

THE UNIVERSITY OF CALGARY

SPLENDID CIRCLES:

WOMEN'S CLUBS IN CALGARY, 1912 - 1939

by

KATHLEEN E. OLIVER

A THESIS

SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES

IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF  
MASTER OF ARTS

DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATIONAL POLICY AND ADMINISTRATIVE STUDIES

CALGARY, ALBERTA

JANUARY, 1992

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ISBN 0-315-75148-7

Canada

THE UNIVERSITY OF CALGARY

FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES

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## ABSTRACT

This thesis is an examination of the activities and accomplishments of women's clubs in Calgary between 1912 and 1939. It was during this time period that women's clubs reached their zenith in terms of influencing public policy. Club members felt they were doing "splendid" work especially in terms of improving conditions for women and children.

The clubs which are discussed include the Calgary Local Council of Women, Imperial Order of the Daughters of the Empire, Women's Institutes, Young Woman's Christian Association, Woman's Canadian Club, Alberta Council on Child and Family Welfare, Great War Next-of-Kin Association, Calgary Women's Labour League and National Social Security Association.

Two women, Mrs. Maude Riley and Mrs. Jean (McWilliam) McDonald, who either belonged to or founded the above clubs are also discussed. Jean McWilliam was from the working class and was involved in organizing unions, advocating for better working conditions, disseminating information on birth control and generally fighting for what she termed the "underdog". Maude Riley belonged to most of the "upper middle class" reform oriented clubs and was primarily concerned with improving legislation that affected women and educating mothers about child care.

Despite their differing points of view, they and the other women in the clubs shared and perpetuated a distinct woman's culture which valued relationships with other women and was based on an ethic of caring for others. This culture led them to act as catalysts for many of the public welfare programs from which we currently benefit. It also emphasized women's primary role as mothers which limited their educational and career opportunities and resulted in a lower economic status for women.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS AND DEDICATION

I would like to thank my Supervisor, Professor Samuel Mitchell, for his encouragement and support during the writing of this thesis. I would also like to thank Dr. Rudy Schnell for his thought provoking comments and Dr. Eliane Silverman for agreeing to be on my committee.

Much appreciation is due to Karen Taylor and Angie McKenna without whose word processing skills and advice this document would have been difficult to complete.

I would also like to acknowledge the influence of Donna Lynn Smith who first got me interested in women's history.

This thesis is dedicated to my husband Cordell Oliver who knew how important it was to me and, despite a number of obstacles, provided the support to make its completion possible.

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## CHAPTER 1

### HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Women have a long tradition of valuing relationships and forming friendship circles with one another. In the latter half of the nineteenth Century, as the Industrial Revolution allowed middle class women more leisure time, these informal circles became more structured as prayer unions, missionary societies, discussion groups, sewing circles, and literary clubs. Their goal was usually to improve some aspect of society or to better themselves, but ample time was always set aside for visiting and refreshments.

As women passed from the Victorian era into the Progressive era, their organizations became more specialized and reform oriented and the women's club movement was launched. Women's clubs reached their zenith during the Progressive era in the early years of the 1900s when they became the agents of education and socialization for reform movements such as suffrage, temperance, child welfare, social purity, and public health. One characteristic, shared in common by these club women, was their use of the word "splendid". Reading through their minute books and reports, the reader is struck by the number of splendid talks that

were given, their splendid fund raising efforts, the splendid teas that were held and in general, the splendid work they were doing.

This thesis will examine their "splendid" work in regard to how it advanced the cause of women. They claimed to be working toward improving women's lives but how successful were they? What were their accomplishments? Many of the women's clubs considered themselves to be primarily educational organizations and an attempt will be made to learn what they were teaching.<sup>1</sup> It is the contention of this thesis that women's clubs played an important role in community education and were instrumental in perpetuating a distinctly female culture that may or may not have advanced the cause of women.

In the United States, it was the colleges for women which shaped the ideals of womanhood and the notion of what was a woman's "proper place" in society.<sup>2</sup> Women's colleges did not exist in Western Canada and there were few opportunities for women to pursue higher education. The woman's club in effect became the college in which women learned what was expected of them and how to relate to the rest of the world. In order to keep this thesis to a

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<sup>1</sup> Nancy Sheehan, "Women's Organizations and Educational Issues, 1900-1930," Canadian Woman Studies 7 (3, 1986): 90.

<sup>2</sup> Sheila Rothman, Woman's Proper Place: A History of Changing Ideals and Practices, (New York: Basic Books, 1978), 4-6.

manageable size, it will focus on two Calgary women, the clubs to which they belonged and how they were educated there. The women are Jean McWilliam McDonald and Maude Riley. Both moved to Calgary in the first decade of the twentieth Century and were active in the club movement during the Progressive era. They either belonged to or started a number of clubs which were primarily concerned with women and children. The selection of these two women was based not only on the clubs in which they were active but also because they offer an opportunity to present a glimpse of both working class and upper middle class interests.

Jean McWilliam was from the working class and was involved in organizing unions, advocating for better working conditions, disseminating information on birth control, and generally fighting for what she termed the "underdog".<sup>3</sup>

Maude Riley, on the other hand, belonged to most of the "upper middle class" reform oriented clubs and was primarily concerned with improving legislation that affected women and educating mothers about child care.

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<sup>3</sup> Jean McWilliam divorced William McWilliam sometime during the late twenties or early thirties and married William McDonald in 1936. Since her name was McWilliam during most of the time this thesis covers, she will be referred to by that name.

## Historical Overview of Calgary

1875-1939

At the time Maude Riley and Jean McWilliam arrived in Calgary, 1903 and 1907 respectively, Calgary was no longer a frontier town. It was first established in 1875 as a North West Mounted Police Fort. The police were dispatched to the West in 1874 to ensure the "peaceful occupation and exploitation of the West".<sup>4</sup> They had accomplished their task of settling the Indians on reservations which allowed a transcontinental railway to be built. The completion of the railway encouraged settlers to start homesteading and guaranteed an influx of immigrants.

By the time these immigrants arrived, Calgary had already established itself as an outpost of British traditions and customs. Many of the police officers came from upper class Ontario backgrounds and were relatively well educated. As such, they commanded respect and soon became the social leaders in the area. Their values and institutions, essentially those of Britain, became the accepted norm and set the tone for later settlement. Added to the influence of the police was that of the numerous

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<sup>4</sup> R.C. Macleod, "Canadianizing the West: the North West Mounted Police as Agents of the National Policy, 1873-1905" in The Prairie West, ed. R.D. Francis and Howard Palmer (Edmonton: University of Alberta Press, 1985), 189.

aristocratic British ranchers who had been attracted to the area by inexpensive land leases.<sup>5</sup>

After the arrival of the railway in 1883, Calgary became the major urban centre of the province and the centre of the ranching community. Incorporation as a town occurred in 1884 and as a city in 1893. In 1881, the population of Calgary had been seventy five but by 1891 it had grown to 3,876. The next ten years did not see a great deal of growth, but by 1911 the population had ballooned to over 40,000.<sup>6</sup> The era of free land in the United States had ended, so American farmers and European immigrants turned to the free homesteads of the "Last Best West".<sup>7</sup>

When McWilliam and Riley arrived, they saw a bustling boom town struggling to keep up with the influx of about one thousand new arrivals each month. Everywhere they looked, they would have seen new construction projects. Most of the major downtown buildings were built between 1908 and 1912 and many of the downtown buildings were built from

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<sup>5</sup> Sheilagh S. Jameson, "The Social Elite of the Ranch Community and Calgary" in Frontier Calgary ed. A.W. Rasporich and H.C. Klassen, (Calgary: McLelland and Stewart West, 1975), 57.

<sup>6</sup> Vicky Williams, Calgary: Then and Now (Vancouver: Bodima Books, 1978).

<sup>7</sup> W.L. Morton, The Progressive Party in Canada (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1950), 37.

impressive looking sandstone.<sup>8</sup> Telephone lines were already in evidence, electricity was common, most houses had running water and after the discovery of oil at Turner Valley in 1914, wood stoves became a thing of the past.

Alberta's economy was almost totally based on agriculture which was subject not only to the vagaries of a frequently harsh climate but also to the National Policy of Sir John A. MacDonald. His policy had been set in place to protect the manufacturing interests of central Canada and required the western farmer to buy finished goods in a protected Eastern market and pay high freight rates to ship raw materials for sale. The control of the railways, banks and grain trade was concentrated in the East. It was dissatisfaction with these conditions that laid the ground work for the "agrarian revolt" which followed.<sup>9</sup>

The revolt began with the formation of the United Farmers of Alberta in 1909 which had education of its members in collective action as its primary purpose. It grew rapidly after 1911 and became a political movement which formed the provincial government in 1921.<sup>10</sup> It was also during 1921 that all Canadian women voted for the first.

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<sup>8</sup> Janice Dickin McGinnis "Birth to Boom to Bust: Building in Calgary, 1875 - 1914 in Frontier Calgary, ed. A.W. Rasporich and H.C. Klassen (Calgary: McClelland and Stewart West, 1975), 11.

<sup>9</sup> Morton, Progressive Party, 6.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid., 11.

time in a federal election and Agnes Macphail, a school teacher from Grey County Ontario, became the first Canadian woman to be elected a Member of Parliament.<sup>11</sup> She began her term of office in 1922 serving in the first post war Parliament. In keeping with the general atmosphere of change, there was a new Prime Minister, Mackenzie King and for the first time, a third party calling themselves the Progressives. The Progressives, led by T.A. Crerar, were mainly farmers from Ontario and the western provinces. Their main goal was to secure a better deal for the labours of farmers. Also serving for the first time in this new Parliament were two labour members, one of whom was J.S. Woodsworth who had gained notoriety during the Winnipeg General Strike. The only conservative elected from the prairies in that election was R.B. Bennett from Calgary who went on to become Prime Minister during the thirties.<sup>12</sup>

At the same time, the Social Gospel movement was also prevalent in western Canada. It was an expression of Protestant utopianism that believed God's Kingdom could be created here on earth through strenuous moral reform and government legislation. It appeared in Canada in the 1880s and was concerned with temperance, sabbath observance,

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<sup>11</sup> Margaret MacLellan, "History of Women's Rights in Canada." in Studies of the Royal Commission on the Status of Women in Canada, (Ottawa: Information Canada, 1971), 18.

<sup>12</sup> John Diefenbaker, One Canada: Memoirs of the Right Honourable John G. Diefenbaker (Toronto: Macmillan, 1975), 133 & 151.

social purity and alleviating urban poverty. All concerns that were closely allied with those of the women's clubs. Richard Allen states there was a strong link between the social gospel and the ideology of the agrarian revolt.<sup>13</sup> There was just as strong a link between it and female activism which will be discussed later through the career of Maude Riley.

As well as agricultural discontent, there was also a great deal of labour unrest in Calgary, especially after the Great War. The cost of living skyrocketed during the war and as the veterans returned, unemployment reached crisis proportions. There was a general feeling among the working class that they had suffered disproportionately from the war and were being exploited by war profiteers. The time was ripe for labour radicalism which resulted in the formation of the One Big Union in Calgary in 1919 and culminated in the Winnipeg General Strike in the same year. Although centered in Winnipeg, Calgary was also involved by means of sympathy strikes and Jean McWilliam was in the centre of the controversy.

Calgary became increasingly sympathetic to the Labour movement during the twenties. This was partially because the United Farmers of Alberta did not run candidates in the

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<sup>13</sup> Richard Allen, "The Social Gospel as the Religion of the Agrarian Revolt", in The Prairie West, ed. R.D. Francis and Howard Palmer (Edmonton: University of Alberta Press, 1985), 439-449.

urban electoral races. They believed in an occupational theory of representation and introduced a system of proportional representation into Calgary and Edmonton. This allowed Labour to win seats in every election on both city council and the school board.<sup>14</sup> Women played a prominent role in Labor politics in the twenties and a number of them were elected to office on a labour ticket during this time.<sup>15</sup>

The United Farmers of Alberta had an unusual career at the polls. They first stood for election in 1921 and won an overwhelming majority which they maintained in 1925 and 1930. They then lost all their seats in the 1935 election when Social Credit swept into power. Much of Social Credit's success has been attributed to the charismatic personality of their leader, William Aberhart, a Calgary high school principal. He preached with evangelical fervour and made skilful use of radio broadcasts to explain his radical monetary policies that promised to put money into the hands of people who had not handled money in a long time.<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> Thomas Flanagan, "Political Geography and the United Farmers of Alberta", in The Twenties in Western Canada ed. S.M. Trofimenkoff (Ottawa: National Museum of Man, 1972), 153.

<sup>15</sup> Patricia Roome, "Amelia Turner and Calgary Labour Women, 1919-1935, in Beyond the Vote ed. Linda Kealey and Joan Sangster (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1989), 92.

<sup>16</sup> J.G. Diefenbaker, One Canada: Memoirs of the Right Honourable John G. Diefenbaker (Toronto: Macmillan, 1975), 175.

They had not handled money because of the Great Depression which was particularly devastating on the prairies. High unemployment in the cities was compounded by poor weather conditions in the rural areas which decimated an economy that was based on agriculture.<sup>17</sup> It is difficult to pinpoint exactly when the depression started in Calgary as the economy had not been strong during the twenties and periods of high unemployment especially during the winter months were common. To working class people like Jean McWilliam, the Great Depression of the thirties was little different from her experience in the twenties. It just lasted longer.<sup>18</sup>

However, the Depression was not a universal disaster for everyone. There were pockets of people who remained employed and although they may have suffered some salary cuts, the cost of living also went down proportionately, and they may even have been better off than previously.<sup>19</sup> Many of the middle class club women such as Maude Riley fit this description.

It was during the thirties that another political protest party was formed and it too was founded in Calgary.

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<sup>17</sup> James Gray, The Winter Years (Toronto: MacMillan of Canada, 1964), 1.

<sup>18</sup> Public Archives of Alberta (PAA), 72. 338, Audiotape of Interview with Mollie LaFrance (nee McWilliam) by Georgia Baird, 3 May 1972.

<sup>19</sup> Michiel Horn, ed. The Dirty Thirties (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1972), 85.

The socialist Cooperative Commonwealth Federation (CCF) held its founding convention in Calgary in July 1932.<sup>20</sup> It united left wing farm and labour groups and many of the Calgary women who had previously been active in labour politics became CCF supporters. One such woman was Amelia Turner, who having served for twelve years as a Labour representative on the Calgary school board, ran as the first CCF candidate in Canada in a 1933 provincial by-election.<sup>21</sup> She was narrowly defeated and the CCF party never became much of an influence in Alberta, but it certainly became a powerful force in neighbouring Saskatchewan.

The first forty years of the twentieth Century in Calgary was thus a time of social upheaval characterized by massive waves of immigration, religious fervour, labour unrest and political uncertainty. It has been postulated that this scene of political unrest and air of reform helped the cause of women and led to western women achieving improved political status before their counterparts in other parts of Canada.<sup>22</sup> This contention will be explored further in Chapter 4.

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<sup>20</sup> Howard Palmer with Tamara Palmer, Alberta: A New History, (Edmonton: Hurtig Publishers, 1990), 255.

<sup>21</sup> Patricia Roome, "Amelia Turner", 106.

<sup>22</sup> V.J. Strong-Boag, "Canadian Feminism in the 1920's: The Case of Nellie L. McClung", in The Prairie West: Historical Readings, ed. R.D. Francis and H. Palmer (Edmonton: University of Alberta Press, 1985), 467.

### The Doctrine of Woman's Separate Sphere

During the last half of the nineteenth century, in the Victorian Era, much time was devoted to discussing what constituted woman's proper sphere or role in Canadian society.<sup>23</sup> Increasing urbanization and industrialization meant that men and women no longer worked together in the home or on the farm. Men left their homes in order to go to their place of work. Compulsory education meant children no longer stayed at home, but went out to school. Women were left at home and needed to find some meaningful reason for their existence.

Although women were seldom asked what they thought their sphere should be, men were frequent speakers on the subject. The Reverend Robert Sedgewick delivered a lengthy lecture on "The Proper Sphere and Influence of Woman in Christian Society" to the Halifax Young Men's Christian Association in 1856.<sup>24</sup> His lecture included the prevailing point of view that "woman is the complement of man" and "the sphere of woman is home and whatever is co-relative with home in the social economy".<sup>25</sup> He also mentioned the

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<sup>23</sup> Ramsay Cook and Wendy Mitchinson ed., The Proper Sphere: Woman's Place in Canadian Society (Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1976), 5-6.

<sup>24</sup> Reprinted in Cook and Mitchinson, The Proper Sphere, 8-34.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid., 9 & 19.

appropriate roles that women should fill; that of a daughter, sister, wife and of course that of the mother:

It is in this relationship that her power for good is specially manifest, and specially blissful.

Women were thus defined in terms of their relationship to men and the role of mother was considered to be their ultimate calling. This point of view continued to prevail during the Progressive Era as well and the early feminists such as Nellie McClung believed it as well. She states in her classic book on women's rights:

Women are naturally the guardians of the race, and every normal woman desires children.<sup>26</sup>

It was during the Victorian Era that the normal bodily functions of women such as menstruation and pregnancy became associated with disease and ill health. Women were not only considered to be frail but also predisposed to insanity. As the Reverend Sedgewick described it:

It is granted that physiologically the framework of the female is more delicate and fragile than that of man, and it is granted too that her mental constitution has been cast in a finer mould, and the whole texture of the mechanism of her inner nature is every way more susceptible and impressible.<sup>27</sup>

The medical community believed that any strenuous activity or mental excitement would be injurious to women and this belief was used to justify the exclusion of women from

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<sup>26</sup> Nellie McClung, In Times Like These (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1972), 22 Originally published in 1915.

<sup>27</sup> Cook and Mitchinson, Woman's Proper Sphere, 17.

higher education and any form of public life. Because women had separate natures from men, they were to receive different types of education. The basic skills of reading, writing and arithmetic were to be supplemented with music, drawing, embroidery and a smattering of languages that could be used to "enliven a drawing room conversation". Again the good Reverend describes for us what type of education a woman should receive:

But there are other 'ologies as well of which no woman, if she is to move in her sphere as she ought to, can afford to remain ignorant. There is the sublime science of washology and its sister bakeology. There is darnology and scrubology. There is mendology, and cookology in its wide comprehensiveness and its untellable utility,....<sup>28</sup>

The public sphere of paid employment and politics became the male's preserve and the private sphere of home making and child nurturing became the province of women. It was considered to be against the natural order of things for women to step out of their sphere and become self supporting or to engage in activities outside the home. The family was the fundamental building block of society and woman was its centre. Any move by women into the public sphere was seen as an attack upon the family and therefore upon the stable basis of society.<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>28</sup> Ibid., 21.

<sup>29</sup> Jeanne L'Esperance, The Widening Sphere: Women in Canada, 1870-1940 (Ottawa: Public Archives of Canada, 1982), 2.

At the same time, women were also viewed as being naturally religious and morally superior to men. The Reverend Sedgewick describes this inclination:

Hence her aptitude for piety in its principles and practices and pleasures, hence too her attainments, and hence the vast influence which godliness exerts on herself and which it enables her to exert on others.<sup>30</sup>

Although women were limited in their activities by the doctrine of spheres, it did transform their homes into shrines where they ruled. It also conferred upon them an elevated status as mothers which allowed them to believe, that although they were different from men, they were in no way inferior.

Women were thus careful about how they stepped into the public sphere, but step out they did, and their strategy for doing so made special use of the doctrine of spheres. They used their special status as mothers and housekeepers to widen their influence by taking out into the world the very qualities which made them so valuable within the family. Their first steps were through female societies devoted to religious and charitable ends. Their attempts to assist and uplift the deprived and depraved were not viewed as an invasion of male territory but were consistent with their image of piety and guardians of morals.<sup>31</sup> It was not long

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<sup>30</sup> Ibid., 23.

