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The State of Writing on the Canadian Welfare State: What's Class Got to Do With It?

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The State of Writing on the Canadian Welfare State: What's Class Got to Do With It?

Alvin Finkel

SINCE 1979, THE MAJOR SYNTHESIS on the history of the welfare state in Canada has been Dennis Guest's *The Emergence of Social Security in Canada*. Revised twice, most recently in 1997, Guest's overview is a workmanlike presentation of the contexts that produced the major pieces of social legislation in Canada.[1] If Guest deals well with the debates surrounding the emergence of various programs, he provides little sense of the range of alternatives that were available to policymakers, and why some were dismissed as too radical while others were viewed as too conservative. Though the third edition registers a great deal of concern about the erosion of the welfare state in the last two decades of the 20th century, there is a Whiggish quality to the lament, a sense that a social consensus was reached at different junctures that allowed some new program to see the light of day, and that most, if not all, Canadians benefited.

But such a picture, which reflected the small literature on the welfare state when Guest first produced his book, no longer provides much of the flavour of the historical work that is now being published regarding the emergence and implementation of social programs in Canada. Marxists, feminists, critical theorists, postmodernists, and social activists outside the academy of various ideological

[1]Dennis Guest, *The Emergence of Social Security in Canada*, (1979; Vancouver 1997).

Alvin Finkel, "The State of Writing on the Canadian Welfare State: What's Class Got to Do With It?," *Labour/Le Travail*, 54 (Fall 2004), 151-74.

leanings have all, in their turn, challenged earlier assessments in which the welfare state and each of its component programs are presented as unqualified achievements for all Canadians. Much of the theoretical base upon which the revisionist literature rests is derivative from the international literature on the history of the welfare state, and that in turn has been much influenced by the wide-ranging debates of recent years regarding the character of the state generally in a variety of types of society, but especially capitalist societies.

Sparked by post-modernist discourse generally, the latest academic fashion in explorations of the state focuses on "governance" and "governmentality." Though this work spans the ideological spectrum, its approach builds on earlier Marxist and feminist works that explored the relations between the various instances of the state and the various groupings within civil society. Marxists have tended to stress the double role of the state in capitalist economies of providing the institutional framework for conditions conducive to accumulation of capital, on the one hand, and legitimation of the system to the masses, on the other. With Marx's notion of the state as the "executive committee of the bourgeoisie," some theorists have focused on the state's capture by capitalists while others have emphasized a separation of state elites from the bourgeoisie that allows the former to structure state programs in ways that both mediate between competing interests of sections of the bourgeoisie and to keep the system legitimate in the eyes of important non-bourgeois groups. Feminists have emphasized the state's historical role in maintaining patriarchal social relations, patriarchy defined here not in the classical sense of complete male power over women but preservation of male domination.

But there are a variety of Marxisms and feminisms in writing on the welfare state, and many historians of labour and of social movements, including the women's movement, have demonstrated the successes of subordinate groups in winning important concessions from the state. While these leave capitalism unchallenged and male domination weakened but far from shattered, they demonstrate the need not to leap to supra-historical metanarratives of the state as a uniformly-behaving enemy of the working class or of women. Post-modernists build on these insights to point out that the state is largely an abstraction, a composite of competing discourses that represent the civil society upon which the state is built. As one summary of Michel Foucault's take on the welfare state indicates:

> Power for Foucault is not possessed, like property, but is immanent, non-subjective and relational; it functions like a piece of machinery which includes its objects.... Foucault's account ... redirects our attention to the microstructure of mutually constitutive relationships, equally comprising knowledge and power, which constitute the social structure of the welfare state.[2]

[2]Eli Zaretsky, "Rethinking the Welfare State: Dependence, Economic Individualism and the Family," in James Dickinson and Bob Russell, eds., *Family, Economy and State: The Social Reproduction Process Under Capitalism* (Toronto 1986), 88-89.

This view of power provides some linkages between post-modernism, on the one hand, and Marxism and socialist-feminism on the other. But, as this paper suggests, it also links post-modernism more closely to classical political pluralist theory, and makes problematic the core presumption of socialist theory that capitalism is an integrated system rather than a set of fungible discourses and accompanying behaviour patterns. If Marxists and socialist-feminists regard the transformations possible within capitalism as limited by the labour theory of value, and the constant need of capital to expand and make profits, post-modernists regard systems and their possible limits as discursive devices. Transformation of anything is at least theoretically possible once the discourses and the social values that hold them together are laid bare. In any case, in historical analysis, what is needed from this perspective is not a retelling of battles of social class or of gender, but a close textual analysis of hegemonic discourses that created a particular social order as well as counter-hegemonic discourses that challenged and perhaps even changed that order.

Of course, all of these theoretical approaches lead to rather different answers to the questions of what constitutes the state, who runs it, why they get to exercise such power, and how they have used it. And it is with regards to these questions that I wish to interrogate recent key works in Canada on the welfare state. While I see myself as comfortably within the Marxist tradition of writing about the welfare state, I think it is important to stress that this tradition does not suggest that either capitalism or capitalists are unchanging phenomena, though it maintains that private property relations and the profit motive insure systemic inequalities since there is no incentive to invest capital in an ideal welfare state, that is, one in which there is equality of wealth and power.

There are, therefore, strict, if not always easy-to-define, limits beyond which the state cannot go to appease popular demands for social justice. The state in a capitalist society must insure that the distinction between capital and labour is maintained. It is more arguable whether there are limits to the capitalist state's ability to respond to demands for gender equality. Sociologist R.W. Connell argues:

> the state is not inherently patriarchal, but is historically constructed as patriarchal in a political process whose outcome is open. The process of bureaucratization is central here, as conventional bureaucracy is a tight fusion of the structure of power and the division of labour. Together with selective recruitment and promotion, these structures form an integrated mechanism of gender relations that results in the exclusion of women from positions of authority and the subordination of the areas of work in which most women are concentrated.[3]

In short, while patriarchy can indeed be challenged within the confines of the capitalist state, the state itself, much like the social order it governs, is thoroughly

[3]R.W. Connell, *Gender and Power: Society, The Person and Sexual Politics* (Stanford, California 1987), 129.

imbued with patriarchal ideology because it serves the interests of those with power. Nonetheless, as socialist-feminist Linda Gordon argues, in contrast to social control theorists whose Canadian representatives we will soon discuss, it is important not to understate the role of women's agency, any more than workers' agency, in establishing social programs and in their implementation. Policy makers, she suggests, have "fragmented and inconsistent goals" and "most welfare policies represent the jerry-built compromises which are the artifacts of political and social conflict — a dynamic that functionalism cannot encompass."[4] The challenge is at once to try to locate the impacts of various identifiable social groups as well as state actors on the evolution (and sometimes destruction) of social programs, and to interrogate the ways in which state actors insured that the overall economic system was not threatened by social programs. In doing so, I would stress that while discourses are important, they are meaningless without an effort to locate the material actors who had an interest in promoting particular ways of thinking, and examining closely the differences, though also the similarities at times, in the ways super-ordinate groups and subordinate groups in society analyzed social problems and presented solutions.

