskatchewan Archives Board, R61.8.XXI.106s.

<sup>4</sup> A copy of this document may found in the Woodrow Lloyd Papers, Saskatchewan Archives Board, R61.8.XXI.106s. All quotations in this paragraph come from this document.

<sup>5</sup> In the 1967 provincial election, Palma Little ran in Humboldt which had been Liberal since 1956 and Adele Smillie ran in Saskatoon Nutana South which was a newly created riding whose boundaries had been re-drawn in the Liberals favour.

<sup>6</sup> A copy of this document may found in Canadiana Pamphlet Collection at the University of Saskatchewan Library, JL197.N5N5.I.14. All quotations in this paragraph come from this document.

<sup>7</sup> A transcript of this debate may be found in *Saskatchewan Legislative Assembly Debates and Proceedings, Fifth Session-Eighteenth Legislature*, December 5<sup>th</sup>, 1974, 1048-1053.

<sup>8</sup> In the 1971 provincial election, Edna Bradley ran in Milestone and lost to the Welfare and Youth Agency Minister who had held the seat since 1964.

<sup>9</sup> In the 1975, Delanie Scotton ran in Wilkie which had been Liberal since 1948 and had only been won by the CCF once since 1917. In the same election, Anne Boulton ran in Saskatoon Sutherland (formerly Saskatoon University) which had won by the NDP in 1971 and Agnes Groome ran in Regina Wascana which had been narrowly won for the NDP by the popular Regina Mayor, Henry Baker, in 1971. Interestingly, Baker, who remained mayor while being a MLA, switched to the safer riding of Regina Victoria in the 1975 election leaving Groome to be defeated in his former riding.

<sup>10</sup> In 1982, Margaret Fern ran in Regina South, Elaine Driver ran in Weyburn and Patricia Atkinson ran in Saskatoon Nutana. Weyburn had been held by the CCF-NDP since 1964 and Saskatoon Nutana had been held by the NDP since its creation in 1975. Regina South had been traditionally held by the Liberals but the NDP had come within 200 votes of winning it in the 1978 election.

<sup>11</sup> See the advertisement for the New Democrats Life Issues Committee in *The Commonwealth*, September 25<sup>th</sup>, 1985.

<sup>12</sup> It should be noted that the NDP did released a document that set out its goals until the end of decade during the 1991 election which committed it to pay equity for the public sector, additional daycare spaces and better support for victims of family violence. See Saskatchewan NDP, *Renewing the Saskatchewan Community*, Saskatchewan Legislative Library.

<sup>13</sup> The NDP had 11 out of the 12 female MLAs in the Legislature after the 1991 election and the Liberals' lone MLA, who was also their leader, was a woman. However, the Liberals did add another woman in a 1994 by-election. After the 1995 election, the NDP had 10 out of the 13 female MLAs in the Legislature with the other three female MLAs being Liberal. The NDP added another woman in a 1998 by-election. The Conservatives elected no women in the 1990s but two Liberal female MLAs were among the disgruntled Liberals whom formed the Saskatchewan Party with the Conservatives in 1998. Thus, as we can see, NDP MLAs made 91% of female MLAs from 1991 to 1993, 84% in 1994, 76% in 1995 to 1998 and 84% in 1998 to 1999.

<sup>14</sup> Both Weyerhaeuser (forestry) and The Co-operators (insurance) were members of the program. However, it should be noted that several corporations in Saskatchewan, such as CIBC, had internal employment equity programs but these initiatives were not in any way connected with public institutions.

<sup>15</sup> This number was calculated by comparing the reports of the Saskatchewan Public Service Commission and the Saskatchewan Human Rights Commission with Statistics Canada data on the total provincial workforce for Saskatchewan.

<sup>16</sup> For instance, pre-kindergarten programs were targeted to poor neighborhoods and daycare subsidies were increased for teen parents.