<sup>31</sup> Nancy Woloch, Women and the American Experience (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1984), 167.

before they spread further into the public sphere and became involved with other reform issues through their clubs.

### Women's Clubs

The main vehicle for reform was women's clubs which by the end of the nineteenth century were a standard feature of the urban scene. The opportunities for more leisure time came at a time when increasing industrialization had created a number of serious social problems such as overcrowding, urban poverty, and epidemics of various diseases. Thus the goal of many women's clubs was to remedy some evil of industrial capitalism such as child labour, working conditions for women, abuse of alcohol and impurities in milk.<sup>32</sup>

In Canada, the most prominent and influential club was the National Council of Women (NCW). It was founded in 1893 in Toronto by Lady Aberdeen, the wife of the Governor General. It was intended to be a non-political, non-sectarian organization. At the time of its inception, the NCW did not support suffrage and Lady Aberdeen was careful to declare it was not dedicated to any one propaganda but that its aim was simply mothering.<sup>33</sup>

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<sup>32</sup> Woloch, Women and the American Experience, 270-271.

<sup>33</sup> Rosa Shaw, Proud Heritage: A History of the National Council of Women of Canada. (Toronto: Ryerson Press, 1957), 115.

The NCW had no specific reform thrust since it was an umbrella organization for many different women's groups, and saw its role as providing a feminine influence on Canadian society.<sup>34</sup> By 1937, it claimed affiliation with sixteen nationally organized societies and forty nine Local Councils, including one in Calgary. The NCW claimed a membership of 500,000, making it the largest women's organization in Canada.<sup>35</sup>

The Calgary Local Council of Women (LCW) was the local link with the NCW. It was formed in 1912 to provide a united voice for all women in Calgary. Its first president was Alice Jamieson, the widow of a former mayor, and the first female police magistrate in Canada. As with all local bodies of the NCW, the Calgary LCW was not an organization of individuals but of organizations. In 1912 it had thirty organizations, representing a variety of purposes, affiliated with it.<sup>36</sup> The nationally organized clubs that were affiliated with the Calgary Local Council of Women in the twenties are summarized in Table 1.

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<sup>34</sup> Nancy Sheehan, "Women's Organizations and Educational Issues, 1900-1930," Canadian Woman Studies 7 (3, 1986):90.

<sup>35</sup> Mary Patricia Powell, "A Response to the Depression: The Local Council of Women of Vancouver," in In Her Own Right, ed. Barbara Latham and Cathy Kess (Victoria: Camosun College, 1980), 255.

<sup>36</sup> Sheila Johnston, "Giving Freely of Her Time and Energy: Calgary Public Women." (MA Thesis, University of Calgary, 1987), 29-30.

**TABLE 1**  
**SELECTED WOMEN'S CLUBS IN CALGARY**

Organization	Date & Place of Origin	Founder	Main Purpose
Imperial Order Daughters of the Empire (IODE)	1900 Montreal	Margaret Polson Murray	Provide service to the Empire. Strengthen ties with Britain. Assimilate immigrants into the dominant culture pattern.
Women's Institutes (WI)	1899 Ontario	Adelaide Hoodless	Educate women in domestic science.
Woman's Christian Temperance Union (WCTU)	1874 Owen Sound, Ontario 1873 Chicago	Letitia Youmans in Canada Annie Withenmeyer in U.S.A.	Promote abstinence from alcohol.
Young Women's Christian Association (YWCA)	1870 St. John, New Brunswick c.a. 1855 England	Agnes Blizard Bogart in Canada Emma Roberts in England	Provide safe Christian refuge for single working girls in urban centres.
Woman's Canadian Club	1892 Hamilton, Ontario	Charles R. McCullough (of Canadian Club)	Promote Canadian nationalism.

Source: Josephine P. Harshaw, When Women Work Together: A History of the YWCA in Canada (Toronto: Ryerson, 1966), 8 & 11.; Nancy M. Sheehan, "Womens Organizations and Educational Issues, 1900-1930". Canadian Women Studies 7 (3,1986): 90-92. and Elise A. Corbet, "Womans Canadian Club of Calgary". Alberta History 25 (Summer 1977): 29.

All of the organizations mentioned in Table 1 were founded in the East and imported to the West by female immigrants who had been involved with them in their former homes. By 1912 all were firmly established in Calgary and carrying out various reform activities, usually with an evangelical, social gospel flavour.

Jean McWilliam did not join the LCW until 1930 but she was the founder of several women's organizations that had a working class focus. She started the Great War Next-of-Kin Association during the war to assist the dependents of serving men in collecting sufficient living allowances. After the war, in 1919, when labour unrest was rampant, she founded the Calgary Women's Labour League to assist the families of those who were participating in the general strikes. It was through the Women's Labour League that she became an affiliate of the LCW and the League eventually evolved into the National Social Security Association which lobbied for improved old age pensions.<sup>37</sup>

Maude Riley also formed an association of her own. It began in 1918 as the Calgary Child Welfare Association and, as it broadened its interests, became the Alberta Council on Child and Family Welfare. It had affiliates of its own and mounted a broad spectrum of reforms aimed at improving the

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<sup>37</sup> Patricia Roome, "Amelia Turner and Calgary Labour Women, 1919-1935," in Beyond the Vote ed. Linda Kealey and Joan Sangster (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1989), 95.

lives and health of children. It was particularly well known in Calgary during the twenties and thirties when it sponsored annual Child Welfare Weeks which featured a number of educational programs.<sup>38</sup>

Neither Riley nor McWilliam were directly involved with the Suffrage campaign that took place in Alberta prior to the vote being granted in 1916, but since many of their colleagues were, it will be discussed briefly.

### The Struggle for Suffrage

The nineteenth Century was generally a time of struggle for social justice and equality. The struggle for female autonomy was part of this larger battle and focused on obtaining the franchise or, as it was commonly known, woman's suffrage. Women, somewhat naively, believed that it was through political action that society could be improved.<sup>39</sup>

The franchise had a long history of being an exclusively male prerogative and in Britain, it was established as the privilege and responsibility of wealthy men with property. It was therefore, quite a struggle for

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<sup>38</sup> Elise Corbet, "A. Maude Riley: 'A Do-Gooder, Not a Suffragette'." in Citymakers: Calgarians After the Frontier ed. Max Foran and Sheilagh Jameson (Calgary: Historical Society of Alberta, 1987), 214.

<sup>39</sup> Cook and Mitchinson, The Proper Sphere, 3.

women, especially married women, who basically had no status or property in their own right, to achieve the vote. The Canadian suffrage movement was influenced by ideas originating in Britain and the United States; both of which took longer to grant the franchise than did Canada.<sup>40</sup>

The Canadian movement started late and success came relatively easily. Dr. Emily Stowe is generally considered to be the founder of the suffrage movement in Canada.<sup>41</sup> She wanted to become a physician but no Canadian university would admit her so she was forced to take her medical training in the United States. While there, she met the leaders of the American Suffrage movement and after her return to Canada, she established the Toronto Women's Literary Club in 1877. It evolved into the Canadian Woman Suffrage Association and began to attract men and women with wide reform interests.<sup>42</sup>

The majority of the Canadian suffragists were moral reformers who were members of a social elite. They wanted women to vote in order to achieve other reforms, especially prohibition of alcohol and to strengthen the middle class

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<sup>40</sup> For further information on contrasts between the American and British movement see Chapter 7 of Report of the Royal Commission on the Status of Women in Canada (Ottawa: Information Canada, 1970).

<sup>41</sup> Carol Lee Bacchi, Liberation Deferred? The Ideas of the English-Canadian Suffragists, 1877-1918 (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1983), 3.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid., 28.

family by doubling its representation. They had no desire to see any change in the traditional role of women as wives and mothers and were primarily motivated by a desire to counteract the vote of the working class or foreign born male who they felt was not their equal. Most of them were what we would term maternal feminists.<sup>43</sup> The term "maternal feminism" is used in Canada, while American writers prefer "maternalism", to describe ideologies that exalted women's capacity to mother and extended to society as a whole the values of care, nurturance, and morality.<sup>44</sup>

Very few Canadian suffragists became involved with more radical feminist demands such as the demand for complete educational and occupational equality. Such a moderate stance did not provoke nearly as much opposition as that experienced by the militant British suffragettes or the American proponents of the Equal Rights Amendment.

Although the first Canadian suffrage club had started in Ontario, it was the western provinces which were successful in achieving the vote first. In 1916, the provincial franchise was granted to the women of Manitoba, Saskatchewan and Alberta.<sup>45</sup> By 1919, women were eligible

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<sup>43</sup> Ibid., 12.

<sup>44</sup> Seth Koven and Sonya Michel, "Womanly Duties: Maternalist Politics and the Origins of Welfare States in France, Germany, Great Britain, and the United States, 1880-1920," American Historical Review 95 (October 1990): 1079.

<sup>45</sup> Faye Reineberg Holt, "Women's Suffrage in Alberta," Alberta History 39 (Autumn, 1991): 25.

to vote in provincial elections and sit in the legislatures of all the provinces except Prince Edward Island and Quebec. Prince Edward Island granted the franchise in 1921 but it was 1940 before Quebec finally capitulated. Women obtained the federal vote in 1918 and the right to sit in the House of Commons in 1920.<sup>46</sup>

Alberta was the third provincial government to enfranchise women and it did so in April of 1916 after a struggle which began in 1902 with the formation of the Calgary Branch of the WCTU.<sup>47</sup> Petitions were circulated and meetings were requested with the Premier. At one such meeting in 1913, Premier Sifton refused to let a delegation of one hundred and fifty women into the Legislature and insulted them with:

Did you ladies wash up your luncheon dishes before you came down here to ask me for the vote? If you haven't you'd better go home because you're not going to get any votes from me.<sup>48</sup>

In spite of such a chauvinistic greeting, the women persevered and in 1914, presented a petition with 12,200 names on it. This still did not sway the government and a year later, a large delegation resorted to occupying the Legislature and reading yet another petition.

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<sup>46</sup> Royal Commission on Status of Women, 337.

<sup>47</sup> Faye Holt, "Women's Suffrage in Alberta", 25.

<sup>48</sup> Cited in Ibid., 26.

By this time Nellie McClung, a seasoned suffrage and prohibition worker had moved to Alberta from Manitoba and along with Emily Murphy, another prominent female activist, took over the leadership of the campaign. They tried a number of other pressure tactics and were ultimately successful in April of 1916. It is not surprising that Premier Sifton was still somewhat wary of giving too much power to women and qualified his endorsement by stating "enfranchisement was not granted for the benefit of women but for the whole country."<sup>49</sup> Prohibition was closely linked with the female suffrage issue and legislation enacting prohibition was put into effect on July 1 1916. It remained in force in Alberta until 1923.<sup>50</sup>

Alberta then became the scene of a number of firsts for women. Louise McKinney and Roberta McAdams were the first female legislators in the British Empire when they took their provincial seats in 1917. In 1921, when the United Farmers formed the government, Irene Parlby became the first female cabinet minister, albeit without a portfolio for her entire fourteen year career. Emily Murphy and Alice Jamieson became the first female police magistrates in Canada when appointed in 1916 but, they were immediately challenged by lawyers on their right to hear cases since

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<sup>49</sup> Calgary Daily Herald, 2 March 1916.

<sup>50</sup> Howard Palmer with Tamara Palmer, Alberta: A New History, 175.

women were not considered to be persons under the British North America Act.<sup>51</sup> Not being persons also denied them the right to sit in the Canadian Senate.

Emily Murphy joined forces with four other Alberta women: Nellie McClung, Irene Parlby, Henrietta Muir Edwards and Louise McKinney and launched what became known as the landmark "Person's Case". They petitioned the British Privy Council regarding its interpretation of the word person. It was 1929 before a decision was handed down and Canadian women were finally declared persons and thus eligible for appointment to the Canadian Senate.<sup>52</sup>

### Summary

The women who participated in the Suffrage campaign were all experienced club women. It was in their clubs that they learned to organize, to speak in public, to run meetings, and to lobby. Some saw the campaign as an extension of their role in the household but others saw it as moving into the public sphere.<sup>53</sup> However, feminist

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<sup>51</sup> Linda Rasmussen et al. A Harvest Yet to Reap: A History of Prairie Women, (Toronto: the Women's Press, 1976), 228 - 230.

<sup>52</sup> Margaret MacLellan, "History of Women's Rights in Canada", in Studies of the Royal Commission on the Status of Women in Canada (Ottawa: Information Canada, 1971), 21.

<sup>53</sup> Eliane Silverman, The Last Best West, (Montreal: Eden Press, 1984), 181-182.

historians are now questioning whether the accomplishments of women such as those involved with the Person's Case actually advanced women's political and economic equality. They question whether the early reformer's use of their special status as mothers actually limited their advances in the long term.<sup>54</sup> According to Barbara Nicholson, the maternal feminists on the prairies were satisfied with achieving the vote and few women were prepared to challenge the social and family structures which put women in a secondary position. Because of this, true equality was not achieved and women remained limited in what they could accomplish.<sup>55</sup> Veronica Strong-Boag states they did not move into public affairs in any great numbers after the vote was won but remained primarily in the home because the world remained committed to women having the primary responsibility for maintenance of the family and home.<sup>56</sup>

This notion of women retreating from public life after the vote was won is somewhat misleading if Maude Riley and Jean McWilliam's lives are at all typical. Neither woman

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<sup>54</sup> Veronica Strong-Boag, The New Day Recalled: Lives of Girls and Women in English Canada, 1919-1939. (Toronto, Copp Clark Pitman, 1988), 217-222, and Linda Kealey, A Not Unreasonable Claim: Women and Reform in Canada, 1880-1920 (Toronto: Women's Educational Press, 1979), 7.

<sup>55</sup> Barbara Jean Nicholson, "Feminism in the Prairie Provinces to 1916," (Masters thesis, University of Calgary, 1974). See also Carol Lee Bacchi, Liberation Deferred? The Ideas of the English-Canadian Suffragists, 1877-1918. (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1983).

<sup>56</sup> Strong-Boag, New Day, 220.

was particularly involved in either the suffrage or the temperance movement. Instead, most of their work as activists took place during the War and in the two decades just after it. The organizations which they formed had nothing to do with suffrage but were very much involved with the cause of women and children and were most active in the twenties and thirties. The remainder of this thesis will attempt to describe the types of activities with which they were involved and provide some insight into what the women's clubs actually did accomplish.

## CHAPTER 2

## MRS. HAROLD (MAUDE) RILEY: A PROTESTANT NUN

Early Years

Maude Riley, or Mrs. Harold Riley as she always signed her name, was born Alpha Maude Keen in St. Mary's, Ontario.<sup>1</sup> She received her education in Ontario and obtained a first class teaching certificate from the Ontario Normal College in 1902.<sup>2</sup> At that time, possession of a teaching certificate could mean the holder only had a grade school education herself, but a first class certificate meant that Riley had completed high school and was thus better educated than most people. Corbet describes Riley as:

Dictatorial and forthright, well-read and well informed, demanding, persevering and adamant in her resolve."<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Unless indicated otherwise, the information on Maude Riley was taken from Elise Corbet, "A. Maude Riley: A Do Gooder Not a Suffragette," in City Makers: Calgarians After the Frontier, eds. Max Foran and Sheilagh Jameson (Edmonton: The Historical Society of Alberta, 1987).

<sup>2</sup> GAI, M5841, Calgary Local Council of Women (CLCW) Papers, Box 9, File 84, Correspondence with University of Alberta re honorary degree for Maude Riley.

<sup>3</sup> Corbet, "Maude Riley", 222.

A newspaper columnist described her as:

A composite of Queen Victoria in her autocratic moods and the way most people would remember their own grandmother.<sup>4</sup>

Both descriptions capture the ambivalence most people felt toward Maude Riley. They admired her accomplishments and her ability to get things done but resented her autocratic methods and airs of superiority.

Riley first came to Calgary in 1903 because of her health. At the turn of the Century, the West was being promoted as a pastoral utopia by immigration pamphlets, travel books and leading artists of the day. The climate was described as "bracing" and "invigorating" and capable of breeding a "hardy race".<sup>5</sup> It was common practice for doctors in the industrialized East to advise people to move West for their health as did Riley's.

On her arrival she taught school from March 1903 to December 1906 at Glenmore and Nose Creek rural schools. As was the custom, she gave up teaching in 1907 when she married Harold W. Riley, the youngest son of a prominent pioneer ranching family which had lived in Calgary since 1888. They owned large land holdings on the north side of

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<sup>4</sup> CLCW Papers, File 276, Newspaper clipping n.d., Column by Ken Liddell on Maude Riley's life.

<sup>5</sup> R. Douglas Francis, "From Wasteland to Utopia." Great Plans Quarterly 7 (Summer 1987): 189.

the Bow River and became wealthy as their land was subdivided and sold for urban housing developments.<sup>6</sup>

The Riley family fits Lewis Thomas' description of "privileged settlers" who influenced and set the standards and values of the communities in which they lived.<sup>7</sup>

Harold's older brother, Ezra Hounsfield Riley, was a member of the Alberta Legislature, built and furnished St. Barnabas Anglican Church before donating it to the diocese and also presented twenty one acres of land to the city for a park in 1910.<sup>8</sup> Riley Park still bears the family name and still respects Mr. Riley's wish that cricket be the only team game played in it.<sup>9</sup>

### Social Activism

After her marriage, Riley moved to Edmonton where her husband was the deputy Provincial Secretary in the first government of the newly created province. While in Edmonton, Riley became friendly with Emily Murphy who had been in Edmonton since 1903. Murphy was older than Riley

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<sup>6</sup> GAI, Clipping file on Ezra Hounsfield Riley. Calgary Herald, Column by Jack Peach, 4 August 1984.

<sup>7</sup> Lewis G. Thomas, "Privileged Settlers," chap. in Rancher's Legacy (Edmonton: U of A Press, 1986), 151-68.

<sup>8</sup> GAI, Clipping file on E.H. Riley. Obituary 5 January 1937.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid., Jack Peach column.

but they came from similar backgrounds. Both were from Ontario, of the Anglican faith, better educated than the norm and married to prominent men. Murphy already had an established reputation as a writer under the nom de plume of "Janey Canuck" and was a seasoned organizer for reform causes and the legal status of women.<sup>10</sup> It was under Emily Murphy's mentorship that Riley began her club work and her life as a social activist.

Another mentor and fellow collaborator on legal issues was Henrietta Muir Edwards. She too, came from a wealthy Eastern family, and moved to Fort Macleod with her husband, Dr. Oliver C. Edwards, at the age of fifty four in 1903. She previously lived in Ottawa and assisted Lady Aberdeen with the founding of the National Council of Women. Mrs. Edwards was widely respected for her precise legal mind and her comprehensive knowledge of laws relating to women.<sup>11</sup> She already was the National Convenor of Laws for the National Council of Women and, after her move, became the president of its Alberta Executive. Riley served with her as secretary of the executive and the two women, along with delegates from various women's clubs, regularly petitioned the government for legislative changes in respect to women

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<sup>10</sup> Byrne Hope Sanders, Emily Murphy: Crusader (Toronto: MacMillan Company of Canada, 1945), 130.

<sup>11</sup> Linda Rasmussen et al. A Harvest Yet to Reap (Toronto: The Women's Press, 1976), 222.

and children. These activities are discussed in further detail in Chapter 4.

Although Riley was involved with the formation of a number of clubs and was known as a "splendid" fund raiser for a variety of causes, she was best known for and most proud of her maternal and child welfare work. Her interest in this field was inspired by personal experience. As she explained in a newspaper interview:

When my first baby was born in 1909, I was very ill and I made a covenant with the Lord that if I came through I would devote my life to mothers and children. He kept His end of the covenant and I've tried to keep mine.<sup>12</sup>

It was shortly after this experience that the Riley's moved back to Calgary. Harold Riley had become the Registrar at the University of Alberta when it was incorporated in 1908 but the call of private enterprise was too great to resist. Calgary was in the midst of a boom and Mr. Riley decided to open a real estate and financial investment business with his brother. The Rileys moved back onto the part of the family land known as Hounsfield Heights.