Sociologists have made many of the recent efforts to theorize the evolution of the welfare state in Canada. But most of their efforts, examined in light of historical evidence, are ahistorical and fail to differentiate Canadian experience from any other country's. A good example is Jane Ursel's much-cited *Private Lives, Public Policy: 100 Years of State Intervention in the Family* (Toronto 1992). Ursel combines feminist analysis with an apparent focus on political economy in an attempt to explain the evolution of social policy in Canada from 1884 to 1968. She suggests there were three distinct periods in the evolution of policy. From 1884 to 1913, policies addressed "legislative and social discouragement of women's employment in combination with the legislative enforcement of men's roles as providers."[5] The idea was to strengthen the masculine role as breadwinner and feminine place as homemaker. But the low wages paid to many men meant that the ideal family model was reproducing poverty in many households. So, from 1914 to 1939, family policies provided "more systematic structures for the support of the family (welfare law), while extending the limitations on female and child labour (labour law) and elaborating on legislation to ensure familial support of its members (family law)."[6] Finally, in the third stage studied, from 1940 to 1968, "the central task of the state became one of realignment of income and labour flows between the two spheres [of household and wage labour market] and a restructuring of the state to accommodate

[4]Linda Gordon, "The Welfare State: Towards a Socialist-Feminist Perspective," in Ralph Miliband and Leo Panitch, eds., *Socialist Register, 1990* (London 1990), 186.
[5]Jane Ursel, *Private Lives, Public Policy: 100 Years of State Intervention in the Family* (Toronto 1992), 10.
[6]Ursel, *Private Lives*, 11

the increasing demand to socialize costs of production." This replaced "familial patriarchy" with "social patriarchy."[7]

The problem with this erudite-sounding historical overview is that it is profoundly ahistorical. Though she marshals pieces of legislation in each period that she proposes were meant to fulfil the social policy goals that characterize the period, Ursel fails to examine the legislation in action. So, for example, mothers' allowances are presented as legislation of the second period which was meant to keep women out of the work force. In practice, mothers' allowances could not, as the work of James Struthers and others suggests, maintain a family in Ontario. In most other provinces, it was even less generous and in several, there was a clear agenda on the part of legislators to force widows to work rather than to provide a sufficient state pension to keep them out of the work force. While Ursel may be right in characterizing the legislators as male chauvinists generally hostile to women's presence in the economy, when it came to a showdown between effecting such views in policy and keeping budgets low, the latter generally won out. In short, while preserving women's subordination was a key goal of policy-makers, it lost out to the class-based desire to keep taxes low and not to have to confront the possibility of taxing either corporations or the wealthy more. The notion that there was a comprehensive "family policy" between 1914 and 1939 that favoured state support of families in order to preserve the breadwinner model seems, to be charitable, simply fantasy. Having identified the views on gender of the ruling class, Ursel fails to interrogate their views on class, and in particular, their views on how to prevent their class from having to pay, through either wages for men or taxation by the state, for the reproduction of an idealized gender regime.

Ursel's description of the post-1940 period, on first blush, makes more sense. There was indeed an effort "to socialize costs of reproduction." But, it seems rather odd to forget that pensions and medicare, which were the major new programs of the period, had rather different intentions than either family allowances or the Canada Assistance Plan (CAP). The notion of "social patriarchy" seems irrelevant to medicare. But it is even unhelpful with family allowances and CAP for several reasons: on the one hand, it treats the state as male, which is only partially true. But, more importantly, by regarding the state and a male "family head" as metaphorically equal, it ignores the very real differences between them, the former unlike the latter being a subject against which collective organizing may have some impact. It also ignores the extent to which state payments have provided options for women who formerly were completely dependent for their survival on the financial support of an individual man. As we shall see later on, the experience of family allowances suggests that state social programs provided more than a patriarchal state replacing a patriarchal father of the house.

[7]Ursel, *Private Lives*, 11

Quite apart from Ursel's accuracy or inaccuracy in characterizing certain programs as fitting into a particular comprehensive policy that characterized a relatively long period, there is her failure to interrogate how extensive any of these programs were and how likely they were to fulfil the objectives that she ascribes to them. In short, she imposes models from countries studied in other works, and assumes that there is little necessity to do the empirical studies required to determine whether Canadian legislation matched that of the countries for whom her borrowed model was earlier used. As suggested later on in this paper, the empirical studies done since her work was published largely invalidate her conclusions.

For all this, Ursel's book deserves some credit for making a first attempt at a book-length treatment of the gendered character of the Canadian welfare state. While gender is now a major focus of works on the welfare state both in Canada and internationally, the reality is that before the 1980s it was ignored almost totally both in the mainstream and the radical literature. So, for example, a 1981 collection of eleven essays by some of the major mainstream figures, all male, in social policy analysis, managed not one mention of gender.[8] Some of the early feminist book-length histories of the welfare state in Britain and the United States responded to this indifference by posing the view that maintenance of a particular gender order was the underlying theme of the evolution of the welfare state. For Britain, Elizabeth Wilson's *Women and the Welfare State* and, for the US, Mimi Abramovitz's *Regulating the Lives of Women: Social Welfare Policy from Colonial Times to the Present* provided essentially the same narrative as Ursel, one in which there is a focus on a male-run state imposing social policies on essentially agency-less women.[9] Indeed agency from below is missing almost entirely in these accounts, and political economy is reduced to a gender struggle with issues of class and race playing little or no role.

The assumption, from bits of evidence, of comprehensive policies and major shifts in state thinking, also characterizes the welfare state work of Bruce Curtis and Mariana Valverde. Their work differs from Ursel's in a greater focus on discourse and a less mechanical notion of the relationship between the needs of a particular economic order and the actions of the state. Curtis's ventures onto historical terrain are mostly quite successful. Both his work on the thinking of educational reformers in the 19th century and his forays into the importance of statistical projects to early state formation in Canada have made major contributions to the history of the de-

[8]Peter Flora and Arnold J. Heidenheimer, eds., *The Development of Welfare States in Europe and America* (New Brunswick, New Jersey 1981). On the transition from gender-neutral to gender-based literature on the welfare state, see Alvin Finkel, " Changing the Story: Gender Enters the History of the Welfare State," *Tidjdschrift voor sociale geschiedenis*, 22 (January1996), 67-81.

[9]Elizabeth Wilson, *Women and the Welfare State* (London 1977); Mimi Abramovitz, *Regulating the Lives of Women: Social Welfare Policy from Colonial Times to the Present* (Boston 1989).

velopment of the state in Canada.[10] His welfare state work is useful as well. His study of the efforts that were made in the United Province of Canada in 1866 to deal with an apprehended epidemic of cholera demonstrates the early importance of particular notions of mobilization of social resources to deal with epidemics. But his conclusion from this study of a rather limited phenomenon goes way overboard. He writes that "the scare's durable relevance to the formation of the Canadian state lies in the practical attempts it spawned to extend projects for the organization of surveillance, the centralization of knowledge, the consolidation of expertise, and the government of conduct." [11]

This lovely Foucauldian conclusion is dubious. Little happened in Canada or the central Canadian provinces for the 30 years following the cholera scare to justify such sweeping claims about the state that developed in Canada. Police, asylums, and public schools preceded the cholera scare. And what further development of repressive organizations followed on the heels of this event? Indeed the fairly limited involvement of the state in people's lives in the late nineteenth century is as important a topic to pursue as the rise of institutions of social control and moral regulation.