Once she was settled in Calgary, Riley joined the Children's Aid Society which ran a Children's Shelter for deserted and neglected children. She also continued her involvement with Emily Murphy in the Alberta Association for

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<sup>12</sup> CLCW Papers, File 276, Ken Liddell Column.

the Prevention of Tuberculosis.<sup>13</sup> Together, they raised funds for a sanatorium and promoted the pasteurization of milk in order to prevent the transmittal of tuberculosis to children through contaminated cows milk.<sup>14</sup>

Although Riley began her career as a social activist before 1914, the War challenged her to even further heights of activity. When Belgium was attacked by the Germans in August of 1914, Belgian Relief Organizations were formed in most of the Allied nations. Maude Riley headed the women's auxiliary to the Calgary committee and oversaw the collection and distribution of clothing, food and money which was sent to relieve the suffering in Belgium. This was an immense task that involved the collection of 100,000 articles of clothing and raised \$53,000.00 by means of "tag days".<sup>15</sup> The King of Belgium later showed his gratitude by rewarding her with a decoration in 1919. She was one of only three women in Canada so honoured.

During the war, Riley had the last of her three children and in 1916 her husband went overseas as a captain in the armed forces. He was not to return until 1919. His

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<sup>13</sup> See George J. Wherret, The Miracle of Empty Beds (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1977), 11. for a description of how serious a problem Tuberculosis was at this time.

<sup>14</sup> GAI, M6466, Alberta Council on Child and Family Welfare (ACCFW) Papers, File 4, Clippings from Calgary News Telegram, 18 July, 1914.

<sup>15</sup> Corbet, "Maude Riley", 212.

absence and the presence of three children under the age of seven did not seem to deter Riley in pursuing her outside activities. She was unusual in this regard, as most women waited until their mid-forties when their children were grown to begin making their mark on public life.<sup>16</sup> Of course, having married into a wealthy family, she could afford domestic help and certainly did not have to work outside the home or rely on charity for support as did so many other women while their husbands were overseas.

#### Club Activities

Maude Riley was the consummate club woman. She began her involvement with women's clubs in Edmonton and continued her interest after moving back to Calgary. She was a charter member of many clubs and by 1920, her affiliation with various organizations had grown to the point that she officiated in some capacity in sixteen women's organizations. However, she was careful to point out that she was never involved with the Women's Labour League or the United Farm Women of Alberta.<sup>17</sup> Both these organizations were considered to be quite radical and the "better" people did not belong to them.

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<sup>16</sup> Veronica J. Strong-Boag, The New Day Recalled (Toronto: Copp-Clark-Pittman, 1988), 190.

<sup>17</sup> GAI, Clipping file on Mrs. Harold Riley, Clipping dated 15 January 1920.

All the organizations to which she belonged had a reform thrust, and all were primarily concerned with the interests of women and children. For example, she officiated in some capacity on the executive of the Young Women's Christian Association (YWCA), Playgrounds Association, Anti-Tuberculosis Society, Great War Veteran's Association - Auxiliary, Woman's Canadian Club, Woman's Christian Temperance Union (WCTU), Imperial Order Daughters of the Empire (IODE), Calgary Women's Literary Club and the Calgary Symphony Orchestra.

Even the Great War Veteran's Association, the precursor of today's Royal Canadian Legion, was turned into a woman's club by Riley. The Women's Auxiliary, under her leadership, sponsored a week-long course for "war brides" to instruct them in "Canadian housekeeping methods" and raised funds to open a home for children orphaned by the war.<sup>18</sup> Her membership in the Literary Club and the Symphony Orchestra illustrates the role women played in the West as guardians of culture and the struggle they faced in recreating civilization as they had once known it.<sup>19</sup>

All the other associations mentioned were also affiliated with the Calgary Local Council of Women which was formed in 1912 when a public meeting of women was called to

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<sup>18</sup> Corbet, "Maude Riley", 213.

<sup>19</sup> Nancy Woloch, Women and the American Experience (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1984), 142.

consider the formation of a Woman's Civic League. At this meeting, Maude Riley suggested that a Local Council of Women would be a more helpful influence in the community and be more representative of women's work in the city.<sup>20</sup>

#### Calgary Local Council of Women (LCW)

The Calgary LCW was the local link in a network of councils which included the Alberta Provincial Council of Women, National Council of Women of Canada (NCW) and the International Council of Women. One of its presidents defined it as a:

Body of organized women who could be depended upon to promote whatever leads toward the betterment of life. The most important side of its work is the bringing together of societies and individuals to promote necessary reforms, to remove disabilities and to ensure every child opportunities for full and free development and through the National and International Councils to link together women all over the world.<sup>21</sup>

In each case, the councils were composed of various organizations with common goals related to the welfare of women and children.

The NCW was founded in 1893 in Toronto by Lady Aberdeen, the wife of the Governor General of Canada at the

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<sup>20</sup> CLCW Papers, Box 3, File 21. The 1941 Yearbook contains a "History of the Local Council of Women", 29.

<sup>21</sup> CLCW Papers, Box 4, File 27, Minute Book 1934-1938, President's Address at 1934 Annual Meeting, 11. The president for 1933-1934 was Mrs. F.G. Grevett.

time. It grew out of the large number of women's clubs which proliferated in the latter part of the nineteenth century. Many of these organizations had a reform orientation and appealed to upper and middle class women who felt they had a responsibility to uplift and purify society. It was intended to be a "Parliament of Women" where all views could be heard and whose strength would lie in persuasion rather than direct action. Lady Aberdeen was careful to declare the organization was not dedicated to any one propaganda but that its aim was simply mothering.<sup>22</sup>

Even though it claimed to be nonsectarian, the NCW had a strong Protestant bias. Lady Aberdeen was an evangelical, Victorian liberal whose upper class connections set the pattern for other members. Many of the women who served on the executive of the NCW were "top society" women, often wives of influential men, who either felt they had a special responsibility for the improvement of the community or else conferred their prestige and influence on the organization by serving as figure head executives. Either way they were assets to the NCW in providing access to legislators and commissioners, calming fears about radicalism and increasing publicity. On the other hand they also tended to make the

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<sup>22</sup> Rosa Shaw, Proud Heritage: A History of the National Council of Women of Canada. (Toronto: Ryerson Press, 1957), 115.

NCW and its local councils appear conservative and superficial.<sup>23</sup>

For example, one journalist expressed his disgust with the Calgary LCW for worrying about the shooting of wild birds for sport while, at the same time, favouring conscription:

[It] is most famous for its utter ignorance of the real human problems. Its attitude is Tory and Imperialistic, and for jingoism it would resemble a pink tea in Potsdam.<sup>24</sup>

This disparaging opinion was definitely not shared by Maude Riley who, although she never served on the local executive, was its Convenor of Laws for twenty-one years and was on the provincial executive for many years.

As with all local bodies of the NCW, the Calgary LCW was not made up of individuals but was a federation of organizations. In 1912, at its inception, thirty organizations were affiliated with it and membership fluctuated between a high of forty eight organizations in 1920 to a low of twenty six in 1939.<sup>25</sup> The Council intended to present a united and impartial front concerning

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<sup>23</sup> Veronica J. Strong-Boag, "The Parliament of Women" (PhD. diss. University of Toronto, 1975), 153-157.

<sup>24</sup> Alberta Non Partisan, 10 May 1918.

<sup>25</sup> CLCW Papers, Box 7, File 61, Register of Attendance for 1920 and Box 3, File 21 Year Book for 1939. For 1912 membership numbers see Sheila Johnston, "Giving Freely of Her Time and Energy: Calgary Public Women," (MA thesis, University of Calgary, 1987) 29-30.

issues related to women so achieving consensus among its affiliates was an important consideration.

To ensure consensus, the election of all executive officers and the ratification of all resolutions were considered at the Annual Meeting by delegates from all the affiliates. Each affiliated organization was allowed four votes. They had an opportunity to see the slate of officers and to consider resolutions before the meeting so their four delegates could be instructed on how to vote.<sup>26</sup>

The actual work of the LCW was carried out by a number of convenors who chaired standing committees such as:

Arts and Letters, Citizenship, Education, Natural Resources and Industries, Cinema and Printed Matter, Housing and Town Planning, Migration, Economics, National Recreation, Laws, League of Nations, Mental Hygiene, Trades and Professions, Moral Standards, Public Health, and Soldiers' and Sailors' Pensions and Dependents.<sup>27</sup>

It was these committees which researched issues and presented resolutions to the executive on the appropriate action to be taken by the Council. The resolutions were then sent to all the affiliated organizations for their opinions. If consensus was achieved, the resolution was acted upon. Issues such as censorship of movies and vaudeville performances, promotion of vocational training for girls, improvement of the status of housekeepers,

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<sup>26</sup> CLCWP, Box 3, File 20, Constitution in 1930 Yearbook, p. 17.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid., File 21, 1933 Year Book, List of Officers and Convenors, 17.

inclusion of women on public commissions and policy making boards, non-employment of married women and assimilation of non Anglo-Saxon immigrants dominated the resolutions passed during the twenties.

Consensus on these resolutions was not difficult to achieve in the twenties since the majority of women involved came from similar backgrounds. It was later, during the thirties, that the membership became more disparate. In her study of Calgary women, Sheila Johnston found members of the LCW to be members of the civic elite who shared the following characteristics: they had a comfortable economic and social background; were well educated (mainly teachers); had been born outside Alberta; had a religious background (often wives or daughters of clergy) and were usually mainline Protestant.<sup>28</sup> Maude Riley fits this description with the exception of not being a clergyman's wife.<sup>29</sup> Riley was an Anglican, a religion that was not as strongly associated with the social gospel as was Methodism, but she was a strong believer in the importance of religious values in everyday life.

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<sup>28</sup> Johnston, "Calgary Public Women", 44, 143.

<sup>29</sup> Woloch, Women and the American Experience, 269.

Protestant Nuns

Sheila Rothman, in her book about various ideals of womanhood, describes one ideal as virtuous womanhood which was exemplified by the "Protestant Nun".<sup>30</sup> The term was first used by Frances Willard, president of the American WCTU, to describe women going forth and bringing the virtues of the home into society. Rothman states they defined problems in moral terms and focused their efforts on reforming the person rather than the system. Maude Riley seems to fit Rothman's description and she belonged to the two organizations most closely allied with Protestant Nuns and the ideal of virtuous womanhood: the WCTU and the YWCA.

One example of Riley's many activities while involved with the LCW serves to illustrate her actions as a Protestant Nun. She was adamant that children should listen to a bible reading in school on a daily basis and that a copy of the Ten Commandments be placed in each school room. The original resolution proposing this came from the LCW Convenor on Education in November of 1926.<sup>31</sup> As usual, Riley moved acceptance of the resolution and that it be sent to all the affiliated societies for comments. At this time, forty-three societies were affiliated with the Council, so

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<sup>30</sup> Sheila Rothman, Woman's Proper Place (New York: Basic Books, 1978), 63-93.

<sup>31</sup> CLCW Papers, Box 4, File 25. Minutes of meeting held 19 November 1926.

it was almost the end of January 1927 before it was reported that the resolution was "practically unanimous in acceptance" and would now be sent to the School Board for action.<sup>32</sup>

Although Riley was not on the Education Committee, (she was still the Convenor of Laws) she took on this project personally. It took all her considerable tenacity and organizational skills to accomplish it. She finally declared success almost three years later in September of 1929. During that time she presented the petition on allowing bible reading and providing copies of the Ten Commandments to the School Board and, when they rejected it, offered to supply copies of the Commandments personally.

She also began a campaign to petition the Provincial government regarding a change in the Alberta School Act to allow religious instruction at the opening of the school day. The cost of supplying the schools with copies of the Lord's Prayer and Commandments was researched and a committee organized to provide the "ways and means to place these copies in the school rooms of the City".<sup>33</sup> A sample was printed up and when the School Board said it was too large, Riley suggested printing them on smaller cards but the School board again did not approve it.

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<sup>32</sup> Ibid., Meeting of 21 January, 1927.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid., Meeting of 23 September 1927.

They finally accepted her offer to supply sticker copies that could be pasted in the back of school books. She had 26,400 copies printed in red, white and blue "to impress more forcibly on the child's mind that the Ten Commandments are the basis of all good citizenship and the keeping of the same, true patriotism".<sup>34</sup> The cost was considerable, about a thousand dollars, so she must have done her usual fund raising. She also generated publicity for her cause in the newspapers and made sure that the LCW sent a thank you to the editor of the Calgary Herald for his favourable editorials.

#### The Woman's Christian Temperance Union (WCTU)

The WCTU began in Ohio in the early 1870's as a crusade to close down the saloons which were a symbol of man's depravity and the enemy of women and family life.<sup>35</sup> The Union surged to prominence after 1879 when Frances Willard took over the leadership and enlarged their goal to one of temperance or total prohibition of alcohol. She promoted temperance as a master plan for ridding the world of drunkenness, prostitution, disease (especially venereal disease) and political corruption. Since men were thought to be beyond redemption, the Union focused on women and

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<sup>34</sup> Ibid., Box 3, File 20, 1930 Yearbook, 67.

<sup>35</sup> Woloch, Women and the American Experience, 267-288.

children and organized massive educational campaigns that included a WCTU approved curriculum and textbook in the public schools of Alberta in the twenties.<sup>36</sup> The motto of the WCTU was "Women will bless and brighten every place she enters and will enter every place."<sup>37</sup>

Letitia Youmans of Owen Sound, Ontario was the founder of the WCTU in Canada in 1874. It was she who coined the phrase "Home Protection" which Frances Willard seized upon as a slogan to justify women achieving the vote.<sup>38</sup> Women needed the vote in order to obtain prohibition and thus protect their homes from the evils of alcohol. The connection between suffrage and temperance was a strong one. It was not until the WCTU was formed in Calgary in 1902 that the suffrage movement started.<sup>39</sup>

The WCTU relied at first on petitioning the various governments for legislation enacting prohibition. The governments usually responded by granting a plebiscite on the issue. After a number of provincial plebiscites had endorsed prohibition but legislation had not followed, the WCTU became disillusioned. Finally, in 1897, the Liberal

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<sup>36</sup> Nancy Sheehan, "The WCTU and Educational Strategies on the Canadian Prairie," History of Education Quarterly (Spring 1984), 106.

<sup>37</sup> Rothman, Woman's Proper Place, 67.

<sup>38</sup> Ruth Bordin, Frances Willard: A Biography, (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1986), 100.

<sup>39</sup> Calgary Daily Herald, 1 March 1916.

government under Wilfrid Laurier held a national plebiscite on prohibition but would not allow women to vote. Every province except Quebec voted in favour of prohibition. Of course, most of the Liberal strength came from Quebec, so prohibition was still not enacted. It was after this defeat that the WCTU intensified their support for female suffrage. It was not that they wanted the vote as a basic human right, but that it would allow them to achieve just social ends. As Wendy Mitchinson states, "they were social feminists, not feminists".<sup>40</sup>

Maude Riley fits into this description. She believed in temperance but primarily supported suffrage for the protection of women and children, or what she called "mother politics". In 1923 she was quoted as saying:

Women had earned the vote and should use it only for mother politics in saying what laws should be made regarding child and home life.<sup>41</sup>

She was not interested in the use of the vote for any other reason and believed other concerns were best left to men.

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<sup>40</sup> Wendy Mitchinson, "The WCTU: 'For God, Home and Native Land': A Study in Nineteenth-Century Feminism," in A Not Unreasonable Claim, ed. Linda Kealey (Toronto: The Women's Press, 1979), 167.

<sup>41</sup> As cited in Corbet, "Maude Riley", 211.

The Young Women's Christian Association (YWCA)

Maude Riley and her fellow protestant nuns were concerned about the plight of the young working girl, especially those who came to the city from the rural areas to seek employment. They worried about the girls falling prey to the "white slave trade", (prostitution) or working too hard at factory jobs which might jeopardize their future health as mothers. They were also concerned about them reading unsuitable literature, attending dances or going to picture shows; all of which could "poison their minds". It was in response to these concerns that the YWCA was formed.<sup>42</sup> It originally began in Britain as a prayer union and kept its religious overtones after its export to North America.<sup>43</sup>

The first Canadian YWCA was formed at St. John, New Brunswick in 1870 and it was a requirement that the women involved on its executive be members in good standing of a church, and it was taken for granted that the church would be a Protestant one.<sup>44</sup> As the YWCA developed and moved toward the West, it opened up boarding houses for the

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<sup>42</sup> Rothman, Woman's Proper Place, 74-75.

<sup>43</sup> Josephine P. Harshaw, When Women Work Together, (Toronto: Ryerson, 1966), 8.

<sup>44</sup> Wendy Mitchinson, "Early Womens Organizations and Social Reform: Prelude to the Welfare State", in The Benevolent State, ed. Allan Moscovitch and Jim Albert (Toronto: Garamond Press, 1987), 79.

country and immigrant girls who were crowding into the city looking for work. The residences were intended to protect the girls' virtue and surround them with "good influences".<sup>45</sup> In Calgary, the YWCA was founded by Mrs. Thomas Underwood in 1907. A boarding house was built in Victoria Park and the WCTU collaborated in "Traveller's Aid" work by meeting all the trains that came into Calgary. Young girls travelling alone were strongly encouraged to stay at the YWCA.<sup>46</sup>

If they did so, they received woman-controlled accommodation from which men were excluded and were offered recreational opportunities such as night classes, a gymnasium and swimming lessons. It was Maude Riley's duty as Convenor of Physical Training to arrange free swimming lessons for the girls. She probably also helped select library books for their moral worth and participated in finding them respectable jobs which were invariably in domestic service. She and her colleagues felt it was better for girls to be in domestic service under the supervision of another woman than working in a factory where they would be in unsupervised contact with men.

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<sup>45</sup> Mary Quayle Innis, Unfold the Years, (Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 1949) and Diana Pedersen, "Keeping Our Good Girls Good: The YWCA and the Girl Problem, 1870-1930", Canadian Woman Studies, 7 (4, 1986), 22-23.

<sup>46</sup> Daisy MacGregor ed. Alberta Club Woman's Blue Book (Calgary: Canadian Woman's Press Club, 1917), 22.

Not all the girls appreciated this "heavy hand of middle class morality".<sup>47</sup> Some would have preferred more commitment to improving working conditions or raising wages and as one newspaper column on being alone in the city put it:

There ought to be pleasant places in every city where nice boys and girls who are lonely could meet with each other and get acquainted without feeling they were being patronized and improved.<sup>48</sup>

However, Protestant nuns felt they had a duty to improve those who were not up to their standard and they did not stop at religious improvement. It was also their duty to imbue people with patriotic values and make Canada as British as possible. They saw the influx of immigrants into Alberta in the early 1900's as a threat to these goals and worked hard on a number of strategies to assimilate them quickly.<sup>49</sup> The main avenue for such work was the IODE and the Woman's Canadian Club.

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<sup>47</sup> Rothman, Woman's Proper Place, 77.

<sup>48</sup> Alberta Labour News, 16 April 1921.

<sup>49</sup> Howard Palmer, "Strangers and Stereotypes: The Rise of Nativism, 1880-1920" in The Prairie West: Historical Readings, ed. R.D. Francis and H. Palmer, (Edmonton: Pica Pica Press, 1985): 320.

Imperial Order of the Daughters of the Empire (IODE)

Riley belonged to the IODE but was not as active in it as was her sister Mrs. W.D. (May) Spence who was involved at the national level. The IODE was founded in 1900 by Margaret Polson Murray who was the wife of a well known and respected professor at McGill University. Toward the end of the nineteenth century, Mrs. Murray travelled to Britain and was distressed to find how little British women knew of Canada. The Boer War (1899-1902) was being fought at this time and Mrs. Murray thought improved communication between the women of Canada and the women of Britain would enable them to help with the war effort.<sup>50</sup>

Her ultimate goal was to form a body of women to provide service to the Empire and to strengthen and preserve Canada's connection with the motherland. Upon her return to Canada, she travelled widely across the country preaching her message and after a slow start, the organization began to proliferate with numerous local chapters being formed under the motto: One Flag, One Throne, One Empire. The first IODE chapter formed in Calgary was the Colonel Macleod Chapter in 1909. By 1917, four other chapters had been formed.<sup>51</sup>

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<sup>50</sup> Margaret Gillett, We Walked Very Warily: A History of Women at McGill (Montreal: Eden Press, 1981), 126.

<sup>51</sup> Daisy MacGregor, Blue Book, 78.

In order to belong to the IODE, one had to be a British subject and membership was by invitation only. Only wives or daughters of prominent citizens were invited. As one member described it:

I was invited to join because my husband was the school principal. The wife of the vice principal was also invited but not the teacher's wives. It was also necessary to have the right clothes. White gloves, hats and mink jackets were the required uniform.<sup>52</sup>

Members of the IODE took their supremacy in the Canadian cultural mix for granted and assumed all foreign customs, that is, all non-British customs, to be inferior.<sup>53</sup> They also assumed that as members of the superior "race", they had a responsibility to civilize and Christianize the foreigners.<sup>54</sup> Their main goal became not only keeping up bonds with the "mother country" and promoting patriotism but assimilating the immigrants into the dominant cultural pattern.

Some of the activities in which they were engaged during the First World War were: tending graves of those killed in battle, perpetuating the memory of heroic deeds, providing Union Jacks and pictures of royalty for schools (to keep the imperial presence in front of children), sponsoring essay writing contests on patriotic themes,

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<sup>52</sup> Hooper Interview.

<sup>53</sup> Strong-Boag, New Day, 191.

<sup>54</sup> Kealey, Not Unreasonable.Claim, 5.

assisting needy families of soldiers with donations of food and money, raising money for ambulances and machine guns, and supporting the school cadet program in order to prepare youth to come to Britain's aid at any time.<sup>55</sup>

One of the resolutions it sponsored for the provincial government's consideration in both 1932 and 1933 was that the flag be shown and the national anthem played at the close of all picture shows. This was thought to be "particularly necessary in this province where there are so many nationalities."<sup>56</sup>

However, while such overt chauvinism was tolerated, it was the issue of cadet training that divided the IODE from many of the other women's clubs that were becoming increasingly interested in peace activities. Cadet training had begun in Calgary public schools as early as 1895 under the direction of Sergeant Fred Bagley, one of the original members of the Royal Northwest Mounted Police. School boys were actually issued rifles and trained in foot and arms drill on a weekly basis. George Stanley, who grew up in Calgary, remembers his cadet training period fondly and resented the interference of the "belligerent women" who

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<sup>55</sup> Gillett, Women at McGill, 126; and Nancy M. Sheehan, "Women's Organizations and Educational Issues, 1900-1930", Canadian Woman Studies 7 (3, 1986): 91.

<sup>56</sup> CLCW Papers, Box 3, File 20, 1932 Yearbook, p. 62.

felt it led to increased militarism and succeeded in having it removed from the school curriculum.<sup>57</sup>

It was not only "belligerent women" who were against cadet training. Organized labour was also opposed to it and many columns in the Alberta Labour News were devoted to this issue during the twenties. Working class people felt they stood to suffer more from a war, from both an economic point of view and lost lives, than did those of the upper classes. Working class mothers frequently said they weren't bringing up any more young boys to be "cannon fodder" in another war. Opposition to cadet training grew stronger until it was finally discontinued in the public schools in the thirties and replaced with physical training. The IODE continued to support it and eventually withdrew their affiliation from the LCW over the issue.<sup>58</sup>

#### Woman's Canadian Club

The other patriotic organization to which Riley belonged and helped form was the Woman's Canadian Club of

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<sup>57</sup> George F.G. Stanley, "School Days" in Citymakers: Calgarians After the Frontier, ed. Max Foran and Sheilagh Jameson (Calgary: The Historical Society of Alberta, 1987), 8-15.

<sup>58</sup> CLCW, Box 26, File 288, Scrapbook with clipping from Calgary Herald, 20 February, 1933.

Calgary.<sup>59</sup> It was originally organized in Hamilton, Ontario, as the Canadian Club by two men who wanted to promote "pride in and love of country".<sup>60</sup> The first Calgary club was formed by men in 1908 with the women's club forming in 1911. Prior to and during the war, it was through this club that Riley did much of her public health campaigning and fund raising for the Red Cross, the Patriotic Fund, the Children's Shelter and numerous other charities. When the emergency of the war was over, fund raising was almost discontinued and the club became more involved with its main purpose, "the maintenance of Canadian nationalism in the native born and placing Canadian ideals before the immigrants".<sup>61</sup>

Although the "foreign born" could join the club, they could not vote or hold office unless they were British subjects. The club maintained close ties with the public school board and promoted the teaching of Canadian history, saluting the flag each morning and essay contests on Canadian subjects. They also sponsored exhibits of Canadian art, promoted Canadian literature and arranged Dominion Day celebrations.

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<sup>59</sup> Ibid., File 84, Correspondence with University of Alberta re honorary degree.

<sup>60</sup> Elise Corbet, "Woman's Canadian Club of Calgary", Alberta History, 25 (Summer 1977), 29.

<sup>61</sup> Ibid., 30.

In order to place Canadian ideals before the immigrants, they collected and distributed Canadian and British magazines to the new settlers in the surrounding area. In all of these activities they were careful to base their Canadian nationalism on British institutions and traditions. It was therefore no contradiction of loyalties for Riley to belong to the Canadian Club and the IODE at the same time. They were both trying to keep Canada as British middle class as possible.

### Educating Mothers

Another response to the "problem" of Canadianizing the immigrants was what Rothman calls the ideology of the "educated mother".<sup>62</sup> The focus of this ideology was on the child and was greatly influenced by G. Stanley Hall, a specialist in child development, who insisted that women had to be specially trained to their responsibilities as mothers. While he meant all mothers, it was particularly the foreign born mother who needed instruction.

Woloch states the child was "discovered" at the turn of the Century and became the "veritable centre piece of society".<sup>63</sup> This happened because the birth rate was dropping which meant fewer children for mothers to focus on

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<sup>62</sup> Rothman, Woman's Proper Place, Chapter 3: 97-132.

<sup>63</sup> Woloch, Women and the American Experience, 296.

and more time to spend with them.<sup>64</sup> The child was no longer seen as a household labourer or family wage earner but as a work of art that could be moulded by proper mothering into a perfect being or as Maude Riley was quoted as saying:

The child is the nation's best asset and the mother is the bulwark of the nation.<sup>65</sup>

This increased interest in the child was coupled with efforts to professionalize the homemakers vocation in order to give it more status.

By the end of the nineteenth Century, employing a servant was a major female prerequisite for middle class status. However, with the increased career opportunities available in offices, stores and factories, most girls were not interested in the long hours and drudgery of domestic work. Obtaining and keeping servants became a crisis situation and middle class women tried a number of strategies to solve the problem. One of these was to transform housekeeping and child care into specialized missions that required training and professional skills.<sup>66</sup>

The field of domestic science was born and women's

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<sup>64</sup> See Angus McLaren and Arlene Tigar McLaren, The Bedroom and the State (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1986), 11. They state the average completed Canadian family size fell from 4.1 children for parents born in 1871 to 2.9 children for parents born in 1911.

<sup>65</sup> Calgary Herald, 28 May 1919.

<sup>66</sup> Woloch, Women and the American Experience, 295.

clubs were quick to pick up the cause. In Calgary, the two organizations most closely allied with domestic science and child training were the Women's Institutes and the Alberta Council on Child and Family Welfare. It was this latter organization that Maude Riley herself founded because:

Parents are eager for knowledge and are looking to leaders and specialists for educational direction.<sup>67</sup>

In the United States, women's colleges and settlement houses served as important institutions for training women in domestic and social science and providing employment for graduates who were eager to influence and educate the poor, especially in hygiene and child development. In Canada, the scene was somewhat different as there were almost no women's colleges or settlement houses. To fill this void, a uniquely Canadian organization known as the Women's Institutes evolved.

#### Women's Institutes (WI)

The Women's Institutes have been called rural universities but they were not limited to the rural areas but were also active in towns and cities on the prairies. Maude Riley was a member and frequent guest speaker and Emily Murphy, definitely an urban woman, became the National

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<sup>67</sup> GAI, M6466, Alberta Council on Child and Family Welfare Papers, File 4, Clipping from Calgary Albertan, n.d.

President when the Federated Women's Institutes were formed in 1919.<sup>68</sup>

The WI began in Hamilton, Ontario in 1897 under the influence of Adelaide Hoodless. She had already been involved in the founding of the YWCA and the NCW and was primarily interested in the teaching of domestic science in the public school system. One of her children died at the age of eighteen months from drinking contaminated milk and she vowed to teach other mothers how to prevent similar tragedies. She saw the teaching of domestic science as part of this crusade and also as a means of elevating the vocation of homemaking.

She started a domestic science school in the Hamilton YWCA in 1894 while she was its president but it lacked permanent funding. In order to achieve more stability, Hoodless lobbied the provincial government for approval to expand into the public schools. The Ontario minister of education encouraged her to prepare a text book and publicize the new subject in order to determine if public support was behind its introduction in the schools.

Between 1894 and 1896 Mrs. Hoodless gave over sixty addresses to school boards, teacher's conventions and any other group that would listen to the virtues of domestic

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<sup>68</sup> Shelley A. Bosetti, "The Rural Women's University: Women's Institutes from 1909-1940." (Master thesis, University of Alberta, 1983), 27.

science.<sup>69</sup> It was just such an address in 1896, to a group of women in Wentworth County, that led to the formation of the first WI. Actually, Adelaide suggested they form a "Women's Department of Domestic Economy" in affiliation with the Farmer's Institute of South Wentworth, but the women formed a separate club instead.<sup>70</sup>

The Farmer's Institutes were under government patronage and had been formed in 1885 to transmit information on new agricultural techniques by means of visiting lecturers and demonstration trains. Although the women chose not to affiliate with the male group, they continued the pattern of government sponsorship. The Ontario government provided cash subsidies and paid organizers which allowed the WI to flourish. By 1912, the provincial agricultural department was offering a number of short courses in nutrition and cooking, home nursing and sewing through the auspices of the new Women's Institutes.

During the same time, Adelaide Hoodless was successful in establishing classes in domestic science in the public schools of Ontario and was also instrumental in setting up the Macdonald Institute to train teachers in domestic science in affiliation with the Ontario Agricultural College in Guelph in 1903. Through the NCW, she presented a

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<sup>69</sup> Robert Stamp "Teaching Girls their 'God Given Place in Life'." Atlantis, 2 (2, 1977):24.

<sup>70</sup> Terry Crowley, "The Origins of Continuing Education for Women". Canadian Woman's Studies, 7 (3, 1986): 79.

resolution calling for pressure to be brought to bear on all provincial governments to establish similar teacher training courses.

The Women's Institutes were first introduced to Alberta in 1909 and the government became involved in 1912.<sup>71</sup> They hired Miss Georgina Stewart, a graduate of the Macdonald Institute, as the Superintendent of Women's Institutes and provided a grant of five dollars for each twenty members. They also sent out official hard cover minute books, suggested topics for meetings and in 1915 printed a handbook for all the locals.

"Lady Speakers" and organizers travelled around the province in demonstration trains and were successful in stimulating the growth of the Institutes. During 1917, they offered twenty five short courses on home nursing, first aid, cooking and canning.<sup>72</sup> By 1918, at their fourth annual convention, they were able to announce that the membership had grown from 3,700 to 8,000 in the past year and there were now 212 Institutes in the province.<sup>73</sup>

Carol Dennison believes that only the resources of the government allowed such efforts to be successful at a time when women were geographically isolated and transportation systems so poor. The Department of Agriculture was eager to

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<sup>71</sup> Bosetti, "The Rural Women's University", 40.

<sup>72</sup> Daisy MacGregor, Blue Book, 29-30.

<sup>73</sup> Calgary Daily Herald, 8 March, 1918.

commit the resources because they saw the WI as a means of combatting the rural to urban shift that was beginning to be a problem.<sup>74</sup> They believed men left their farms for city life because they were discontented with rural conditions. By educating women on methods to make farm life easier, more profitable and more attractive, a greater number of families would stay on the farm.

Governments were also motivated by a belief in the importance of the family at a time when talk of suffrage and increased opportunities for women outside the home seemed to be threatening traditional home life. The WI had "For Home and Country" as its motto and Adelaide Hoodless believed:

A nation cannot rise above the level of its homes, therefore, we women must work and study together to raise our homes to the highest possible level.<sup>75</sup>

Such an organization seemed just right for promoting a stable, docile agricultural work force which was seen by everyone as eminently desirable.

However, the WI did more than propagandize for the provincial government. It was through their auspices that community halls, rural hospitals, school lunch programs and travelling libraries became established. They also led

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<sup>74</sup> Carol J. Dennison, "Housekeepers of the Community", in Knowledge for the People, ed. Michael Welton (Toronto: OISE Press, 1987), 53.

<sup>75</sup> Quote from Adelaide Hoodless cited in Bosetti, "Rural Women's University", 56.

efforts to provide garbage disposal sites, sewer systems, mail service, telephone systems, parks and fire halls.<sup>76</sup>

One of their more unique contributions was the creation of rest rooms in small towns for the use of rural women. These women, if they were lucky, came into town with their husbands but had no place to nurse their children or have a cup of tea while they were waiting for their husbands to finish their business. The WI recognized this need and had restrooms built which usually consisted of an attractive heated room with a kitchenette, a small lending library, and a washroom. Here women could make themselves a drink, care for their children, borrow books, visit with other women, eat a lunch and perhaps purchase handicrafts.<sup>77</sup> They were probably the first female resource centres in existence.

#### Alberta Council on Child and Family Welfare (ACCFW)

The organization most frequently associated with Maude Riley and most focused on educating mothers was the Alberta Council on Child and Family Welfare (ACCFW). It came into being in September of 1918 and was first known as the Calgary Child Welfare Association.<sup>78</sup> At first Maude Riley

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<sup>76</sup> Dennison, "Housekeepers of the Community", 60

<sup>77</sup> Ibid., 62.

<sup>78</sup> GAI, Alberta Council on Child and Family Welfare Papers, M6466, File 4, Minute Book, Meeting of 10 September 1918.

was its Secretary-Treasurer and Dr. Mahood, the Medical Officer of Health was the president. When he left the city in 1923, Riley became the president and served in that capacity until her death in 1962.<sup>79</sup> It was in 1936 that the organization became known as the Alberta Council on Child and Family Welfare.<sup>80</sup>

The original reason for setting up the group was to provide a means of lobbying for safe milk.<sup>81</sup> The first resolution of the association was to petition City Council that milk not be left on wagons longer than three hours. By 1924 the goals of the association had broadened to include improving conditions in:

1. Child Hygiene
2. Child Labour
3. Education and Recreation
4. Neglect, Dependency and Defect
5. Ethical and Spiritual Development of the Child.<sup>82</sup>

The association was successful in achieving most of its goals because Riley had carefully set it up to include almost every prominent person in Calgary. The two vice-presidents also served as the president of the Local Council of Women and the president of the oldest Mother's Club in the city. Membership in the association included the Mayor,

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<sup>79</sup> Ibid., File 3, Mini-Minutes compiled for 60th anniversary.

<sup>80</sup> Ibid., File 3, Minutes of 27 February 1936.

<sup>81</sup> Ibid., Mini Minutes.

<sup>82</sup> Ibid., File 1, Constitution, 24 January 1924.

the Superintendent of Schools, the Superintendent of the Hospital Board and representatives from most of the women's clubs such as the WCTU, IODE, WI and the YWCA. Groups that were labour oriented such as the Women's Labour League were not included at first but later became involved with sponsorship of educational programs. Although it included men in its membership, it was the women who attended the meetings and carried out the business of the association.

It was Riley's strategy to garner support for her resolutions by circulating petitions through all the organizations represented and to the public at large prior to their presentation to City Council or other officials.<sup>83</sup> Her strategy worked well and the association was soon able to influence the Health Department to hire a child welfare nurse and set up a clinic to service "sick and well babies".

The major activity of the association was its annual Child Welfare Week. Child Welfare campaigns had been held in Calgary as early as 1917 under the sponsorship of the City Health Department. They involved demonstrations, exhibits, movies and addresses on the topic of child welfare. A committee of prominent citizens organized these campaigns and Maude Riley was on its executive.<sup>84</sup> After the formation of the Calgary Child Welfare Association, it took over the sponsorship of the campaign; added a clinic

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<sup>83</sup> Ibid., File 4, Minutes of 23 January 1919.

<sup>84</sup> Daisy MacGregor, Blue Book, 54.

component and developed a separate program for children as well as one for mothers.<sup>85</sup>

Child Welfare week developed into a multi-faceted community education program aimed at improving child care in Calgary. It was advertised from the pulpit by clergymen, written up in the daily newspapers and selected talks were broadcast nightly on the radio stations. Each day, four or five talks were given on health related topics by "prominent Albertans and experts". Well known and experienced speakers such as Emily Murphy and Nellie McClung were frequent guests. Movies for the children were included and the week closed on Saturday with a "Health Fairy Play" in the Grand Theatre. Riley also edited a Child Welfare Booklet which had helpful hints for mothers, menus for children and facts about the School Clinic in it. In 1923 alone, seven thousand copies of this booklet were distributed through the schools and sent home with the children.<sup>86</sup>

In 1925, it was decided to hold Child Welfare Week during the Easter holidays which would involve the children more and keep them out of mischief. One participant remembers attending it during the thirties as a treat when no one had much money to spend on entertainment. She remembers Maude Riley as an imposing figure who imperiously

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<sup>85</sup> Corbet, "Maude Riley", 217.

<sup>86</sup> Ibid., Clipping from Calgary Herald, 13 October 1923.

and insistently struck a note on the theatre's piano to catch the children's attention and bring them to order.<sup>87</sup> She would then give them a pep talk and have them recite the "Children's Code of Honour".

Child Welfare Week became an institution in Calgary and through it Maude Riley became well known to a whole generation of Calgarians. She also achieved national influence as a representative on the Board of Governors of the Canadian Welfare Council from 1922-1931. In 1946, she was named Calgary Citizen of the Year and was given the King George medal in recognition of her family and social work. After her husband's death, she moved into the Palliser Hotel and lived there until her death in 1962.

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<sup>87</sup> Spalding Interview.

## CHAPTER 3

## JEAN (McWILLIAM) McDONALD: A MILITANT MOTHER

Early Years

A photograph of Jean McWilliam taken around 1911 shows a small, attractive and vibrant woman surrounded by the roughly clad working men who were her first boarders.<sup>1</sup> The picture is black and white so the colour of her hair cannot be seen, but one has the impression it must have been red. She was known as Jean McWilliam until 1936 when she remarried and became Jean McDonald. Her daughter, Mollie LaFrance describes her as a "very jolly and happy person" who always had faith things would turn out for the best. Mollie also refers to the family home as a "refuge for the lame, the limp and the lazy" as her mother was known as a champion of the poor and defender of the underdog.<sup>2</sup>

In a time when women were always referred to by their husband's name, Jean consistently signed herself as Jean McWilliam instead of Mrs. William McWilliam. She often

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<sup>1</sup> This photograph of Jean is reprinted in Max Foran, Calgary: An Illustrated History (Toronto: James Lorimer, 1978), 83.