Mariana Valverde, in a slightly earlier piece, contributed to the view that an embryo welfare state, both redistributive and punitive, was evident in the period Curtis's article studies and shortly thereafter. Focusing on state financial support of private charities, she singles out the ideas of John Langmuir, inspector of asylums, prisons, and charities in Ontario from 1868-72 to demonstrate the growth of modern ideas of rationalizing state finances going to charitable groups. Langmuir sought to rationalize the distribution of state subsidies, much dependent on patronage politics, via matching grants and a per diem formula, and his perspectives were embodied in the Charities Act of 1874.[12] But it is simply not the case that political influence ceased to be important after the passage of the act in the allocation of funds to various social projects. Again, too narrow a focus on individuals or a particular law, too insistent a deconstruction of a few texts, leads to missing the forest. Late 19th-century Canada was not Britain or France. Its state social infrastructure was weak and ideologically flabby. Economic development, not social development, absorbed most of the energies of the federal and provincial governments of this period, with the capitalist class rather than modernist civil servants largely pre-

[10]Bruce Curtis, *True Government by Choice Men? Inspectors, Education, and State Formation in Canada West* (Toronto 1982); and *State Formation, Statistics, and the Census of Canada, 1840-1875* (Toronto 2001).

[11]Bruce Curtis. "Social Investment in Medical Forms: The 1866 Cholera Scare and Beyond," *Canadian Historical Review*, 81 (September 2000), 357.

[12]Mariana Valverde, "The Mixed Economy as a Canadian Tradition," *Studies in Political Economy*, 47 (Summer 1975), 33-60.

vailing in the formulation of government economic policies.[13] When expensive programs of social intervention did arise, they tended to reflect class struggles rather than a state logic emanating from civil servants who were outside the class struggle. Workers' compensation legislation, for example, reflected efforts by workers, on the one hand, to have guaranteed financial aid if on-the-job accidents deprived them of their livelihood, while employers sought protection from jury awards to workers for employers' failures in providing safe workplaces.[14]

But it is hardly only sociologists who have attempted to study social welfare developments through analysis of a changing discourse, fostering analytic shifts in our understanding of the role of the state in preserving the underlying social order. James Snell's study of the reasons why the Canadian government implemented a universal old-age pension program in Canada is, at least in part, a similar study. But if the sociologists I have mentioned have been narrowly focused on the thinking of a governing elite, Snell's focus is certainly on changing views from below. He traces the evolution of popular thought regarding old age from a period when individuals assumed that it was the responsibility of family members to care for their own to a period when the elderly were regarded as properly the responsibility of the state. As seniors, they were looked upon as having earned an entitlement to a "citizen's wage" that others only had a right to earn by the sweat of their brow. Much of Snell's book is given over to the impact of the miserable means-tested pension introduced by Mackenzie King's government in 1927 as a result of an earlier deal with the two Labour members of Parliament to support his minority government in the aftermath of the 1925 election. Snell demonstrates that while the pension was meant to be available only to the totally destitute, Canadians soon came to see it as a program that should be available to everyone. Elderly people with some means learned how to hide them so as to become eligible for a pension, and children of seniors insisted to the authorities that their parents should be given pensions rather than cared for by the finances of their children and other relatives.

The story is not all positive, from Snell's point of view. As it became the norm for the state, rather than families and charitable groups, to care for the elderly financially, a great deal of the family and community concern for older peoples'

[13]On the central role of patronage in Canadian politics before 1914, see Gordon T. Stewart, "Political Patronage Under Macdonald and Laurier, 1878-1911," *American Review of Canadian Studies*, 10 (Spring 1980), 3-26.

[14]Michael J. Piva, "The Workmen's Compensation Movement in Ontario," *Ontario History*, 67 (March 1975), 39-56; Robert H. Babcock. "Blood on the Factory Floor: The Workers' Compensation Movement in Canada and the United States," in Raymond B. Blake and Jeff Keshen, eds., *Social Welfare Policy in Canada: Historical Readings* (Toronto 1995), 107-121; Eric Tucker, *Administering Danger in the Workplace: The Law and Politics of Occupational Health and Safety Regulation in Ontario, 1850-1914* (Toronto 1990); Jeremy Webber, "Labour and the Law," in Paul Craven, ed., *Labouring Lives: Work and Workers in Nineteenth-Century Ontario* (Toronto 1995), 105-203.

non-financial needs, which accompanied the financial support once provided, seemed to go by the wayside. " Some of the flexibility and individuality of earlier mechanisms disappeared, some elements of community and family support shrank as these sources gladly relinquished some of their responsibilities or obligations to the state."[15] Perhaps this is the case. But Snell offers little support for this flat statement. The evidence regarding old people's treatment in institutions before the legislation of pensions is largely grim, and though their treatment at the hands of relatives when their income did not allow them to live on their own is harder to determine, evidence for a pre-pensions golden age does not exist. Such an unsubstantiated claim is nonetheless unsurprising in the context of the well-orchestrated disillusionment with the welfare state that we have been subjected to since the mid-1970s. Even progressive scholars such as Snell, who are supportive of the welfare state, can easily fall into the trap of regarding economic independence as a mixed blessing. For Ontario alone, the work of James Struthers, Edgar-André Montigny, and Stormie Stewart demonstrates that the destitute poor lived miserable lives in the houses of refuge before the means-tested old-age pension was introduced. Struthers and Snell himself also suggest that in most jurisdictions, the period of the means-tested pension was one in which many poverty-stricken elderly people continued to be denied state support.[16]

The real mixed blessing was the pension program itself. The pension was simply too small to live on and even with several hikes over the next two decades, a study in 1969 for the Senate Committee on Poverty found that 40 per cent of Canadian seniors were living in poverty. Snell's book fails to discuss the social debate about the level at which pensions should be set, and indeed he does not much comment on the livability of the pension, or how it stacked up to pensions in other capitalist countries of the time. But he does provide some clues as to why it was set at a low level. Discussing the seniors' organizations and their campaign for a universal pension, Snell notes that they failed to link their provincial bodies into a truly national organization, if only because, dominated by poorer elderly people, they could not afford to have national meetings. If one looks at other actors in the pensions debate, it is clear that the business opponents of a healthy pension had no problems meeting among themselves or getting audiences with the politicians. The pension implemented in 1951 may have been a disappointment to the seniors' organizations. In the late 1940s, they were pushing for pensions of $65 for all Canadian

[15]James Snell, *The Citizens' Wage: The State and the Elderly in Canada, 1900-1951* (Toronto 1996), 223.

[16]James Struthers, *The Limits of Affluence: Welfare in Ontario, 1920-1970* (Toronto 1994); Edgar-André Montigny, *Foisted Upon the Government? State Responsibilities, Family Obligations, and the Care of the Dependent Aged in Late Nineteenth Century Ontario* (Montréal and Kingston 1997); Stormie Stewart. "The Elderly Poor in Rural Ontario: Inmates of the Wellington County House of Industry, 1877-1907," *Journal of the Canadian Historical Association*, New Series, 3 (1992), 217-33.

men over 65 and women over 60. Instead, in 1951, with inflation having eroded the value of a dollar, they got $40 a month for Canadians over 70. That was the same figure as had been set for the means-tested pension in 1947. The Canadian Chamber of Commerce had less reason to be disappointed. Supporting universal pensions in a submission to the Parliamentary committee on Old-Age Security, mainly because it seemed unfair to them that Canadians who saved for their old age were penalized in favour of the supposedly spendthrift citizens who spent every penny they earned, their key concern was to keep down costs. They proposed a $30 pension for Canadians over 70, and while that figure was likely politically impossible, after the means-tested pension had been set at a higher level, the government's failure to go above the $40 minimum already in operation demonstrated an unwillingness to set the "citizen's wage" at a level that could be called a "living wage." The resistance of industry generally to higher taxes, and the insurance industry's campaign against any public program that relieved insecurity enough to potentially reduce the profits of an industry that thrived on people's insecurity, contributed to the government's decision to establish the citizen's wage as a poverty wage.