<sup>2</sup> Georgia Baird Interview with Mollie LaFrance (nee McWilliam).

flaunted other societal conventions, was extremely outspoken, and saw herself as the protector of those who could not or would not speak up for themselves. McWilliam was such a colourful character that Nellie McClung, the prominent author and suffragist, included McWilliam as a character in one of her books.<sup>3</sup> Her character, Jean McCalmon is a thinly disguised portrait of Jean McWilliam. McClung describes her as a:

Fiery Scots woman from the Clyde who was well known and feared by the aldermen of the City for she was a frequent visitor at their meetings and always a dissenter. She wrote letters to the paper on many subjects, for Jean had the gift of words, not always pretty ones. To Jean McCalmon any fight was better than no fight.<sup>4</sup>

Fighting came naturally to McWilliam as most of her life had been a struggle. She was born in the small west Scottish village of Waterside in 1877. Her father was employed as a pig iron lifter at a blast furnace in the steel industry. Her mother died at the age of thirty nine after giving birth to thirteen children, only three of whom survived. The family was so poor that her father had to borrow money in order to bury his wife.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> GAI, M724, Mrs. Jean McDonald Papers, M724, File 1, Appendix to Memoir. Jean apparently "had words" with prominent ladies of the day like Mrs. McClung over the working conditions of domestics. Mollie felt the description of her mother in The Stream Runs Fast was "not flattering".

<sup>4</sup> Nellie McClung, The Stream Runs Fast: My Own Story (Toronto: Thomas Allen Ltd., 1945), 260.

<sup>5</sup> McDonald Papers, File 1, Memoir.

Economic circumstances forced McWilliam to leave school at the age of eleven and begin work as a domestic servant. She was never to forget her "father's hard work for a miserable pittance" and her own early deprivation. It "burned into my heart a determination to carry on as long as I lived in defence of the underdog". Her interest in the trade union movement also came early in life as she stated in her Memoir:

I remember Keir Hardie coming down from Glasgow to organize the workers. My father was among the first to join the union.

After the union was formed a strike was called and McWilliam remembers being on a starvation diet for three months. Eventually she began to train as a dairy maid and cheese maker and attended the Kilmarnock Dairy School where she received her certificate at the age of seventeen.

Later, while working on a dairy farm, she met a man twelve years her senior who began courting her. One weekend their employers left them alone for two days while attending a funeral and according to one written account by McWilliam, "he made violent love to me" which resulted in their marriage. She claims the marriage was not happy as he used to lose his temper and sulk or fly into rages and strike her.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> Ibid, File 2, Untitled typescript written in 1951 which gives a less romanticized version of her life than the Memoir. The relationship between Jean and William McWilliam is confusing. Her Memoir and this typescript do not agree on a number of points and the daughter never mentions her father. It is likely that the marriage was unhappy at a time when divorce was uncommon and that the record has been "sanitized"

As did so many others at the time, McWilliam and her husband immigrated to Canada in 1907 and "planned to make a start in a new world".<sup>7</sup> They came steerage under a Government plan whereby they repaid their fare by doing farm work for two years. Since they were both British born and experienced farm workers, they would have been seen as ideal immigrants.

They came at a time when Canada was experiencing its greatest swell of immigration. Earlier immigration policies were geared toward attracting experienced farmers to the west, regardless of their ethnic origin. This policy had attracted large numbers of Central and Eastern Europeans who were viewed unfavourably by the first settlers who were predominately Canadian by birth and British in national origin. This Anglo Saxon elite was vocal about their dislike of foreigners and began agitating for changes in the immigration policy.<sup>8</sup> The changes that were made resulted in preferential treatment of British immigrants including assistance with payment of their passage.

The McWilliams undoubtedly benefitted from this shift in policy, as they could never have afforded to emigrate

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by the daughter.

<sup>7</sup> McDonald Papers, File 1, Memoir.

<sup>8</sup> See Howard Palmer, "Stranger & Stereotypes: The Rise of Nativism - 1988-1920," in The Prairie West, ed Douglas Francis and Howard Palmer (Edmonton: Pica Pica Press, 1985), 309-333, for a further explanation of the ethnic pecking order in Western Canada.

otherwise. Like most immigrants, they were leaving a life of poverty and misery and had high expectations for a better life, which in many cases were not realized. Some historians believe these unfulfilled dreams were the catalyst for the political radicalism that later became common on the prairies.<sup>9</sup>

At the time of their emigration in 1907, the McWilliams had two children, a daughter Mollie who was two and a son John who was four. Three older children had died in Scotland, two of diphtheria and the other of an unspecified illness while in hospital for a foot straightening operation. The story of their arrival in Canada and their subsequent mishaps is recorded in McWilliam's Memoir and appears to illustrate the nature of the McWilliam marriage. She is self described as strong and capable and he as disorganized and incompetent. He not only left her stranded with little money and two sick children in quarantine at Partridge Island, but he also lost all their luggage by not claiming it properly off the ship in St John. McWilliam was understandably upset but rather than accepting the loss, began petitioning the local member of parliament until the luggage was eventually found.

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<sup>9</sup> See A.W. Rasporich "Utopia, Sect and Millennium in Western Canada, 1870-1940," Prairie Forum 12 (Fall, 1987): 217-43.

### Struggling for a Livelihood

And so began their life in the "New Land". They worked for about a year in Ontario, then went west to the J.H. Lewis farm in Balzac, Alberta. In 1909, they were free of their obligation to the Canadian government and William decided to try homesteading at Munson, an area north of Drumheller. McWilliam was tired of farming and did not think she could stand the isolation of a homestead. Between them they had two hundred and fifty dollars which they divided equally and McWilliam moved to Calgary.

Her first job was doing housework and office cleaning by the hour at the Carlyle Dairy.<sup>10</sup> She rented a small house on Seventh Avenue East, close to City Hall, and began taking in boarders. Most of the boarders were Scottish carpenters who were building the Palliser Hotel. McWilliam also worked as a matron for the Police Department which was then located in the basement of City Hall. As a Police Matron, she was called when needed to supervise and search any women picked up by the police. Most of the women were prostitutes which gave McWilliam a first hand look at the seamier side of Calgary life. A side of life from which most "decent" women were sheltered.

McWilliam worked hard to succeed. Her police work usually occurred at night and she would get home just in

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<sup>10</sup> Baird Interview with Mollie LaFrance.

time to cook breakfast for the boarders. By 1912, at the relatively young age of thirty five, she managed to become a property owner. The house she bought was about two years old and was situated in Victoria Park close to the present day Stampede grounds. The house cost \$5,000 and since she only had about \$200 to her name, it represented quite a gamble. However, it allowed her to expand her room and board business and she obviously was able to meet the payments as she lived there until ill health forced her to move in 1958.<sup>11</sup>

Even in 1912, the house had electricity, running water and an indoor toilet. It also had gas after the Turner Valley field was discovered in 1914 but the gas supply was somewhat unreliable and stoves were designed so they could use coal as well. The rooms were partitioned and she was able to accommodate about sixteen men. They were all single and most of them were Scots interested in the labour movement and of a "socialist bent".

By this time, McWilliam was no longer working by the hour and was able to afford a hired girl for herself. She also sent out her laundry and hired union help for anything she needed done. She was very pro labour and attributed this to her experiences in Scotland where there was such a discrepancy between the aristocracy and the working class.

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<sup>11</sup> McDonald Papers, Report written by Mollie LaFrance in 1967 to Calgary Local Council of Women re inclusion of her mother in their Centennial Project.

It was also quite likely due to the influence of her socialistic boarders and her connections with the homestead in the Drumheller Valley. The miners in this area were militant union men who became ardent supporters of the radical One Big Union when it developed.<sup>12</sup>

The first World War broke out in 1914 and McWilliam's boarding house business fell on hard times. All her boarders enlisted and went overseas. To make ends meet she took in men who were suffering from Venereal Disease and could not be accommodated at the hospital.<sup>13</sup> It was during the war that the public first became aware of the high incidence of gonorrhoea and syphilis in the general population. The treatment of the day was Salvarsan which was a preparation of arsenic. It had to be carefully injected over an extended period of time, sometimes as long as two years. The side effects of the drug were often as bad as the disease itself.<sup>14</sup>

It is likely that McWilliam took in men who were undergoing extended treatment and were not well enough to live on their own. Since it was still considered possible

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<sup>12</sup> Howard Palmer with Tamara Palmer, Alberta: A New History (Edmonton Hurtig Publishers, 1990), 191.

<sup>13</sup> Baird Interview with daughter, Mollie LaFrance.

<sup>14</sup> See Janice Dickin McGinnis, "From Salvarsan to Penicillin: Medical Science and VD Control in Canada," in Essays in the History of Canadian Medicine ed. Wendy Mitchenson and Janice Dickin McGinnis (Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 1988), 132, 82.

to contract the infection through dishes, towels and toilet seats, there must have been a tremendous stigma attached to having such men in her home. Polite society still referred to it as the "secret plague".<sup>15</sup> However, McWilliam did not allow such opinions to interfere with her ability to support herself and her children.

In 1915, William McWilliam also enlisted and went overseas. McWilliam claimed she had not heard from him for three years until he told her of his decision to enlist. However, she did make several trips out to the homestead to check on the crops during his absence. She was concerned that he was being taken advantage of and, ever the sharp business woman, she wanted to protect her share of any profits.

After the war, McWilliam also worked as a practical nurse with the Red Cross Society during the influenza epidemic of 1918 which, within a few short months in the fall of 1918, killed between twenty and twenty two million people in the world.<sup>16</sup> It arrived in Calgary October 2, 1918 by means of an infected troop train.<sup>17</sup> By October 18, schools, churches and theatres were closed and public

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<sup>15</sup> Calgary Local Council of Women Papers & Minutes of Executive Meeting, 16 May 1919.

<sup>16</sup> Eileen Pettigrew. The Silent Enemy: Canada & the Deadly Flu of 1918 (Saskatoon: Western Producer Books, 1983) 5 - 6.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid., 63 - 66.

meetings were banned. The schools were turned into emergency hospitals and since there was a shortage of trained nurses, volunteers were trained to look after the sick.

Jean McWilliam was one of these volunteers and she also opened up her boarding house for the care of the sick. Her children were sent to stay with friends on a farm near Granum while she worked as a practical nurse.<sup>18</sup> There really was not much to be done for her patients except to encourage rest and nourishment. McWilliam cleaned their houses and made some soup which the Red Cross provided. She remembered it as "such a sad winter after the long sad years".<sup>19</sup>

#### The Great War Next-of-Kin Association

It was during the war years that McWilliam began her career of activism. She founded an organization which was known as the Great War Next-of-Kin Association. It was a volatile group which pressured the government by means of petitions and letters into providing better benefits to the wives and children of enlisted men. The men were being paid \$1.10 per day and the wives got two thirds of that which was

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<sup>18</sup> Baird Interview with daughter Mollie LaFance.

<sup>19</sup> McDonald Papers, File 1, Memoir.

a "starvation allowance".<sup>20</sup> A "Patriotic Fund" had been set up to supplement this allowance but it was only given to those who were considered worthy. McWilliam and her fellow members of the Next-of-Kin Association believed the responsibility for their support should be placed on the Canadian government and not be left to private charity. Their major success was to force changes in the administration of the Patriotic Fund which had tried to decrease funding to those women who had worked outside their homes in order to augment their allowances. The slogan of the Association was "justice not charity". Its membership was not limited only to Calgary, as it established branches in the larger centres in the province and as one newspaper account described it, became a "power to be reckoned with".<sup>21</sup>

McWilliam's activities on behalf of the Next-of-Kin Association also brought her into conflict with R.B. Bennett who at that time was the Conservative Member of Parliament for Calgary East. He attended a Next-of-Kin meeting and they exchanged strong words over Prime Minister Borden's lack of sympathy for the soldiers wives. Bennett was originally going to sue McWilliam for defamation of character and summoned her to his office to scare her. She refused to back down and said: "You might be God Almighty to

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<sup>20</sup> Baird Interview with daughter Mollie LaFrance.

<sup>21</sup> Alberta Non-Partisan, 15 March 1918.

the rest of the women in Calgary, but you are just R.B. Bennett to me."<sup>22</sup> Bennett liked someone who was not afraid to stand up to him and McWilliam later considered him a champion of her many causes and a good friend. Such relationships were common in McWilliam's life. She made a career of keeping "things popping for the powers that be" but always kept a number of influential people on her side.

However, McWilliam always attracted controversy and the Next-of-Kin Association was no exception. Tensions among the members developed as officer's wives became involved and as one account describes it some "ultra patriotic reactionaries" attempted to gain control of the executive positions and to "divert their activities from a study of the real issues into a harmless milk and water form of benevolent - charitable philanthropic society". A further account describes how the Association, which was founded because of the common needs of soldier's dependents, deteriorated into differences based on class status.<sup>23</sup> The ground was thus laid for the class struggles which took place after the war.

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<sup>22</sup> Baird Interview with daughter Mollie LaFrance.

<sup>23</sup> Alberta Non-Partisan., 10 May 1918.

Militant Mothers

Along with her involvement in the Next-of-Kin Association, McWilliam was also involved in organizing female laundry workers into a union and conducting a study about living conditions among the workers of Calgary.<sup>24</sup> It is not clear if she did this work independently or as a member of an organization. She was involved with the Calgary Trades and Labour Council but it is not clear in what capacity. She and her colleague Mary Corse are listed as attending meetings and were occasionally asked by the Council to conduct a study or to intervene with the Mayor on some worker's behalf.<sup>25</sup>

Whatever the case, her work as a part time police matron must have given her some legitimacy within the working class and her work with the Red Cross had given her a first hand look at living conditions among many different families. It is small wonder then that McWilliam, who had been witness to so much suffering and strife since she moved to Canada, was an eager witness before the Royal Commission appointed in 1919 to investigate industrial relations in Canada.

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<sup>24</sup> Testimony of Jean McWilliam, Evidence Presented to the Royal Commission on Industrial Relations (Mather's Commission), Calgary, 3 May 1919: 176.

<sup>25</sup> GAI, Calgary Labour Council Papers, M4743, Box 1, File 6, Minutes of Meetings held 5 July, 19 July and 2 August 1918.

She appeared before the Mather's Commission as a private citizen representing no organization.<sup>26</sup> She and her fellow activist, Mary Corse, both gave poignant accounts of what life was like for the working class of Calgary during and just after the war. They spoke of the high cost of living in relation to wages; the high rate of unemployment (especially in the winter months), the low wages paid to women, poor working conditions and the lack of educational opportunities for the children of the working class.

It is clear from their testimony that tensions existed between the social classes of people and that the working class was angry enough to make a "revolution" possible. Mrs. Corse described it as "the vast inequality in the classes of people" and used the following analogy to make her point:

If my children are starving and I go on the corner with a tin cup and beg for a little to buy them bread I am arrested as a vagrant. Another woman can stand on that corner, wearing hundreds of dollars worth of furs, boots costing \$20.00 and a corsage bouquet and they can collect nickels from the Veteran and war widow and she is commended for her services for some petty little scheme.<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>26</sup> This independence was characteristic of Jean McWilliam. In the Baird interview, her daughter states Jean was never involved in politics as she did not want any political strings attached to her activities.

<sup>27</sup> Testimony, Mather's Commission, 637. This probably was aimed at Maude Riley who was renowned as a "Tag Day" organizer and fundraiser.

McWilliam was even more outspoken than her friend and rarely worried about the consequences of her remarks. She was a passionate speaker and her testimony before the Royal Commission gives some idea of the fiery oration for which she was noted:

The Government just let things go to the dogs and they didn't care. The Separation Allowance was raised and the landlords raised the rent. Then the dairymen put an extra (cost) on our milk and butter. The main things which our children had to live on. The working people had to start and pay the price of the war and the millionaires put away the profits.<sup>28</sup>

It also demonstrates how both McWilliam and Mary Corse shrouded their radical opinions in conventional maternal rhetoric. Although they wanted societal changes, they never advocated for any changes in the primary role of women as mothers. Joan Sangster refers to such women as "militant mothers" and believes they were primarily concerned with class inequality rather than women's inequality in particular.<sup>29</sup> Whether they really felt this way or used maternalist sentiments as a strategy to encourage acceptance for their other ideas is difficult to determine.

Feelings of discontent were common among the working class of Calgary and of westerners in general. Their frustration found expression through labour radicalism and

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<sup>28</sup> Ibid., 182.

<sup>29</sup> See Joan Sangster, "Militant Mothering: Women in the Early CCF," chap., in Dreams of Equality (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1989), 91-123.

the formation of reformist political parties, which were concentrated on the Prairies. As previously mentioned, McWilliam was not involved in political parties, but Calgary in 1919 was a hot bed of discontent and she was very much one of the discontented.

### Union Activities

In March of 1919, Calgary hosted a Western Interprovincial Labour Conference which intended to form a left-wing caucus within the Canadian Trades and Labour Congress. Instead of forming a caucus, they voted unanimously to break away from international union affiliations and start a new organization to be called the One Big Union (OBU).<sup>30</sup> Mrs. George (Mary) Corse was present at this conference as the only female member of the Alberta Executive representing the Typographical Ladies Association. She would have heard another delegate, Mrs. Armstrong, speak on the work being done by the Woman's Labour League in Winnipeg. The League picketed when the men were on strike, raised money for strike pay and held "economic classes".<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>30</sup> David Bercuson, "Western Labour Radicalism and the One Big Union: Myths and Realities", in The Twenties in Western Canada, ed. S.M. Trofimenkoff (Ottawa: National Museum of Man, 1972), 33.

<sup>31</sup> P.A.A. 72. 159/108, A Farmilo Papers, Western Convention Report held at Calgary March 13-15, 1919.

At the conference, the delegates passed a resolution of sympathy with Russian Bolshevism and this was reported in the newspaper.<sup>32</sup> It was radical rhetoric such as this that caused much of the later opposition to the OBU. It was not even two years previously that the Bolsheviks had seized power and transformed the Russian uprising of 1917 into a socialist revolution. There was much fear throughout the world that other workers would attempt to do the same. To be in sympathy with the Bolsheviks was interpreted as being in favour of a revolution.

The One Big Union, which came into being in June of 1919, was founded on Marxist principles and designed to unite all workers in Canada into a single union.<sup>33</sup> Bercuson argues that the formation of the OBU was the brainchild of a few radicals and that the majority of the delegates did not really understand what they were supporting. Once they realized the OBU was not going to meet their needs, they deserted it quickly.

The founders of the OBU were primarily radical British immigrants who had been active members of unions or socialist political parties in Great Britain. Many of them were boarders at Jean McWilliam's house. McWilliam was supportive of the OBU and in the beginning at least, was a

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<sup>32</sup> Calgary Herald, 14 March 1919.

<sup>33</sup> Bercuson, "Western Labour Radicalism", 33.

Bolshevist sympathizer.<sup>34</sup> Such early sympathies account for her later reputation as a radical and a communist. Feelings were running high at the time and those in positions of power were eager to stamp out any seeds of revolution. For example, the Great War Veteran's Association (precursor of the Royal Canadian Legion) passed a resolution demanding the "deportation of red socialists, IWWs and other agitators as undesirable citizens especially those who gave voice to the Bolsheviki sentiments at the Calgary labour convention".<sup>35</sup>

The feelings of unrest continued throughout the spring of 1919 and culminated in the Winnipeg General Strike on May 15.<sup>36</sup> The strike started when negotiations broke down between management and labour in the building and metal trades. The Winnipeg Trades and Labour Council took a general strike vote and 25,000 workers walked off the job within hours of the deadline. The city was essentially paralysed for six weeks until June 25. Even though the OBU had not yet been officially formed, (its founding convention was held in Calgary during the first week of June), it and its organizers were blamed for the General Strike.

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<sup>34</sup> Searchlight 26 November 1919. This edition contains a letter to the editor written by Jean McWilliam expressing her outrage at a talk given by the noted British suffragette Emmeline Pankhurst which criticized Bolshevist sympathizers.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid.

<sup>36</sup> Gerald Friesen, The Canadian Prairies (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1987), 361-364.

The federal government sent Senator Gideon Robertson, the Minister of Labour, to Winnipeg to mediate and he was determined that the workers not be allowed to win. Forces made up of the Royal North West Mounted Police and specially trained volunteers were amassed so they could be called upon to put down the strike by force. Robertson also arranged for the arrest of eight strike leaders in the early hours of June 18. Prior to their arrest, the Immigration Act was amended to allow for the deportation of British immigrants and to broaden the definition of sedition. On Saturday, June 21, a demonstration took place and violence erupted. The Royal North West Mounted Police charged into the crowd and gunfire broke out. This day became known as "Bloody Saturday" and resulted in thirty casualties and the death of a striker. Realizing the futility of their struggle, the strikers called off the walkout and returned to work on June 26.

During this time, sympathy strikes were launched in other cities throughout Canada including Calgary.<sup>37</sup> A strike vote was taken on May 26 and 1,500 Calgary workers left their posts out of sympathy with the Winnipeg Strikers.<sup>38</sup> As in Winnipeg, a central strike committee was set up and Jean McWilliam was the representative on it from

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<sup>37</sup> Palmer, Alberta A New History, 191.

<sup>38</sup> Calgary Daily Herald, 26 May 1919.

the federated Labour Union.<sup>39</sup> Around the same time 8,000 miners in District #18 (Drumheller and area) went out on strike.<sup>40</sup> Different unions took votes at different times and it is difficult to ascertain just how many workers were on strike at any one time.

At the same time federal authorities were gathering evidence across the country that could be used in conjunction with the newly expanded legislation on sedition. They began searching the houses of known OBU promoters and supporters. McWilliam's boarding house was one of the areas searched. Her daughter remembers burning "socialistic literature that was nothing serious but it was considered seditious and mother had no desire to be put on the black list".<sup>41</sup> The searches were conducted by the RNWMP and if anything suspicious was found, the consequences could be serious. One man from Port Arthur who was charged with possession of prohibited literature was fined \$100 and fired from his job with Canadian National Railways.<sup>42</sup>

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<sup>39</sup> Ibid, 22 May 1919.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid, 28 May 1919.

<sup>41</sup> Baird interview. The daughter also claims it was R.B. Bennet who phoned Jean and warned her of the upcoming search.

<sup>42</sup> One Big Union Bulletin, 13 November 1919.

Calgary Women's Labour League

Although her daughter claims McWilliam was an innocent bystander condemned by nature of her association with known socialists, the various newspaper accounts place her as an active member of the radical left in the years just following the War and during the early twenties. She was not only a member of the Calgary Central Strike Committee but was also president of the Calgary Defense Committee which raised money for the legal costs of the convicted Winnipeg Strike leaders.<sup>43</sup> Much of the fund raising done in Calgary for these men was done through the Calgary Women's Labour League (CWLL) which McWilliam and Mary Corse founded in June of 1919.

Its purpose was to "support the principle of collective bargaining espoused by the Winnipeg Strike and to help alleviate the suffering of families on strike".<sup>44</sup> It patterned itself after the WLL of Winnipeg which was organized in 1917. A number of other Leagues were formed across Canada before and during the war years. According to Carol Lee Bacchi, the original Leagues were modelled on the British Labour Leagues and originally acted as auxiliaries to male trade unions. Most of the members were wives and daughters of trade unionists who encouraged working women to

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<sup>43</sup> Searchlight, 3 September 1920.

<sup>44</sup> The Searchlight, 3 September 1920.

form unions in order to protect their husbands and/or fathers from wage cutters. Bacchi describes the Leagues as being antagonistic to suffrage and other reform movements. Prohibition was also an area of conflict as working class people saw it as the imposition of middle class values on the working poor who used alcohol as one of their few pleasures.<sup>45</sup>

On the other hand, Joan Sangster describes the members of the Women's Labour Leagues as being primarily Finnish, Yiddish or Ukrainian speaking. She claims, that although some of the Leagues had been in existence since the War, they were revived in 1922 by the Communist Party of Canada when it set up a Women's Department in response to instructions from the Communist International.<sup>46</sup> Florence Custance, the director of the Women's Department, began setting up new Leagues and in 1924 a federal WLL apparatus was established. Sangster states the local leagues were allowed some autonomy but implies they were all guided by the goals of the Communist Party and interpreted issues from a Marxist perspective.

In Calgary, it is not clear that the WLL was affiliated with the Communist Party of Canada. A review of the "Woman

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<sup>45</sup> Carol Lee Bacchi, Liberation Deferred? The Ideas of the English Canadian Suffragists, 1877 - 1918. (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1983), 120 - 121.

<sup>46</sup> Joan Sangster, Dreams of Equality: Women on the Canadian Left, 1920 - 1950, (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1989), 28 - 29.

Worker", the Federation's monthly publication, between 1926 and 1929 revealed no published news about the activities of the Calgary League.<sup>47</sup> McWilliam's daughter, Mollie emphatically denies that her mother was ever a Communist but allows that McWilliam certainly befriended some and even provided one man with free room and board after he had been jailed for sedition.<sup>48</sup>

Although McWilliam supported radical ideals and advocated for the working class, she also supported prohibition and other social reforms advanced by more moderate reformers.<sup>49</sup> While the Calgary Women's Labour League raised funds (\$1,200) for the defence of those arrested during the strike and sent petitions to Ottawa to reinstate fired federal workers, it also petitioned the provincial government for protective legislation that would provide a rest room for female workers, forbid women working after 11:00 p.m., and improve mother's pensions.

They did not request equal pay for women but contented themselves with seeking a minimum wage for women that was based on the actual cost of living. They did not seek

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<sup>47</sup> Telephone Conversation with Patricia Roome, Calgary, 26 July, 1990.

<sup>48</sup> Baird interview.

<sup>49</sup> Alberta Labor News, 25 September 1920. Nellie McClung addressed the CWLL and a motion supporting total abstinence was passed. It is not known if they also supported McClung's claim that prohibition was necessary before any social reform could be accomplished.

changes in society that would allow women with children to work and earn an adequate salary, but instead petitioned for better pensions for mothers based on need rather than marital status.<sup>50</sup>

In 1923, the CWLL even petitioned the Calgary School Board to reduce the number of married women on staff as they supported the concept of a family wage (a man earning enough to support a family adequately) and the duty of a married woman to raise her family.<sup>51</sup> Of course the main people affected by such a petition were married teachers and the League did not see them as members of the working class. Instead they championed the unmarried working girl and sought to improve her working conditions through stricter enforcement of the Factory Act and advocated for a more generous Minimum Wage.

They also created task forces to draw attention to the living conditions of the working class. As with the Next-of-Kin Association, they wanted economic justice not charity and attributed ill health, prostitution and malnutrition to poor wages. Their strategies included lobbying, letter writing campaigns and sending delegates as watchdogs to attend Hospital Board, School Board and City Council

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<sup>50</sup> Searchlight, 3 September 1920.

<sup>51</sup> Patricia Roome, "Amelia Turner and Calgary Labour Women, 1919-1935," in Beyond the Vote, ed. Linda Kealey and Joan Sangster (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1989), 98.

meetings.<sup>52</sup> Alex Ross, a Calgary Labour MLA who was the Minister of Labour during the twenties, was a frequent recipient of letters from the Calgary Women's Labour League and he usually supported their causes.<sup>53</sup>

Jean McWilliam believed in lobbying but not in actually belonging to any political party. It was this belief that separated her from many of the other "left wing" women who originally belonged to the League. In 1924, many of the League members withdrew from it in favour of joining the Dominion Labour Party and supporting candidates for civic elections.<sup>54</sup> They may also have been concerned about Jean McWilliam's affiliation with the Central Council of the Unemployed which was dominated by Communists. A.J. Boulter, a miner from Drumheller, was the head of the Council and was an old family friend of the McWilliams. The CWLL supported the Council's plea for improved relief distribution but when 384 unemployed men occupied City Hall, some of the more conservative women may have had second thoughts.<sup>55</sup> 1924 also marks the year that Mary Corse, the co-founder of the WLL, moved away from Calgary. She held more moderate views than McWilliam and had probably acted as a mediator between McWilliam and some of the other women. Without her

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<sup>52</sup> Alberta Labor News, 10 June 1922.

<sup>53</sup> Roome, "Amelia Turner," 97.

<sup>54</sup> Ibid., 100.

<sup>55</sup> Alberta Labor News, 8 April 1922.

tempering influence some women inevitably clashed with McWilliam and left the League.

It is somewhat difficult to trace the activities of the CWLL after 1924 as it is no longer mentioned in the Alberta Labor News after that date. It continued to exist as it is briefly mentioned as the organizer of the annual conference of the Western Women's Social and Economic League which was held in Calgary in April of 1927.<sup>56</sup> This conference included women from both the Canadian Labor and the Dominion Labor Party. Their resolutions from the conference indicate they were still concerned about the minimum wage for women but they had also broadened their interests to include a stand against war and cadet training in the schools and contributory pensions for unemployment insurance.<sup>57</sup>

#### Birth Control Activities

According to her daughter, Jean McWilliam was a follower of Margaret Sanger, the American birth control crusader who pioneered the use of the vaginal diaphragm. McWilliam shared Sanger's "belief that the burden of child-bearing along with economic conditions was the problem with all the poor of the world."<sup>58</sup>

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<sup>56</sup> Alberta Labor News, 2 April 1927.

<sup>57</sup> Alberta Labor News, 9 April 1927.

<sup>58</sup> McDonald Papers, Appendix to Memoir, 55.

In Canada, it had been illegal to disseminate information about the prevention of conception or to sell contraceptives since 1892 and this law was not amended until 1969. However, in spite of this, the birth rate fell every decade even though the marriage rate rose slightly.<sup>59</sup> Obviously women were using some form of contraception.

Although McWilliam "never did anything outside the law", she used books written by Sanger to help a number of her friends in preventing pregnancies.<sup>60</sup> She also sheltered girls who had illegitimate pregnancies and on at least one occasion, the editor of the Calgary Herald, asked her to take in one of the paper's employees. McWilliam was not a believer in abortion but she did not hesitate to help a woman who came to her after an unsuccessful attempt to abort her seventh pregnancy with a knitting needle.

McWilliam was not alone in her concern about preventing pregnancies but her philosophy and approach was considerably different than that of most birth control advocates of her time.<sup>61</sup> Most of the people promoting birth control in the twenties did not intend to provide information to whomever

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<sup>59</sup> Angus McLaren and Arlene Tigar McLaren, The Bedroom and the State (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1986), 11.

<sup>60</sup> McDonald Papers, Appendix to Memoir, 55.

<sup>61</sup> PAA, Georgina Sackville Papers, 77.259. Georgina Sackville operated a home for unmarried mothers in Calgary. She later moved to Innisfail and wrote Birth Control or Prevention of Conception (Calgary: Home Publications, 1929) which promoted eugenic ideals.

wanted it or to advocate for the right of women to control their own bodies. They believed in Eugenics or the "improvement of the human race by better breeding."<sup>62</sup>

The most strident supporters of the Eugenics cause were the various women's clubs who were particularly concerned about the influx of immigrants who they believed had a high incidence of feeble mindedness and other undesirable characteristics.<sup>63</sup> Maude Riley was also a supporter and gave a talk on the subject during Child Welfare Week which included the following quote:

If we are not to be swamped by the mentally deficient and the feeble minded, we must stop the production of the children of both classes.<sup>64</sup>

She and most other female reformers saw the solution to this problem as sterilization of the unfit to "prevent racial deterioration."<sup>65</sup> In response to intensive lobbying by the various women's clubs, the Alberta government passed the Act Respecting Sexual Sterilization in 1928 and created a Eugenics Board which oversaw the sterilization of those who were judged to be mentally unfit or defective.<sup>66</sup>

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<sup>62</sup> Terry L. Chapman, "Early Eugenics Movement in Western Canada," Alberta History 25 (Autumn 1977):9.

<sup>63</sup> See Angus McLaren, "The Creation of a Haven for Human Thoroughbreds", Canadian Historical Review 67 (2, 1986):134.

<sup>64</sup> ACCFW Papers, File 4, Clipping from Albertan, 16 October 1923.

<sup>65</sup> CLCW Papers, File 20, 1925 Yearbook. Ibid.

<sup>66</sup> Chapman, "Eugenics Movement", 15.

There is no evidence that Jean McWilliam participated in the Eugenic movement. Her birth control activities were directed to helping women achieve some control over their bodies and their lives. She believed all women had a right to such information and to decide whether or not to have a child. Women came to her for help. She did not deliberately seek them out, nor did she believe birth control was the sole answer to their economic problems.

#### Calgary Local Council of Women

McWilliam seems to lose some of her radical leanings as the twenties progress. By 1930, she herself was a speaker on "Public Health" at the Western Labor Women's Convention held in Winnipeg. Other speeches on the program included such reformist topics as "Control of Feeble-mindedness", "Immigration", and "Mother's Allowances".<sup>67</sup> It was also in 1930 that the CWLL affiliated with that bastion of bourgeoisie respectability, the Calgary Local Council of Women.<sup>68</sup>

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<sup>67</sup> Alberta Labor News, 15 March 1930.

<sup>68</sup> CLCW Papers, Box 4, File 25, Minutes of General Meeting held 13 December 1929. In "Amelia Turner and Calgary Labour Women", Patricia Roome states Jean McWilliam was involved with the Local Council of Women during the twenties and even served as their president 1927-28. I believe she has confused Mrs. A. (Effie) MacWilliams with Jean McWilliam and could find no evidence of the CWLL affiliating any earlier than December 1929.

However, Jean McWilliam had not lost all her spunk. At the first annual meeting of the Local Council that the CWLL attended, they sent a letter containing a resolution that read:

Whereas: The public press reports that the Provincial Government has employed mental experts to engage in investigating the mental status of children who are rated as subnormal,

And whereas: There might be danger of experimentations with spinal punctures, the use of serums, gland surgery and other tests;

Therefore be it resolved: That the Women's Labour League of Calgary request the Provincial Government to protect these children from such dangers and further that citizens be safeguarded from committal to mental institutions because of being termed fanatics and soap box orators.<sup>69</sup>

Needless to say, the resolution was tabled and the meeting quickly adjourned. A banquet followed at which Judge Emily Murphy spoke on a far more comfortable and, and to the Local Council, a far more suitable topic: "Poetry as a curation for the ills to which the flesh and the spirit are heirs".

But the CWLL did not give up. They continued to make their presence known and Jean McWilliam was present at almost every executive meeting of the LCW held during the thirties. She was sometimes ruled out of order but she persevered and eventually became as adept at making motions and giving reports as any other member.

Although she herself was growing more conservative, her presence and that of other women with socialist backgrounds

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<sup>69</sup> Ibid., Minutes of Annual Meeting 20 January 1930.

had the effect of making the Calgary Local Council of Women more sympathetic to the cause of labour and the unemployed during the Depression, than they might otherwise have been. The composition of the organizations affiliated with the Calgary Local Council of Women changed dramatically over the years since its inception in 1912.

During its earliest years, religious groups, mother's unions and middle class reformist clubs such as The Imperial Order Daughters of the Empire (IODE) and the Woman's Christian Temperance Union (WCTU) dominated the Council. By the end of the thirties, religious groups had decreased from nineteen in 1920 to eight in 1939. Mother's Unions had become Home and School Associations and there were only two affiliated with the Council whereas there had been seven in 1920. The IODE left the Council in the thirties over the issue of cadet training and the WCTU decreased from four chapters in affiliation to only one.<sup>70</sup> On the other hand, left wing pressure groups increased from having no representation in 1920 to having five groups in 1939. These groups included the Women's Labour League, the CCF Women's Club, the Women's Section of the Dominion Labour Party, the Women's Section of the Ukrainian Labour Temple and the Unemployed Women's Association.<sup>71</sup>

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<sup>70</sup> CLCWP, Box 3, Files 20 and 21, Yearbooks for 1930 and 1939. Box 7, File 61, Register of Attendance for 1920.

<sup>71</sup> Ibid., Yearbook for 1939.

It is difficult to judge just how much influence these new members had on the Calgary LCW because very little has been written about their activities. It is possible, though, to get some sense of what they thought was important by looking at some of the resolutions presented by them for consideration to the Council.

In March of 1936, the Council endorsed a resolution to support a increase in the weekly allowance for single unemployed girls from \$3.50 per week to something more representative of a living wage.<sup>72</sup> About a year later, concern was expressed regarding local unemployed Chinese men who were receiving inadequate relief because of racial discrimination.<sup>73</sup> Another motion brought forward in March of 1937 concerned the boycotting of the Union Packing Company because of a labour dispute.<sup>74</sup> Although no attempt has been made to systematically compare resolutions from the earlier years with those from the latter years; the contrast in types of concerns is markedly different from those involving censorship of movies, bible reading in schools and sterilization of the "unfit".

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<sup>72</sup> Ibid., Box 4, File 27, Minutes of Regular Monthly Meeting, 19 March 1936.

<sup>73</sup> Ibid., Minutes of Regular Monthly Meeting, 18 Feb. 1937.

<sup>74</sup> Ibid., 18 March 1937.

It is easily apparent, that in the thirties, after the CWLL and other socialist organizations affiliated with the Calgary LCW, it underwent some significant changes. Since its formation in 1912, it had been dominated by middle class reformers who belonged to organizations such as the IODE and the WCTU and were primarily interested in imposing their values onto the rest of society. But as these groups left, they were replaced by socialist and labour groups who had broader and more diverse concerns. The image of the Calgary LCW changed in the thirties from that of a middle class conservative reform organization to one more radical and diverse and more supportive of the working class. It was through the influence of militant mothers like Jean McWilliam that such changes came about.

During the latter years of her life, Jean McWilliam concentrated on the struggles of senior citizens. The Women's Labour League had passed a resolution asking for old age pensions in 1922 and as it was winding down its activities as an organization in the thirties, the National Social Security Association emerged with Jean McWilliam as its president.<sup>75</sup> J.S. Woodsworth, the Labour M.P., had pressured the federal government to pass a variety of social legislation in the twenties and the 1926 election brought

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<sup>75</sup> McDonald Papers, File 6, Typescript of Report written for the Calgary Local Council of Women 1950 Yearbook. Jean McDonald signed it as President of both the Women's Labour League and the National Social Security Association.

forward a publicly financed pension scheme that provided those over seventy and without means with twenty dollars a month.<sup>76</sup>

Although McWilliam was not a member of any political party, she supported this legislation and through the National Social Security Association, campaigned to remove the means test for pensions, for a lower retirement age and better benefits for all seniors.<sup>77</sup> They still saw women as requiring special protection though, and advocated for pensions to be given to women at the age of fifty five and to men at age sixty.

Jean McWilliam McDonald died in 1969 and the headline on her obituary read "Veteran champion of Calgary's poor dies."<sup>78</sup> It is interesting to note that her obituary makes no mention of her connection to the Women's Labour League or to the labour radicalism of the twenties. It does highlight her activities with the Calgary Local Council of Women

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<sup>76</sup> John Diefenbaker, One Canada: Memoirs of the Right Honourable John G. Diefenbaker (Toronto: Macmillan, 1975), 151.

<sup>77</sup> CLCW Papers, File 84, Letter from Jean McDonald to LCW, 25 April 1951. The letter head of the National Social Security Association stressed it was a non-political and non-sectarian organization.

<sup>78</sup> Clipping from Margot Smith and Carol Pasternak ed. Pioneer Women of Western Canada (Toronto: Ontario Institute for Studies in Education, 1978), 109.

and no doubt that is how she wanted to be remembered: a militant mother who became respectable.<sup>79</sup>

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<sup>79</sup> One can only speculate on the numbers of women who were involved in radical causes during the early years of the century who have also covered up their activities. Another such woman was interviewed who was involved with the Communist Party during the twenties. She requested anonymity for her children's sake.