While Snell's focus on discourses leads him to provide little insight into the competing class interests with regards to the pension issue, he does certainly make a useful contribution by documenting the growing belief within the broad public that the state owed a living to the elderly. This broad focus is quite a contrast with another major work of the 1990s devoted to the pension issue, Penny Bryden's *Planners and Politicians: Liberal Politics and Social Policy 1957-1968*. Bryden is only marginally concerned with public pressures on the government, with one significant exception: somewhat unlike earlier state-centred writers on government policy, she includes, and indeed, makes central to her story, the internal machinations of the governing party. She documents the power struggle within the post-St. Laurent Liberal party, emphasizing the fight over social policy. Then she follows this struggle into the Liberal Cabinets of the Lester Pearson prime ministership. After elaborating upon the efforts of various right-wingers to derail or delay all reforms, beginning with the Canada Pension Plan (CPP), Bryden concludes:

> The achievement of the Canada Pension Plan legislation also demonstrated the successful transformation of the national Liberal Party. By accepting the national responsibility for a fully portable and universal pension scheme, the Pearson Liberals had shifted their administrative emphasis away from the national economy and towards the well-being of the individual citizen.[17]

But, like Snell, Bryden takes little interest in either dealing with alternative visions of the shape of a pension plan for Canadians that emerged during the pension debates or in comparing the richness of pensions in Canada with those in other coun-

[17]P.E. Bryden, *Planners and Politicians: Liberal Politics and Social Policy 1957-1968* (Montréal and Kingston 1997), 122.

tries. She is satisfied that the federal government's resistance to the efforts of Ontario and the private insurance industry to place the universal pensions program in private hands demonstrates "the transformation of the national Liberal Party."

In practice, though, even with the CPP, plus old-age pensions, and the Guaranteed Income Supplement (GIS) implemented a year after the CPP, Canada in 1981, still under a Liberal regime, spent less of its GDP on public pensions than any other industrialized country and 27 per cent of seniors, according to Statistics Canada one year earlier, lived on "limited incomes," with the poverty rate among female seniors higher still. Clearly, it is not enough for us to know that public opinion and the Liberal party had, between them, created a variety of new pension programs in Canada. We need to know more about the social forces that prevented popular support for a "citizen's wage" producing at least as rich a state benefit package for Canadians as for citizens of other countries. Indeed, we need to know why the balance of social forces was more favourable to seniors in other countries.

The most revealing book on the evolution of pensions programs in Canada is not by a historian but by a trade union researcher. Richard Deaton's examination of pensions policy in Canada indicates that even though the federal government resisted efforts to prevent a non-profit public program being implemented, it gave control over the large pools of capital represented by workers' deductions for CPP to the private sector. Unlike the Quebec Pension Plan, which has been entrepreneurial at certain stages, the CPP funds have never been used to fund social objectives, though, of course, some would argue that is to the benefit of the pensioners whose earnings depend on successful capitalist investments by fund managers.

Deaton notes the many weaknesses from the workers' point of view of the provisions in the early CPP. He traces the efforts made by trade unions, pensioners' groups, and women's organizations from the mid-1970s to 1987 to fill the various gaps in pensions legislation in Canada, and the counter-efforts by industry groups to maintain the status quo. His conclusion:

> The public policy review of retirement income arrangements in Canada and the remedial reform "package," however, failed to expand either the private or the public pension system. As a result of conflicting views and pressures concerning the extent and nature of pension reform based on the opposing class interests of the major actors, and critical issues of coverage, inflation-proofing and an adequate income replacement rate were left unresolved.[18]

Alone among the recent analysts of the evolution of pensions policy, Deaton associates the "conflicting views and pressures" of various actors, that is the competing discourses, with "opposing class interests of the major actors." Many will reject his conclusion as mere reductionism. But even if class conflict is too limited a perspective within which to study pensions policy, the fact is that its exclusion from

[18]Richard Lee Deaton, *The Political Economy of Pensions: Power, Politics and Social Change in Canada, Britain and the United States* (Vancouver 1989), 21.

the other narratives ends up producing an unjustified positivism about progress on the pensions front in Canada over the years. That is not to say that nothing has been achieved since, in fact, notwithstanding Deaton's assessment of the failure to overhaul CPP, there were large increases in the OAP and the GIS in the early 1980s, and, at least by some reckonings, a decline in the poverty of the elderly. Though their role needs further examination, no doubt, the social activists mentioned by Deaton played a key role in whatever progress did occur.

If the elderly have at least achieved some victories over time, destitute children and mothers have been far less favoured by the so-called welfare state in Canada. There is therefore certainly some justification on the part of historians in searching out the discourses that made single mothers and the poor but young more generally appear to be less worthy recipients of state aid than old people. The "citizen's wage" that was to be conferred upon pensioners was given more reluctantly to mothers and, even though family allowances preceded old-age pensions as a universal program, their value was quickly allowed to erode with inflation. In the 1990s, the program first lost its universality and then was retired altogether.

The 1990s literature on mothers' allowances presents a fairly grim tale that builds on an earlier critical literature.[19] From its origins in the Western provinces in the immediate post-war years, the program was reserved not only for those who passed a needs test, much as pensioners had to do before 1951, but also a morals test. Recipients were expected to be chaste, a reflection of the gendered notions of morality that ruled state policymaking in the social security area until relatively recently and certainly still plays a role today. State authorities, by contrast, had little interest in the sex lives of male applicants for social assistance, whether single or married; but that hardly meant that they were spared from bourgeois notions of morality, as the "work test" in the Houses of Industry attested. Those who appeared to drink too much or who refused to take work offered outside their normal field of labour could be denied state assistance.