## CHAPTER 4

## BENEATH THE SPLENDOR

The early years of the twentieth Century were years of reform as Alberta was swept by the forces of the agrarian revolt and social gospel which were part of a continental progressive movement advocating a better life for all. Women were among the most ardent of the progressive reformers and they had high hopes for a better society in general and better conditions for women in particular.

These reformers and their clubs had an implacable faith in the power of legislation to enforce desired changes on society as a whole. Rather than advocate for changes in the primary role of women as mothers, they fought for changes which would enhance the status of women as moral guardians of society and nurturers of men and children. Men were still seen as the primary breadwinners and little attention was paid to the economic status of women unless it had a negative effect on children.

Much was made of women uplifting and purifying society through their participation in politics and as mentioned

previously, Alberta became the scene of a number of political firsts for women at the provincial level.<sup>1</sup>

Similarly, women were also active in local politics. Annie Gale was elected to the Calgary City Council in 1918 and served until 1923. Edith Patterson later followed her example and was elected in 1927. She was joined by Pansy Pue in 1930 and followed by Rose Wilkinson in 1936. Between 1918 and 1936, the School Board always had at least one female trustee sitting on it. Mary Corse, Marion Carson and Amelia Turner all served on it during the inter war years.<sup>2</sup>

Although neither Maude Riley nor Jean McWilliam ran for public office, the previous chapters have described their activities in various clubs which attempted to improve the lives of other women in Calgary. But how successful were they? Did their self described "splendid" efforts have any tangible results? Were women any better off at the beginning of the Second World War than they had been just after the first one? This chapter intends to explore how the political and legal achievements of women in the early 1900's obscured and even contributed to the lack of career and educational opportunities for women and their

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<sup>1</sup> Linda Rasmussen et al. A Harvest Yet to Reap: A History of Prairie Women, (Toronto: The Women's Press, 1976), 228-230.

<sup>2</sup> Ging G. Wong, "Calgary's Civic Government: A Structural History", Archives Division of Glenbow, 1987.

correspondingly low economic status that was epidemic by the end of the thirties.

### Legal Status of Women

During the first thirty years of the twentieth century, a number of legislative changes were made that affected the status of women in Alberta. Most of the changes sought were those which reformers saw as improving society without changing its basic structure or the separate roles of men and women.<sup>3</sup>

At the beginning of the century women had few legal rights especially after they married. A married woman was basically considered to be a possession of her husband and the children likewise belonged to their father. If the marriage broke up, the father retained custody of the children and the mother only regained it upon his death. If she had committed adultery, she forfeited her children forever.<sup>4</sup> Dower rights did not exist which meant a husband could sell the family home without the wife's consent and she had no recourse. Divorce was almost unheard of and whereas a husband could obtain a divorce on the grounds of

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<sup>3</sup> Elise Corbet, "Alberta Women in the 1920's: An Inquiry into Four Aspects of Their Lives", (Masters thesis, University of Calgary, 1979), 11.

<sup>4</sup> Rasmussen, Harvest, 226.

adultery alone, a women had to couple adultery with cruelty or desertion.<sup>5</sup>

And as it stated in the federal Election Act: "No woman, idiot, lunatic or criminal shall vote."<sup>6</sup> This particular indignity became the rallying point around which a number of early women's organizations coalesced. They believed if they could only get the vote, they could not only correct some of the injustices in women's lives, they could also make society in general a better place by lobbying for a number of other reforms.

Two of the most active women in regards to legal reform in Alberta were Mrs. O.C. (Henrietta) Edwards and Maude Riley. For fifteen years, on behalf of the Alberta Council of Women, they led an annual delegation to the provincial government seeking improvements in legislation related to women and children.<sup>7</sup>

Some of the legislation which they influenced the government to pass can be found in Table 2.

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<sup>5</sup> Department of Labour, Legal Status of Women, 31.

<sup>6</sup> As cited in Nellie McClung, In Times Like These, 43.

<sup>7</sup> Elise Corbet, "A. Maude Riley: a Do-Gooder, Not a Suffragette", in City Makers : Calgarians After the Frontier, ed Max Foran and Sheilagh Jameson (Calgary: Historical Society of Alberta, 1987), 210.

TABLE 2

## Alberta Legislation Relating to Women and Children

Date	Legislation	Purpose
1910	The Married Woman's Relief Act	Allowed a widow to receive an allowance from husband's estate if his will left her less than if he had died in testate.
1913	Infants Act	Guaranteed mother some guardianship rights after father's death.
1915	Married Woman's Home Protection Act	Allowed wife to prevent any transaction involving her home.
1916	Equal Suffrage Act	Gave women equality with men in provincial, municipal and school affairs.
1917	Dower Act	Safeguarded the interests of the wife in the event of the husband selling the home or homestead. (Extension of 1915 legislation)
1918	Dominion Elections Act	Allowed women to vote in federal elections. A year later they were allowed to hold office.
1919	Naturalization Act	Permitted a female British subject who married an "alien" to keep her citizenship.
1919	Mother's Allowance Act	Paid pension to widows or wives of the insane who had children.

TABLE 2 - Continued:

## Alberta Legislation Relating to Women and Children

Date	Legislation	Purpose
1920	Revised Infants Act	Made mother and father joint guardians of their children.
1921	Jury Act	Permitted women to be called as jurors except in criminal cases. Gave female defendants the right to women on her jury.
1922	Minimum Wage Act	Established a Board with jurisdiction to set minimum wage for all urban women wage earners except domestics in private homes. Also set hours of work for women.
1922	Married Women's Act	Reaffirmed wife's independence in her own financial and legal dealings.
1923	Children of Unmarried Parent's Act	Made the father responsible for the support of his child if paternity was proven.
1926	Revised Dower Act	Allowed wife a life time interest in some of her husband's property.
1926	Revised Mother's Allowance Act	Extended pension benefits to wives of "cripples" or invalids.
1929	Resolution of "Person's Case" by Privy Council in London, England	Declared women to be persons and qualified to sit in the Canadian Senate.

Source: Linda Rasmussen et al. A Harvest Yet to Reap (Toronto: the Women's Press, 1976), 226 - 231; and Department of Labour, Legal Status of Women (Ottawa: King's Printer, 1924)

Although some of the above legislation did improve the lot of women, most of it served to reinforce the doctrine of separate spheres and the concept of woman's role primarily being that of wife and mother and did little to improve their economic status. For example the Mother's Allowance Act only provided financial support until sons reached the age of fifteen and daughters turned sixteen. The mother was then on her own and having previously devoted her time to her children, she was not in a strong position to become self supporting. The Mothers Allowance was also only given to widows and did not apply to those who were divorced or whose husbands had deserted them.

In a similar vein, the Minimum Wage Act of 1925, only applied to women and girls and was intended to set a fair wage for females based on their cost of living. However, since it was generally assumed that girls were living at home and just working for "pin money" until they married, their cost of living was never calculated accurately.<sup>8</sup> It also did not apply to domestic workers, who in Calgary made up a large proportion of female workers, and were probably the workers in greatest need of protection.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> Department of Labour; Legal Status of Women (Ottawa, 1924), 70.

<sup>9</sup> Veronica Strong Boag, "Working Women & the State" in Women & the Canadian Labour Force, ed. Naomi Hersom & Dorothy Smith. (Ottawa: Social Sciences & Humanities Research Council of Canada, 1982) 453 - 56.

The Minimum Wage Act was an extension of earlier legislation known as the Alberta Factories Act which outlined the number of hours a woman could work, ensured rest breaks; prohibited night work and limited the type of occupations a woman could enter. Both pieces of legislation encouraged the idea that women were inferior workers who needed protection which handicapped women in their competition with male workers.<sup>10</sup>

Even the Dower Act, which in general, did improve the status of women, was not truly equitable in that the wife was still subordinate to her husband and could only keep her property if she had kept it separate from that of her husband from the beginning of the marriage.<sup>11</sup> The struggle for female jurors also had less to do with women achieving equality than it did with protecting the sensibilities of female defendants and perpetuating the notion of women's separate sphere. It was felt that women should be tried by their peers and not subjected to the humiliation of testifying in front of men. A similar argument was advanced for the necessity of female police by the Calgary Local Council of Women in 1931 which declared:

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<sup>10</sup> Veronica Strong-Boag, The New Day Recalled (Toronto: Copp-Clark-Pittman, 1988), 70. See also Sheila M. Rothman Woman's Proper Place (New York: Basic Books, 1978) p. 153 - 167 for an interesting discussion of how legislation favoured by American Progressives was counter productive to the best interests of women.

<sup>11</sup> Elise Corbet, "Alberta Women in the 1920's. (Master's Thesis, University of Calgary, 1979), 16.

Where the law touches a woman or child, the hand of the law ought to be that of a woman.<sup>12</sup>

Even the famous Person's Case did little to advance the cause of women. It did establish the right for women to sit in the Senate but such a right affected very few women except the elite. As one columnist for the United Farmers of Alberta put it:

In huge headlines I see it blazoned - "Women Eligible for Senate". I suppose, therefore, it is my duty to rejoice and be glad, but truth compels me to admit that I do not feel the thrill that perhaps I should. I do not feel half as much stirred as I did last Spring when that body turned down the bill passed by the Commons allowing women to establish a home in order to sue for divorce.<sup>13</sup>

Emily Murphy originally launched the Person's Case in order to counteract challenges from male lawyers that she was ineligible to hear cases as a police magistrate because she was not a "person". As time went on she became hopeful of being Canada's first female senator. However, since she was a staunch Conservative and the government of the day was Liberal, she was passed over in favour of Cairine Wilson, who was well connected to a prominent wealthy Liberal family. Judge Murphy also believed Mrs. Wilson was chosen because she was unlikely to create "any agitation for

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<sup>12</sup> Calgary Local Council of Women Papers, M5841, Box 3, File 20, 1931 Year Book, 79.

<sup>13</sup> H. Zella Spencer, reprinted in Alberta Labour News, 6 November 1929. The comment about divorce refers to women not being able to sue for divorce from their own domicile but having to travel to wherever their husbands were located.

women's place in the Senate".<sup>14</sup> It is certainly clear that the government highlighted Mrs. Wilson's maternal role rather than any of her other accomplishments as this excerpt from Hansard demonstrates:

We pay our respects to the incumbent who, previous to being called upon to perform her new functions, had accomplished - we must highly proclaim it - the most sacred duty, being the mother of eight children - - <sup>15</sup>

Emily Murphy was not only distressed at missing out on the Senate appointment but also felt the selection of Cairine Wilson denigrated the purpose of having a woman in the Senate. Although Judge Murphy had previously been one of the foremost supporters of protective legislation for women which ensured that women were treated differently, she saw the seat in the Senate as women finally being recognized as equals. As she confided to her close friend Nellie McClung:

- - - I can't see either why she should have been "supported": on his arm while going up to be sworn in. She went there as an equal, and not as a supported or protected person.<sup>16</sup>

Unfortunately Senator Wilson and other women were still seen as being in need of protection. Reformers such as

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<sup>14</sup> Provincial Archives of British Columbia, (PABC) Nellie McClung Papers, Add. MSS. 10, Box 11, File 13, Letter from Emily Murphy, 4 March 1930.

<sup>15</sup> Debates, House of Commons, 1930, 13. Address by Honourable Mr. Dupuis, 24 February 1930.

<sup>16</sup> Nellie McClung Papers, Letter from Emily Murphy, 4 March 1930.

Maude Riley and Emily Murphy had emphasized the maternal role of women to the exclusion of all other roles and spent much of their energy on fighting for legislation that preserved that role. It was too late to undo all those years of work. The result of maintaining a special role and separate sphere for women is also evident when the educational opportunities available to them are examined.

### Educational Opportunities

There were few opportunities for women in Calgary to achieve a post secondary education. There was only one university in Alberta and it was located in Edmonton. It was therefore difficult for any student from Calgary to attend university unless they were able to afford not only the tuition but the cost of living away from home. Given the expectation that women would stay at home until they were married, and not work after marriage, it was not a priority in many families to see their daughters educated. This is not to imply that no Calgary women attended the University of Alberta. Catherine Barclay was a well known Calgary school teacher who graduated from the University of Alberta in 1926.<sup>17</sup> She, as did many others, graduated from Normal School first and worked as a rural teacher while

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<sup>17</sup> GAI, M6126, Catherine and Mary Barclay Papers, File 34.

saving her money for university. After graduation though, she continued as a teacher since a university education really did not serve to open the doors of any other profession as it did for men.<sup>18</sup>

The twenties were also a time when vocational training in the public schools became popular and this too limited women's opportunities for career choices. After schooling became compulsory, there was a rapid expansion in secondary school enrolments which meant that high school was no longer just for the elite. Educators adopted a new utilitarian outlook and tried to find practical purposes for education. John Dewey was a leading progressive educational reformer who aimed to democratize education by placing the vocational needs of the lower class children on the same plane as the intellectual knowledge sought by the upper classes.<sup>19</sup>

Unfortunately in their zeal to make education practical, the progressive reformers further separated males and females into separate roles. Vocational training for girls of all social levels became courses in domestic science and/or secretarial skills. Again women themselves aided and abetted this shift. Throughout the twenties and thirties, various women's groups advocated special education for girls. The Calgary LCW reflected these wishes in resolutions put forward by their Education Committee. For

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<sup>18</sup> Rothman, Woman's Proper Place, 107.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid., 120-121

example, here is what one Convenor of Education had to say in her annual report:

We felt that less time should be given girls in subjects that are only essential to boys, and more time taken up with hygiene, household science, literature and fine arts.<sup>20</sup>

At the 1935 Annual meeting of the Calgary LCW, a letter from Maude Riley was read reporting a decision of the Provincial Executive to present a petition to the provincial government asking that:

Home Training replace subjects like Algebra, Geometry and Latin for girls who do not intend entering University.<sup>21</sup>

Such an attitude fostered the notion of certain subjects being inappropriate for girls to study and that the role of wife and mother was their true vocation in life.

Although it was possible for women to study nursing at either the Holy Cross Hospital or the Calgary General Hospital during the twenties and thirties, these programs were over two years long and required physical stamina that not all women had. Even though entrance requirements were as low as grade eight, employment after graduation was not certain as hospitals were basically staffed by students. Most graduate nurses worked as private duty nurses and fees

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<sup>20</sup> CLCW, Box 3, File 20, 1931 Yearbook, 57.

<sup>21</sup> CLCW Papers, Box 4 File 27, Minutes of Annual Meeting, 22 January 1935.

were set at \$5.00 per day.<sup>22</sup> During the thirties between one half to two thirds of these nurses were "unoccupied".

Wages for graduate nurses were low compared to other female occupations. In 1941, a graduate nurse in Calgary averaged \$523 on a yearly basis compared to \$1,217 for a female teacher. This was better than the \$191 averaged by a female domestic but not much higher than a laundress at \$461. It is difficult to determine the average earnings of a secretary because clerical workers were not reported separately in the 1941 Census. However, a female employee of the Post Office was probably a clerk of some nature and earned \$857.<sup>23</sup> It is not difficult to see where nursing fit on the hierarchy of desirable occupations and why teaching and clerical work were the positions most often chosen by women until they married.

It was fairly easy for a girl in Calgary to become a teacher. The Normal School had been established there since 1906.<sup>24</sup> Throughout the twenties, most students entered with a grade 11 or 12 education and were between 16 and 18 years of age.<sup>25</sup> The course they took was only eight months

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<sup>22</sup> Jennifer Sherwood and Eve Henderson, "Our History A Proud Heritage: the 1930's." AARN Newsletter, 46 (September, 1990):10

<sup>23</sup> Census of Canada, 1941, Table 11, 610.

<sup>24</sup> Weston, Phyllis A. "The History of Education in Calgary", Masters Thesis: University of Alberta, 1951, 23.

<sup>25</sup> Provincial Archives of Alberta, GS 79.61, General Register of Calgary Normal School.

in length and the students were predominantly female. In 1919, there were 52 students and only 15 of them were male. After graduation, most of them got positions teaching in one room rural schools. Only experienced teachers or those with university degrees were wanted in the cities.<sup>26</sup>

If a girl wanted a job in the city and one that was deemed appropriate for her gender, then clerical work was her best choice. The public schools made this choice easier as they provided secretarial training within the school system. A Commercial department had been established at Central High School in 1908 and when it moved to other accommodations it became known as the Commercial High School. In 1938 it was transplanted to the Western Canada High School buildings.<sup>27</sup>

Students were admitted with a Grade 8 education and were taught typewriting, shorthand, business English, spelling and penmanship. However, during the thirties, it was not unusual for Calgary girls, who had completed grade twelve at an academically based high school, to attend a "short course commercial" at Western Canada Composite High. These courses taught typing, shorthand and other business courses with the goal of acquiring a secretarial job.<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>26</sup> University of Calgary Archives, UARC 86.34, A.L. Doucette Papers, Box 17, History of Calgary Normal School.

<sup>27</sup> Phyllis Weston, "History of Education", 25.

<sup>28</sup> Spalding Interview.

There was no charge for these courses which made them attractive to cash starved families who were unable or unwilling to pay for the education of daughters. These were women who were just as intelligent and able as their male counterparts but the school system actively encouraged their relegation to poorly paid jobs in which they could never hope to earn enough to support themselves. Their only hope of achieving an adequate standard of living was to marry well.

### Labour Force Participation

Although legislative changes and educational opportunities were based on the belief that the primary role for women was still that of a wife and mother, the number of females in Canada over the age of ten participating in the labour force increased from 195,900 in 1891 to 490,150 in 1921.<sup>29</sup> If anything, these figures probably underestimate the number of women working, as those who took in work such as sewing or laundry in their own homes were not regarded by the Census enumerators as being gainfully occupied. Someone like Jean McWilliam, who operated a boarding house and did a variety of odd jobs to support herself, may or may not have been represented in Census data. Nor were farm women

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<sup>29</sup> Census of Canada, 1921, xiv.

represented and they certainly contributed an important part of farm labour especially on the prairies.

However, census data does give some sense of trends in the working patterns of women and is a good source for their wage rates. Table 3 compares Calgary labour force participation rates with national figures and it also compares female rates with those of male Calgarians.

**TABLE 3**  
**LABOUR FORCE PARTICIPATION**

	1921	1931	1941*
POPULATION OF CALGARY	63,305	83,761	88,904
FEMALE POPULATION OF CALGARY	31,479	40,416	44,361
PERCENTAGE OF FEMALE CALGARIANS GAINFULLY EMPLOYED	23.9%	25.3%	23.3%
PERCENTAGE OF MALE CALGARIANS GAINFULLY EMPLOYED	90.4%	90.5%	85.8% **
PERCENTAGE OF FEMALE CANADIANS GAINFULLY EMPLOYED	17.7%	19.4%	22.9%

\* The Census of 1941 uses the age of 14 and above for its employment figures. The Census of 1921 and 1931 uses 10 and above.

\*\* This figure includes the number of enlisted men. If they are not included, the rate drops to 69.8%.

Sources: Census of Canada, 1921, Table 5:346; 1931, Table 42:262; 1941, Table 8: 234.  
Max Foran, Calgary an Illustrated History. (Toronto: James Lorimar and Co., 1978), 174-179. Veronica Strong-Boag, The New Day Recalled. (Toronto: Copp Clark Pittman, 1988), 43.

As Table 3 clearly shows, the working women of Calgary were not even close to their male counterparts in terms of employment but they were significantly above the national average for women. However, a closer look reveals that the female participation rate did not keep up with the population increase between 1921 and 1931. During this ten year period, the number of females over the age of fourteen increased by 38.6% but the corresponding increase in the numbers of gainfully employed increased by only 1.4%. During the 1930s the situation worsened and the percentage of women working actually declined by 2%.

Certainly the Great Depression played a role in this decline as high unemployment took its toll on all workers, especially those on the Prairies.<sup>30</sup> Thus there was a slow recovery for both men and women when compared to the rest of the nation. The improvement in the 1941 employment rate of men is reflective of the large numbers who were engaged in military service. Women supposedly moved into male jobs too at this time but the majority of war time employment was in manufacturing. Calgary had very little manufacturing so its female workers did not enjoy a comparable increase in job opportunities.<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>30</sup> James Gray, The Winter Years (Toronto: MacMillan of Canada, 1964), 1.