James Struthers provides the most nuanced study to date of mothers' allowances in a particular province in his *The Limits of Affluence: Welfare in Ontario, 1920-1970*. He traces the growth of a child-saving coalition that included Children's Aid Societies, upper and middle class club women, juvenile court magistrates, health and education officials, and the trade unions. While he demonstrates that the allowances were of great economic importance to their recipients, he also

[19]Among the earlier works are Veronica Strong-Boag, "'Wages for Housework': Mothers' Allowances and the Beginning of Social Security in Canada," *Journal of Canadian Studies*, 14 (Spring 1979), 24-34; and Megan J. Davies, "'Services Rendered, Rearing Children for the State': Mothers' Pensions in British Columbia, 1911-1931," in Barbara K. Latham and Roberta J. Pazdro, eds., *Not Just Pin Money: Selected Essays on the History of Women's Work in British Columbia* (Victoria 1984), 249-263. A recent and useful survey of issues involving women and the welfare state is Shirley Tillotson, *Welfare for Wellbeing: Women, Work and Family in Twentieth Century Canada* (Toronto 2001).

indicates that they were too small to allow most recipients to escape paid labour. This despite the fact that, as he notes, the prevailing discourse on mothers' allowances held that "unlike other clients of the emerging welfare state, women staying at home to raise their children were at work performing an essential service."[20] Struthers, following American historian Linda Gordon, is quite attentive to the gender assumptions that made the mothers' allowances program at once the protector of the rights of widows and the regulator of their morals. Margaret Little demonstrates that the program directors made use of non-recipients of the allowances, especially unpaid middle and upper-class women who gladly responded to state calls for private-citizen involvement in the surveillance of recipients, to enforce the moral regulation called for in the legislation.[21] Andrée Lévesque explores the symbolism of Quebec introducing its mothers' pension in 1937, the same year that it cut single moms off social assistance altogether.[22]

All of these authors do an excellent job of demonstrating the gender assumptions at the base of the mothers' allowance programs, and Struthers, in particular, shows that even those who managed to meet both the means and moral tests received rather scant aid. The unwillingness of the state to pay out more for mothers' allowances, however, deserves more attention, and cannot be explored purely on the level of gender discourse since, as Struthers suggests, that discourse might have led one to believe that the state would do more than provide a poverty wage to widows with more than one child, the only group covered in the early years of mothers' allowance in Ontario. Particularly in the period before World War II, it is clear that governments were reluctant to impose more than the tiniest of corporate and personal income taxes. Debates about who was to pay for what, with their strong class overtones, need to be explored in tandem with discussions about social policies.

Struthers recognizes this, in part, in his critique of the social work profession's naïve belief that "solving poverty was a technical question best left within the aegis of social work expertise."[23] But his critique that they lost sight of the "extent to which welfare policy is about moral choices and competing values" over-locates both the struggle for change and the dilemmas of social workers in the sphere of discourse, as opposed to the arena of class struggle. *The Limits of Affluence* in fact suffers throughout from a sense that mistaken attitudes about poverty on the part of policy makers, in turn shaped by discourses filled with mythologies, created the limits on welfare state development from the 1920s to the 1970s. The relationship between social policy-making and class interests, while brushed upon throughout the book, rarely becomes an important theme.

[20]Struthers, *The Limits of Affluence*, 37.
[21]Margaret Little, *No Car, No Radio, No Liquor Permit: The Moral Regulation of Single Mothers in Ontario, 1920-1997* (Toronto 1998).
[22]Andrée Lévesque, *La Norme et les déviantes : Des femmes au Québec pendant l'entre deux-guerres* (Montréal 1989), 136.
[23]Lévesque, *La Norme et les déviantes*, 275.

Struthers does, however, recognize that the social work profession in Canada, whose views he elaborates, was divided between those who tried to present social reforms in a depoliticized manner and those who identified with the working-class movement. Social workers, as a number of recent works suggest, faced the same difficulty as other state-sector professionals in navigating between views of themselves as professionals, on the one hand, and workers on the other. They also grappled with whether their role was to distance themselves professionally from clients and deal with their problems as individual ones amenable to proven technical solutions, or to identify with clients as victims of regressive social policies benefiting a ruling class. For the United States, Linda Gordon, Regina Kunzel, and more recently Daniel Walkowitz, have traced the development of the social work profession, and the importance of issues of class, gender, and race in differentiating the workers both from their clients and from the boards of social agencies.[24] Sara Z. Burke has recreated the gender politics that resulted in professionalization of social work in Canada, but unfortunately in a rather uncritical manner that assumes that women's successful efforts to stave off male upper-class attempts to make social work the province of genteel male volunteers tells enough of the story.[25] By contrast, social work scholar Gale Wills, tracing the evolution of social-worker-staffed social agencies in Toronto, points out the fragility of social worker efforts to achieve either professional autonomy, or the right to speak out about social causes of poverty. Mainly women, they had little influence within bodies controlled by elite men. With business leaders prominent on the boards of agencies, and leading the Community Chest, whose financial support the agencies required for their existence, only a minority of social workers were willing to take radical positions on social issues. In the Community Chests, it might have been possible for labour leaders, who were well represented, to challenge the perspectives of the business leaders and support the more progressive elements among the social workers. Instead, with Cold War labour "statesmen" at the helm of most unions, the worker representatives were too busy projecting an image of respectability to take class perspectives inside these campaigns.

Wills, like Struthers, follows the transformation of the Toronto Welfare Council's 1939 publication, *The Cost of Living*, with its demonstration of the inadequacy both of the wages of less-skilled workers and the incomes received by recipients of state aid to meet a minimum standard of decent living, to 1949's *A Guide to Family Spending in Toronto*. While the former became an important tool in labour's arse-

[24]Linda Gordon, *Pitied But Not Entitled: Single Mothers and the History of Welfare, 1890-1935* (New York 1994); Regina G. Kunzel, *Fallen Women, Problem Girls: Unmarried Mothers and the Professionalization of Social Work, 1890-1945* (New Haven 1993); Daniel J. Walkowitz, *Working with Class: Social Workers and the Politics of Middle-Class Identity* (Chapel Hill 1999).

[25]Sara Z. Burke, *Seeking the Highest Good: Social Service and Gender at the University of Toronto, 1888-1937* (Toronto 1996).

nal for higher wages, the latter, with its focus on aiding a classless consumer to spend her dollars well in the city's economy, reflected the victory of the employer representatives on the Toronto Welfare Council in determining how the social workers' data would be marshaled.[26]

Wills' close analysis of both class and gender factors influencing the behaviour and discourse of the social work profession finds little sympathy in a recent award-winning work by Nancy Christie, *Engendering the State: Family, Work, and Welfare in Canada*. Christie takes a fairly hard line in stating that gender trumped class in the reasoning that produced the major federal and social payout programs from 1914 to 1945. "The evolution of the Canadian state reflected gender rather than class imperatives; its base was the male breadwinner and its superstructure was the liberal notion of government as both umpire and night watchman."[27] She justifies this conclusion by an exhaustive search through social work, state, and elite discourses, in all of which she finds familialist assumptions regarding the origins of policies such as mothers' allowances, unemployment insurance, and family allowances. I have critiqued Christie's approach elsewhere [28] and will just summarize here. First, the strength of Christie's work actually lies ironically in the materials that move away from discourse on mothers' allowances and into the records of these programs. She considerably nuances Struthers' and especially Little's findings regarding this program to demonstrate, much as Snell did for means-tested pensions, that the allowances came to be seen fairly quickly as the right of women without male breadwinners and caused women's organizations to press successfully for their extension to deserted wives, wives of disabled husbands, and, in some jurisdictions, single mothers. Though there was a hardening of administrative policies regarding the allowances during the Depression, mothers' allowances, in Christie's view, at least recognized a woman's right to lead a household; family allowances, by contrast, were implemented to increase the income in male-breadwinner households and keep women out of the labour force.

The main problem that I find with Christie's work, which privileges discourse, is that it largely fails to explain why campaigns for certain programs failed at one time and then succeeded in another. In the late 1920s, Charlotte Whitton's arguments against family allowances are presented as decisively routing efforts by J.S. Woodsworth to convince the government to introduce such a program. But Whitton's very similar arguments in 1944 clearly failed to turn the tide, and it is not easy to determine from Christie's arguments why this should be the case. An examination of social forces at work in the two periods, as opposed to simply an examina-

[26]Gale Wills, *A Marriage of Convenience: Business and Social Work in Toronto 1918-1957* (Toronto 1995).

[27]Nancy Christie, *Engendering the State: Family, Work and Welfare in Canada* (Toronto 2000), 4.

[28]Alvin Finkel, "Welfare for Whom? Class, Gender, and Race in Social Policy," *Labour/Le Travail*, 49 (Spring 2002), 247-261.

tion of dueling discourses, would have provided a better explanation of the results of the family allowances campaigns in the two periods. But that would have meant close attention to social class battles, the importance of which Christie rejects.

Both Snell and Christie, as suggested, have done yeoman's work in demonstrating the ways in which a modest social program meant to aid a small, defined destitute group can create a demand for larger entitlements. This "domino theory" of the welfare state is validated in Dominique Marshall's work on family allowances and compulsory education in Quebec. Interestingly, while Christie argues that the introduction of family allowances helped to stifle popular wartime calls for a broader welfare state, Marshall's evidence suggests the reverse. In Quebec, the sense of entitlement created by the federal family allowance program, combined with French-Canadian nationalism to produce much of the philosophy of the Quiet Revolution in which the provincial state regarded itself as a vehicle both for economic growth and the development of social programs. Marshall also reveals the extent of cooperation of the Catholic school authorities in Quebec with the family allowance administrators to report children no longer in school. Despite the Duplessis government's hostility to both the federal program and to the compulsory schooling legislation passed by the Liberal Godbout government shortly before Duplessis' return to power in 1944, the Church had largely been convinced that its earlier opposition to compulsory schooling made little sense if Quebec was to become prosperous enough to prevent its people leaving to seek work elsewhere. Since the province appeared lax in its enforcement of the schooling legislation, the Church furtively cooperated with the family allowance authorities to threaten parents who removed their children from school with financial penalties.

Family allowances certainly emerge in a far more positive light in Marshall's largely class-based argument than they do in Christie's gender-based account. For the very poor, they meant the ability to either keep children out of orphanages or at least have them home for longer periods every bit as much as mothers' allowances did.[29] For the working class, they provided a focus on the social wage and the need to struggle to increase it at the same time as they battled for higher wages at work. Finally, many members of the social work army that arose to hear the cases for exemptions from school attendance for 14 and 15 year olds were radicalized as they dealt with the poverty-stricken families who constituted their caseload. While they may have joined Duplessis in accepting the right of families to send their young teenagers to work, they found it appalling that poverty limited the opportunities available to these young people, and rejected the government's laissez-faire attitudes to destitution.

One area where, in recent years, Quebec advocates of social programs have proven far more successful than their counterparts in the rest of the country is daycare. There have been several recent efforts to trace the uneven development of

[29]Dominique Marshall, *Aux origines sociales de l'État-Providence : familles québécoises, obligation scolaire et allocations familiales, 1940-1955* (Montréal 1998).

daycare in Canada, and, outside of Quebec, the overall failure of the movement for largely publicly financed and publicly operated quality childcare. Susan Prentice's work on the Toronto postwar daycare movement highlighted the ability of a well-organized movement for publicly subsidized childcare to maintain the status quo in Ontario at a time when the federal government had removed its financial contribution to daycares and Quebec, the other province that had received federal subsidies, simply folded its daycare program. As Prentice demonstrates, the city's daycare movement, with its many activist Communist and Cooperative Commonwealth Federation (CCF) women, represented a gendered working-class campaign that was able to win broad support from the female-dominated social work profession, as well as male working-class organizations and ultimately forced the state authorities to maintain the daycares without federal monies. In turn, the provincial leaders gradually fought back by taking advantage of Cold War hysteria to insist that the daycare movement constituted a Communist-inspired plot to nationalize children.[30]

Some of the more recent literature on the daycare movement has focused more on the character of its discourse rather than the strength of its organizations. For some, such as Annis May Timpson, it has been a tragedy that both the movement and state policies have driven a wedge between the related issues of women's employment equality and the provision of adequate childcare services.[31] For others, including Linda A. White in Susan Prentice's recent collection on child care advocacy,[32] such a wedge should have been driven earlier by the movement since a child-centered and moderate discourse, in their view, wins more support both from the public and from policy-makers than a feminist, equality-seeking discourse. But, Jane Jenson's article on the Quebec daycare movement in the Prentice collection seems to indicate that a militant movement for daycare can succeed if it draws together a large enough coalition of the women's movement, the trade union movement, and other progressive social movements.[33] In Quebec's case, the Parti Québécois regime, anxious to maintain the support of social activists for the sovereignist cause, agreed to endorse a program that was meant eventually to lead to a universal access to public, quality daycare for five dollars a day per child (of course, Jenson was writing before the provincial Liberals regained power in Que-

[30]Susan Prentice, "Workers, Mothers, Reds: Toronto's Postwar Daycare Fight," *Studies in Political Economy*, 30 (Autumn 1989), 115-141.

[31]Annis May Timpson, *Driven Apart: Women's Employment Equality and Child Care in Canadian Public Policy* (Vancouver 2001).

[32]Linda A. White, "From Ideal to Pragmatic Politics: National Child Care Advocacy Groups in the 1980s and 1990s," in Susan Prentice, ed., *Five Decades of Child Care Advocacy and Policy in Canada* (Halifax 2001), 97-115.

[33]Jane Jenson, "Family, Child Care and Social Solidarity, The Case of Quebec," in Susan Prentice, ed., *Five Decades of Child Care Advocacy and Policy in Canada*, 39-62.

bec). This in spite of the party's overall embrace of the neoliberalism that marks almost all bourgeois regimes in the world today.

On the whole, the daycare literature is weak on the relations between political economy and the ebb and flow of developments in the daycare sector. In part, this is because much of this literature is limited to single provinces and short periods. At one point this was also true of the literature on unemployment insurance though it featured lively debates beween and among Marxists, empiricists, state-centered theorists, and feminists, particularly on the issues surrounding the legislation of unemployment insurance in the first place. Legal social justice scholar Georges Campeau has done this area of social policy a great service by producing a recent historical synthesis, *De l'assurance-chômage à l'assurance-emploi*.[34] Campeau demonstrates that there has been a constant struggle since the 1930s between supporters of an actuarial program and supporters of a redistributive program. For the former, most women workers, part-timers, and seasonal workers could not be insured since periods of unemployment for them were almost guaranteed, which, in actuarial terms, meant that they could only be supported if they paid sky-high insurance rates. For supporters of redistribution, that meant they were the ideal candidates for inclusion in a program, with those least likely to face unemployment being the ones who should pay the most to maintain such a program. Thus the radicals in the early 1930s fought for unemployment "insurance" to be a program paid for by general revenues rather than by levies on the workers. They lacked the social power to force their point. But, by the 1950s and 1960s, the labour and women's movements had both won considerable leverage over the program in an era of general prosperity, and the changes to the legislation in 1971 brought 96 per cent of the workforce under the umbrella of unemployment insurance, and introduced maternity benefits as well. By 1997, years of capitalist crisis and the firm hold of neoliberal ideology among the bourgeoisie and instances of the state left only 41 per cent of workers with coverage, and reduced coverage at that.

While Campeau attempts for most periods to demonstrate the relative impact of policy changes on men and women (he largely fails to discuss this issue for the earliest period of unemployment insurance, and does not mention Ruth Pierson's excellent work in this area[35]), Ann Porter provides a far more detailed study of the gendering of unemployment insurance policy in a recent book. *Gendered States: Women, Unemployment Insurance, and the Political Economy of the Welfare State in Canada* embodies both the strengths and weaknesses of many studies that attempt to counter an exclusive focus on class by making gender the central, and sometimes only, variable worthy of emphasis.[36] On the one hand, Porter's detailed

[34]Georges Campeau, *De l'assurance-chômage à l'assurance-emploi* (Montréal 2001).
[35]Ruth Pierson, "Gender and the Unemployment Insurance Debates in Canada, 1934-1940," *Labour/Le Travail*, 25 (Spring 1990), 77-103.
[36]Ann Porter, *Gendered States: Women, Unemployment Insurance, and the Political Economy of the Welfare State in Canada, 1945-1997* (Toronto 2003).

analysis of all the sub-clauses of various iterations of the unemployment/employment insurance legislation from 1945 to 1997 demonstrates well the discrimination against women that was envisioned by the legislative drafters. On the other, she fails to explain why the gap between the percentages of unemployed men and women receiving unemployment insurance seemed to shrink despite the continuous erection of new obstacles to women applicants. More importantly, from a class perspective, the emphasis in her narrative is simply at variance with what her statistics reveal: the changes in the act after 1971 were meant to disadvantage the entire working class, not simply women. While this was achieved in part through gendered changes to the act and its administration, for both genders of the working class, the intent was the same. So, for example, while 69 per cent of unemployed women received unemployment insurance in 1977, and 81 per cent of unemployed men, by 1997, those figures had dropped to the depressingly low and statistically similar figures of 39 per cent of women and 44 per cent of men. It may seem unfair to suggest that all of the unemployed, both men and women, in 1997 had reason to look with envy on the treatment of unemployed women twenty years earlier, but it simply underscores how devastating to the working class as a whole the tightening of the "employment insurance" system proved to be.

If the balance of class forces has sometimes favoured and sometimes worked against a generous unemployment insurance policy, it would seem that it always favours the bourgeoisie in the area of housing policy. John Bacher's *Keeping to the Marketplace*, in particular, demonstrates the failure of efforts to develop a commitment to social housing. Bacher rejects Marxist analysis of reform movements in favour of a state-centered approach. For the most part, Bacher presents deputy minister of Finance, W.C. Clark, as the villain in the piece who single-handedly restrained the advocates of public housing, represented in his book by Harold Clark and a few others (the Clark versus Clark motif dominates the book). Public policy, asserts Bacher, after Keith Banting, "is an elite process primarily involving Cabinet ministers and senior civil servants."[37] And amongst them, it appears that the results of battles in discourse determine state policy. Maybe, but he simply ignores working-class and popular campaigns for social housing, or the counter-campaigns of the real estate industry. This is rather lazy analysis and is justified by spurious arguments such as the claim that there was a turn to public housing in legislation in 1949, after post-war labour militancy had peaked, which is supposed to demonstrate that the presence or absence of working-class agitation had no effect on the timing of social housing initiatives. This, one page after we are told that the purpose of the 1949 legislation was, in fact, "to limit the growth of public housing."[38] There was indeed no more than token social housing before the mid-1960s, when 25 years of building social housing began, marked however by the creation of ghettoes of

[37]John C. Bacher, *Keeping to the Marketplace: The Evolution of Canadian Housing Policy* (Montréal and Kingston 1993), 23.
[38]Bacher, *Keeping to the Marketplace*, 31.

cheaply constructed domiciles for marginalized social groups rather than by integrating social housing within all communities, as advocated by working-class organizations from the Depression onwards. Like Penny Bryden's work, Bacher's has too few actors to explain much regarding policy choices by politicians. The housing field does not yet have its Georges Campeau. It certainly does not have its Ann Porter, since Bacher's work simply ignores gender. But a number of local studies, including work by Jill Wade, Richard Harris, and Sean Purdy certainly pave the way to a history of housing policy in which both the bourgeoisie and the working class are social actors[39]

While much of the work on the expensive social programs of the post-war period appears to understate the role of social class in the making of social policy, this is far less the case in the literature of the 1990s and beyond that deals with moral regulation. A central tenet of this literature is that much of what governments have done at various periods has been to deny extremes of wealth and poverty and to suggest that the poor are the authors of their own misfortunes. The social control and moral regulation literature in juvenile delinquency emphasizes the efforts to punish those who violated the laws and conventional morality, ignoring the social causes of supposedly anti-social behaviour, and, in the case of girls, imposing a double standard regarding sexual relations meant to defend the monogamous family of a legally married husband and wife and their children whose importance to social assistance programs we have already seen. Joan Sangster has mapped this territory well.[40] Cynthia Comacchio[41] and Katherine Arnup,[42] among others, have similarly demonstrated that those who expressed concerns regarding maternal and child welfare also tended to blame mothers rather than the distribution of wealth for child neglect and malnutrition. Education, rather than redistribution of income, was the preferred solution. The work of these scholars demonstrates the sinister side to the child-saving movement that an earlier generation of scholars, led by Neil Sutherland,[43] painted in more positive terms.

A similar blend of class and gender analysis is evident in the novel work of Shirley Tillotson that demonstrates the link between the politics of the

[39]Jill Wade, *Houses for All: The Struggle for Social Housing in Vancouver, 1919-1950* (Vancouver 1994); Richard Harris, *Unplanned Suburbs: Toronto's American Tragedy, 1900-1950* (Baltimore 1996); Sean Purdy, " 'Ripped Off' by the System: Housing Policy, Poverty, and Territorial Stigmatization in Regent Park Housing Project, 1951-1991," *Labour/Le Travail*, 52 (Fall 2003), 45-108.

[40]Joan Sangster, *Girl Trouble: Female Delinquency in English Canada* (Toronto 2002).

[41]Cynthia R. Comacchio, *Nations Are Built of Babies: Saving Ontario's Mothers and Children, 1900-1940* (Montréal and Kingston 1993).

[42]Katherine Arnup, *Education for Motherhood: Advice for Mothers in Twentieth-Century Canada* (Toronto 1994).

[43]Neil Sutherland, *Children in English-Canadian Society: Framing the Twentieth-Century Consensus* (Toronto 1976).

state-supported recreational movements in the post-war period and the character of the welfare state. While initial efforts from below focused on creation of a community-controlled democratic structure of decision-making, with women playing an important role, these had given way by the mid-1950s to bureaucratic structures with paid males in charge. The relationship between the recreational movement and the broader welfare state is metaphorical. But certainly Tillotson's evidence demonstrates the powerful forces of bureaucracy and commercialism at work in the 1950s. These demobilizing forces limited the ability of working-class and women's movements of the time to press for fundamental social change.

Elsewhere interestingly, Tillotson proves a bit of an apologist for the efforts by labour leaders to participate within the United Way and its predecessors. She notes that working-class people are disproportionately the beneficiaries of many of the services that private agencies provide. Further she argues that unions, often accused of deliberately trying to demobilize their members in the Cold War and to seize bureaucratic control over workers' organizations, were trying to increase membership involvement and viewed labour representation in charitable organizations as a way to activate members who had friends or family dependent on such services. This is fine as far as it goes, but that is not that far. The ability by corporate leaders to intervene in private agencies' agendas, mentioned by Wills and Struthers, was simply not challenged by labour leaders involved in these agencies. Tillotson's own evidence implies that these leaders were more interested in pressing their labour statesman image via participation in charitable fund-raising and agency boards than in pressing a class agenda. In short, arguably, such participation largely aided in reinforcing bourgeois hegemony rather than either challenging or limiting it. Tillotson is correct in noting that labour leaders faced the difficult issue of how to reconcile workers' class needs with their needs, as citizens, to participate in the broader community. But she understates the extent to which they resolved the latter by submerging the former.[44]

Nor were such labour leaders necessarily simply representing the supposedly conservative instincts of an embourgeoisifed membership led by postwar prosperity to believe that the existing economy and established arrangements for helping the unfortunate were basically all right. Polls in the early post-war period suggested that a large minority of all Canadians, and therefore one suspects a majority or at least large minority of working-class Canadians, believed that private charities should disappear altogether with the state insuring a sufficiency of economic resources for individuals and families. On the issue of state funding versus funding by voluntary subscription of community social needs, the trade union leadership

[44]Shirley Tillotson, *The Public at Play: Gender and the Politics of Recreation in Post-War Ontario* (Toronto 2000); Shirley Tillotson, "Class and Community in Canadian Welfare Work, 1933-1960," *Journal of Canadian Studies*, 32 (Spring 1997), 63-92; Shirley Tillotson, "'When Our Membership Awakens:' Welfare Work and Canadian Union Autonomy, 1950-1965," *Labour/Le Travail* 40 (Fall 1997), 137-69.

dragged behind a large section of their members rather than leading the way.[45] But far more work is necessary regarding the involvement of trade unions in cross-class community organizations, and the extent to which this represented the wishes of the membership for participation within the larger polity or simply the desire of union porkchoppers to be regarded as on par with corporate and government elites within society.

The question of competing interests between trade unionists and other groups in the working class also requires more attention. Economist Rodney Haddow has raised interesting issues in this regard with respect to the debates regarding first CAP and then the ill-fated guaranteed annual income from 1958 to 1978.[46] Haddow observes that both the trade union movement and the New Democratic Party (NDP), while not opposing a guaranteed annual income, were less interested in the problems of the working poor and the usually unemployed than in defending programs such as unemployment insurance and the various pension programs, including the CPP for which the poor rarely qualified. He suggests that the better protected unionized workers and the poor had different interests in this debate, with those of the former largely winning out. Certainly the relationship between different fractions of the working class is an important and rarely discussed issue in the examination of social policy debates. But Haddow seems almost to construct the poor, including the working poor, as members of a different class altogether from the working class. He fails however to analyze the relations between anti-poverty groups and the union movement. Anti-poverty groups, even when they were compromised by state funding, were generally quite clear that they did not want to undermine existing social programs and to find the money for a guaranteed annual income in other social insurance programs. They were not calling for a redistribution of income from the barely-getting-by to the destitute but a more radical redistribution of wealth generally (though, like the trade union movement, the anti-poverty movement was rarely explicitly anti-capitalist).[47] Haddow's unproblematic embrace of

[45] *Calgary Herald*, 19 May 1948 reported a Gallup poll in which people were asked whether the social problems dealt with by groups such as the Red Cross, CNIB, Community Chests, etc., should be paid for and handled by government or be left to voluntary funding and direction by local groups. The Canada-wide result was 59 per cent in favour of voluntary funding and direction, with 33 per cent favouring state funding and direction, and 8 per cent undecided. But in cities over 100,000, the support for voluntary control declined to 50 per cent with 41 per cent in favour of state control.

[46] Rodney S. Haddow, *Poverty Reform in Canada, 1958-1978: State and Class Influences on Policy-Making* (Montréal and Kingston 1993).

[47] Anti-poverty organizations, such as the National Anti-Poverty Action Organization (NAPO) and the Federated Anti-Poverty Group of British Columbia, called for steep increases in corporate taxes and taxes on the wealthy to pay for guaranteed annual incomes. In this regard, they were not at all at odds with the trade union movement, though the latter and the NDP can certainly be accused of having provided far too inconsistent support to anti-poverty groups.

the bourgeois view (largely accepted by state actors) that the issue was whether "society" was willing to direct more money to the poor simply ignores the social class issue of the entitlement of the corporate elite and coupon-clippers to monopolize an exorbitant portion of national wealth. Thus, it is easy (but erroneous) for him to imply that trade unions were no better than corporations in promoting guaranteed annual incomes. Like other state-centered authors, his assessment of non-state actors is often quite disparaging. Not content with noting the difficulties that anti-poverty activists had in mobilizing their constituency, he mentions "their modest material and intellectual resources."[48] Anyone who is not a committed elitist who examines the presentation of arguments by the anti-poverty movement, on the one hand, and by state bureaucrats and elected politicians, on the other, is likely to conclude that the "intellectual resources" of the poor exceeded those of the rich; it was the access to power of the latter, not brains, that insured their continued hold over society.

In conclusion, while the social welfare literature of the past ten years pulls in several different directions, we have a much richer view than ever before of the social movements, the competing discourses, and the state actors who contributed to the development of specific types of programs and to various changes over time in their shape. We have a stronger understanding, as well, of the role of gender in shaping social programs. But the tendency in the historical and sociological literature to pay more attention to discourse than to political economy has tended to understate class dimensions in the formation of social policy. While there is a more critical appreciation of the period of the Keynesian welfare state, that period and its predecessor and successor are presented more as eras of a particular set of discourses rather than periods of specific relations of class forces. Deconstructing changing discourses is helpful, but without greater interrogation about *who* was largely responsible for changing discourses and *why*, the utility of such deconstruction for either purposes of understanding historical changes or for posing activist strategies is certainly debatable. Certainly, the literature on the welfare state would benefit from far closer examination of the "whens" and "whys" of a variety of class-related questions regarding the welfare state. While these should be examined with comparisons with other countries in mind, the specificities of Canadian developments need close attention. When did various sectors of the bourgeoisie decide that certain forms of state intervention would benefit them, and what efforts did they make to implement programs that reflected this point of view regarding their interests? When did various sectors of the bourgeoisie decide that various welfare state programs needed to be trimmed or removed? Again, how did they attempt to effect the changes that they wanted? With what success? Similarly, how did the trade union movement and other working-class organizations organize to win or maintain various forms of state intervention affecting the "social wage" of their

National Archives of Canada, Canadian Council of Social Development Papers, MG 28, I 10, Vol. 188, contains examples of the demands of the anti-poverty organizations.

[48]Haddow, *Poverty Reform*, 165.

members? How did state responses reflect class understandings of various instances of the state? These questions may sound a touch "determinist" to many, and they certainly need to be combined with serious interrogation as to why certain class discourses became more hegemonic (or, for that matter, counter-hegemonic) than others at given times. Such questioning certainly has to factor in issues of gender and race, and the over-determination of class needs to be problematized. But the reduction of class to an epiphenomenon, which seems to characterize much recent work, which is otherwise laudable, needs to be challenged.