<sup>31</sup> Max Foran, Calgary: An Illustrated History, (Toronto: James Lorimar & Co., 1978), 30.

### Career Opportunities

By 1910, women were moving into professional jobs considered appropriate to their gender such as nursing, teaching and clerical work but this trend decelerated after the War. Women were seen as a threat to the returning veterans as this excerpt from a Calgary newspaper shows:

Hundreds of housewives are seeking maids, willing to pay them good wages. Thousands of girls are holding down what were before the war, mens' jobs, keeping returned veterans out in the streets.<sup>32</sup>

By 1921 the Public Service Commission had barred women from employment unless they were self supporting or if there were no qualified men available.<sup>33</sup> Calgary did not have a large number of government employees but it is likely that such a ruling set the tone for other employers. It would certainly have had an impact on the employment of women throughout Canada and as jobs became more scarce, such a ruling became more and more convenient to enforce.

Single working women were seen as a threat to men's jobs but married working women were seen as a threat to everyone. Women themselves disapproved of married women working. In 1926, the Calgary Local Council of Women passed a resolution to: "Petition merchants and businessmen to

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<sup>32</sup> Calgary Daily Herald, 21 May 1919.

<sup>33</sup> Public Service Commission of Canada, The Employment of Women in the Public Service (Ottawa, 1973), 1 - 2.

employ single girls in preference to married women.<sup>34</sup> This issue became quite controversial and was still being discussed throughout the thirties. While the Council wanted to encourage employment of those most in need, there were a number of their "own kind" who were vulnerable to such a ruling. Notable among these was Emily Murphy employed as a police magistrate who was also married. She wrote to Nellie McClung and expressed her concerns:

I was surprised to see that some Calgary women were trying to have married women prohibited from taking positions other than charwomen. I think it would be quite as logical for married women to advocate that no unmarried men be employed.<sup>35</sup>

After receiving a petition with thirty names on it, the Council agreed to Maude Riley's suggestion:

That we recognize the urgent necessity many married women have to work, yet we respectfully urge the merchants - - - to give, whenever possible, the young man and woman a chance in the game of life.<sup>36</sup>

The general public did not usually recognize that married women had any necessity to work. It was just assumed that a husband was the only means of support they needed and that they were depriving the unemployed, especially men, of needed income. In fact, by the thirties,

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<sup>34</sup> CLCW Papers, Box 4, File 25, Minutes of Meeting, 19 February 1926.

<sup>35</sup> Nellie McClung Papers, Box 11, File 13. Letter, 4 March 1930.

<sup>36</sup> CLCW Papers, Box 4, File 25, Minutes of Meeting, 13 December 1929.

most women were working in jobs that men would not have taken anyway. Table 4 illustrates the types of occupations in which women were employed.

**TABLE 4**  
**FEMALE LABOUR FORCE BY OCCUPATION IN CALGARY**  
**PERCENTAGE EMPLOYED**

<u>OCCUPATIONS</u>	<u>1921</u>	<u>1931</u>	<u>1941</u>
CLERICAL	35.2%	35.7%	30.0%
TEXTILE INDUSTRY (Factory Workers, Seamstresses and Milliners)	10.0%	3.0%	3.0%
TELEPHONE & TELEGRAPH OPERATORS	2.3%	2.0%	1.0%
SALESWOMEN	9.9%	10.0%	9.0%
DOMESTIC SERVICE (Servants, Hairdressers, and Waitresses)	24.9%	28.0%	35.0%
TEACHERS	7.9%	8.0%	5.0%
NURSES and STUDENTS	6.8%	3.0%	7.0%
TOTAL	97.0%	89.7%	90.0%

Source: Censuses of Canada 1921, Table 5; 1931, Table 36; 1941, Table 11.

Table 4 demonstrates how women were concentrated in relatively few occupations. This concentration decreased somewhat in the intervening years, between 1921 in that 90% of all working women were in the seven listed occupational categories in 1941, compared to 97% in 1921. This pattern

is vastly different from that of men who had a variety of occupations available in agriculture, construction, transportation and professional categories.

There was a rapid increase in the numbers of women entering the clerical field between 1911 and 1921 but as the table illustrates this levels off and remains fairly constant between 1921 and 1941. The numbers of saleswomen and nurses also remain constant. Nurses decreased somewhat in 1931 during the Depression, because most of them were engaged in private duty nursing and depended on their client's ability to pay. On the other hand teachers, telegraph and telephone operators, which were the better paying occupations, decrease in terms of providing employment for women. The number of professional or skilled jobs for women reached its peak in 1921 and the subsequent decrease was a national trend.<sup>37</sup>

The only occupation showing an increase in employment for women was that of domestic service. The impact of this shift in opportunities can be better calculated by looking at the amount of earnings women could expect from these jobs. Table 5 shows average earnings according to the most common occupations.<sup>38</sup>

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<sup>37</sup> Department of Labour, Changing Patterns in Women's Employment, (Ottawa: Queens Printer, 1966), 41.

<sup>38</sup> Unfortunately the categorization of occupations underwent a change between 1921 and 1941 and for this reason it was impossible to include clerical workers in Table 4.

**TABLE 5**  
**AVERAGE YEARLY WAGE ACCORDING TO OCCUPATION AND GENDER**  
**IN CALGARY**

OCCUPATIONS	1921		1941	
	MALE	FEMALE	MALE	FEMALE
FACTORY WORKERS - TEXTILE	\$1,085.00	\$602.00	\$1,063.00	\$441.00
TELEGRAPH OPERATORS	\$1,670.00	\$1,063.00	\$1,364.00	\$1,340.00
TELEPHONE OPERATOR	\$1,392.00	\$890.00	\$1,730.00	\$802.00
SALESPERSON	\$1,425.00	\$701.00	\$1,330.00	\$643.00
DOMESTIC SERVANT	\$520.00	\$395.00	\$465.00	\$191.00
HAIRDRESSER/BARBER	\$1,183.00	\$642.00	\$771.00	\$558.00
TEACHER	\$1,910.00	\$1,246.00	\$1,636.00	\$1,217.00

Sources: Censuses of Canada 1941, Table 40;  
1921, Table 11.

Table 5 illustrates that women earned less than men in every single occupational category. The only wages to show a significant increase when compared to male wages are those of telegraph operators and teachers and in both these occupations the percentage of female workers decreased. Female telegraph operators in 1941 are earning almost as much as their male counterparts but they make up only 3% of the workers compared to 20% in 1921. By the same token, the wages of female teachers rose from 65% of a male teacher's wage in 1921 to 74% in 1941 but their numbers in the profession dropped from 76.7% to 58%. This change is obvious when examining the records of the Calgary Normal

School as the number of men entering the school show a steady increase during the Depression years.<sup>39</sup>

Men recognized a good thing when they saw it and took advantage of the opportunity to get some higher education at much less expense than what attending university would entail. Normal School and teaching represented a stepping stone to another later career. Women did not enjoy the same privilege. Teaching was essentially the pinnacle of career opportunities for women. As men moved into teaching, women had nowhere to go but down into a lower paid category.

All the other occupational categories show not only a decrease in wages from 1921 to 1941 but a decrease in terms of the female wage compared to the male wage. The worst example is that of the domestic servant. In 1921, a female domestic was earning the lowest wage of all the occupations listed, but compared to her male counterpart, she was earning 75% of his wage. Twenty years later, she is still not only earning the lowest wage, but is now earning only 41% of what the male domestic is earning. This inequity is further compounded when numbers of workers are taken into account. As we saw previously from Table 4, the only occupational category for women that showed a significant growth rate between 1921 and 1941 was that of the domestic servant.

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<sup>39</sup> PAA, GS 79.61, General Register of Calgary Normal School.

The increase in numbers of women in domestic service was one of the most significant factors in lowering the overall economic status of women during these years. The tragedy of it lies in the attitude of the social policy makers of the time. Not only were the substandard wages and working conditions condoned by not including these workers under the Minimum Wage Act but there was a total lack of vision for alternate female roles other than domestic or maternal ones.

As early as 1919 the Local Council of Women was proclaiming that the main cause of the existing labour unrest was the "great need for skilled workers and the greatest need is for housekeepers". They felt that the "status of housekeepers must be raised if this need is to be overcome." Maude Riley, who had been involved in studying the situation, then passed a resolution to petition the government to supply intensive training in the Institute of Technology for:

Girls leaving school at the age of fifteen upwards, in the following, millinery, dressmaking, tailoring, house assistants, laundry workers etc.<sup>40</sup>

The push toward encouraging more women to enter domestic service continued throughout the twenties and even resulted in a plan in the early thirties to bring British factory workers over to train as domestics. They were

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<sup>40</sup> CLCW Papers, Box 4, File 24, Minutes of Executive Meeting, 22 April 1919.

housed in a hostel on 4th Avenue East and were apparently quite miserable about their fate. Jean McWilliam took up their cause and by means of a letter writing campaign was successful in having them sent back to their homes.<sup>41</sup>

Even in the late thirties, training for domestic service was still seen as the answer to female unemployment. The major recommendation of a National Commission in 1938, was to set up a nation wide system of domestic training schools and an employment placement service.<sup>42</sup> Other women, especially upper middle class ones, accepted this solution and cooperated with the federal government in setting up and furnishing domestic training schools as part of the Dominion Provincial Rehabilitation scheme. The Calgary Local Council of Women took up the cause and set up such a school in the old Lougheed mansion.<sup>43</sup>

#### Women's Wages

It seems obvious then, that although women's participation rate in the labour force did not decrease in the same proportion as men's did, the wages they were paid certainly did and they did not recover to the same extent

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<sup>41</sup> GAI, Jean McDonald Papers, M724, Memoir, 58.

<sup>42</sup> Report of the National Employment Commission, Ottawa: Kings Printer, 1938.

<sup>43</sup> LCW Papers, Box 3, File 20.

that men did. The advent of the war in 1939 did not improve the employment picture for the women in Calgary as is illustrated in table 6.

**TABLE 6**  
**AVERAGE WAGE ACCORDING TO GENDER IN CALGARY**

	1921	1931	1941
Male Average Yearly Wage	\$1,348.00	\$441.45	\$1,213.00
Average Number of Weeks Worked	46.00	39.20	42.75
Female Average Yearly Wage	\$789.31	\$303.30	\$583.00
Average Number of Weeks Worked	49.00	45.00	40.90
Female Wage Expressed as a Percentage of Male Wage	55.00%	68.00%	48.00%

Source: Censuses of Canada 1921, 1931 and 1941.

The Depression took longer to affect women but as the figures for 1941 show, it eventually did so with a vengeance. The average wage for women dropped by 26% between 1921 and 1941. By comparison the average wage for men showed a corresponding drop of 10%. By 1941, women were only earning 48% of the average male salary. A similar pattern existed across Canada as a whole, with the average female wage being 49% of the male wage in 1941.<sup>44</sup>

The drop in female wages can be attributed to, not only the shift of many women into lower paying domestic

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<sup>44</sup> Census of Canada, 1941.

recommendations to address these injustices. Instead, it recommended establishing a minimum wage for men so they could never be paid less than a woman.<sup>47</sup>

The problem seems to be one of perception and it depends upon the notion that women help rather than work, that their true place is in the home and that when they venture out of the home, they are best suited to doing work that replicates housework and childcare. Such work is unskilled, interruptible, nurturing and appropriately rewarded primarily by love and secondarily by a segregated workplace where women's work has less value than men's.<sup>48</sup> Women were simply not seen as needing to be self supporting. Despite personal experience to the contrary, Jean McWilliam did little to correct this perception and Maude Riley actively nurtured it.

The situation is not much different today. The separation of spheres is not limited to a single generation. It exists today when female politicians are usually given portfolios dealing with health, social welfare or education. The high visibility of a few fortunate women, has tended to obscure the working conditions and salaries of the majority of women. Women are still concentrated in traditionally

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<sup>47</sup> Report of the Royal Commission on Price Spreads, (Ottawa: 1935), 131.

<sup>48</sup> Linda Kerber, "Separate Spheres, Female Worlds, Woman's Place: The Rhetoric of Women's History", The Journal of American History 75 (June, 1988): 28.

service jobs, but also to the decrease in the number of weeks they worked between 1921 to 1941. Whereas women were averaging 49 weeks of work in 1921, by 1941 they were only averaging 40.9 weeks. This is the result of a practise which began during the Depression of keeping women on call to be used only during peak hours. One author who lived through the Depression describes women as cheap labour who would work two or three hours or part time when a store or restaurant was busy.<sup>45</sup>

Women were aware of this problem but were powerless to stop it. As Mrs. Margaret Lewis the Factory Act inspector stated:

One of the newest phases of the employment situation, brought about by the need of decreasing overhead expenses, is the growing tendency towards part-time employment ----- Such short time, paid by the hourly rate, does not furnish a living wage for the self-supporting girl, and renders her problem of maintenance an acute one.<sup>46</sup>

All the legislation that women had lobbied for in the past did nothing to help them. They had always been interested in limiting the hours a woman could work not trying to ensure she got enough work to support herself. Few people seemed concerned with the plight of the working woman. Even the Stevens Commission, appointed in 1934, to investigate working conditions, mentioned the wide disparity between wages earned by women and men but made no

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<sup>45</sup> Gray, The Winter Years, 35.

<sup>46</sup> CLCW Papers, Box 3, File 20, 1932 Yearbook, 30.

female jobs which pay lower wages. Part time work is still a predominately female pattern which drastically reduces pension benefits. As to wages, women are now earning about 66% of the average male wage. While this is better than it was in 1941, it is lower than the percentage achieved in 1931.<sup>49</sup>

The seeds for ensuring the inferior status of women in the workplace were sown in the early part of the century, many times by women and their clubs. The notion of women having a special sphere, their primary role being that of the mother, and of having a special duty to uphold the moral standards of society was reinforced by the protective legislation passed in the first twenty five years of this century. Such legislation limited women to certain jobs and ensured they would never be paid as well as men. The crisis of the Depression merely accelerated a process which had already begun; that of using women as a cheap labour source in jobs men did not want. Today, women are still living with the consequences.

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<sup>49</sup> Rosalie Abella, Equality in Employment (Ottawa: Supply & Services, Canada, 1984), 73 and "Women in Canada: A Statistical Report" (Ottawa: Statistics Canada, 1990).

## CHAPTER 5

## ACCOMPLISHMENTS and INTERPRETATION

Despite their differences, both Jean McWilliam and Maude Riley can justifiably be called maternal feminists. Some historians might not consider them feminists at all since they did not explicitly challenge male domination.<sup>50</sup> However, this study will consider them feminists because their primary focus was on changing conditions that would improve women's lives.

Although Jean Mc William was more militant and radical than Maude Riley, she did not question the basic structure of society in regards to the role women played in it, and often justified her requests for change in terms of what would be best for the future generation of children. Maude Riley, was a more typical maternal feminist, and through the Alberta Council on Child and Family, she attempted to educate mothers about proper care and hygiene for their children. Jean McWilliam also did so when she was the LCW Child Welfare Convenor in the late thirties, but she took a

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<sup>50</sup> Nancy F. Cott, "What's in a Name: The Limits of 'Social Feminism'; or, Expanding the Vocabulary of Women's History," *The Journal of American History* 76 (December, 1989): 826-27.

broader look at why children were not well cared for as her annual report from 1939 illustrates:

I have found that many of these children have no tooth brushes, and even if they had, there is no opportunity to use same, as in the crowded dwellings there is usually a shortage of bathrooms and sinks where the children can wash their teeth. Drink plenty of milk! What a statement. What are the parents going to use for money to buy it? Are the Governments doing anything to see that the bread-winner gets a job to provide these things so vitally necessary to the growing child?<sup>1</sup>

Although she advocated for structural changes such as government intervention in the job market on behalf of male breadwinners, she did not challenge the lack of available child care or opportunities for women to also earn wages that would improve the family income. As late as 1941, she was still concerned about the enforcement of a law keeping young girls out of dance halls. She thought there should be an inspector to meet these girls, ask their age and notify their parents.<sup>2</sup> Girls, in her eyes still needed special protection and should not be as visible in the public sphere.

Likewise, Maude Riley lived a very public life but refused to see herself as engaged in politics. She disapproved of married women working, but in reality she herself had a full time career as a lobbyist, fundraiser and

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<sup>1</sup> McDonald Papers, File 6, Typescript of Child Welfare Report by Mrs. J. McDonald, for Calgary Local Council of Women 1939 Yearbook. Jean McWilliam married William McDonald in 1936.

<sup>2</sup> CLCW Papers, Box 25, File 273, Clipping nd.

social worker. However it was always her role as wife and mother that she emphasized in later interviews:

"But I never went out to meetings at night," she declared, " I felt I should be home to tuck my youngsters in bed. I left my club work outside the door. If my husband wanted to know what was doing in my club work he had to read about it in the Herald."<sup>3</sup>

The previous chapter described how the philosophy of maternal feminism, which permeated the clubs to which the two women belonged, limited the educational and career opportunities open to women and how this in turn adversely affected their economic status. However, their belief that women's role was primarily that of the mother and housekeeper, did not mean they believed women were inferior to men or that they believed in a passive approach to the social problems facing them.

On the contrary, they believed women were morally superior to men and capable of shaping a new and better society than had previously been possible. It was their duty to use their talents as mothers and housekeepers to clean up the mess men had made. Their clubs nourished this belief and assisted them in a number of reforms that improved women's lives in a qualitative way.

It is not clear whether these women consciously used their special status as mothers as a strategic ploy to

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<sup>3</sup> PAA, Information file on Mrs. Harold Riley, Article by Linda Curtis originally published in the Calgary Herald, April 24, 1954.

achieve their goals. Deborah Gorham suggests that the suffragists may have used their special mission of protecting their homes and family as a tactic of argument as much as a deeply felt belief.<sup>4</sup> She believes they turned their opponent's arguments that they were too good to vote inside out by stating it was their innate goodness that made it imperative they be allowed to vote.

In a similar vein Jean Anyon argues that women do not completely accept or reject sex role socialization. While they learn what the socially prescribed behaviors are, and usually behave in ways that are expected, it is more like the reaction of black slaves to enslavement - a simultaneous process of accommodation and resistance.<sup>5</sup> Judith Arcana also subscribes to a similar belief, she states girls learn to be women from their mothers who make it clear men are the masters but teach their daughters how to manipulate and scheme to get their way.

Thus our mothers foster and perpetuate our role playing rather than nurture our woman-selves. Yet denied their birth right and oppressed into the wife-mother role, they still try to give us the tools we need to survive - as in any slave

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<sup>4</sup> Deborah Gorham, "The Canadian Suffragists" in Women in the Canadian Mosaic, ed. Gwen Matheson (Toronto: Peter Martin Associates, 1976), 25.

<sup>5</sup> Jean Anyon, "Intersections of Gender and Class: Accommodation and Resistance by Working Class and Affluent Females to Contradictory Sex Role Ideologies", in Gender, Class and Education ed. Stephen Walker and Len Barton (New York: International Publications Service, 1983, 19.

culture, we learn our own style of shuffle and grin.<sup>6</sup>

Several illustrations of this female "shuffle and grin" can be found in the writings of Nellie McClung. She describes the scene of a School Board President resigning his position because a woman was elected. He expected to be cajoled to stay but, instead, the woman gave a speech highly praising him and accepting his resignation with regret. "He had never been praised so much in his life and was half way home before he realized what had happened."<sup>7</sup> Arcana believes women have built up a sub-culture in a male dominated society that teaches safe behavior, that which is unchallenging to male domination.<sup>8</sup> It is the contention of this thesis that women have transmitted a distinct culture not only from mother to daughter but also through the clubs they formed and belonged to in the Progressive Era.

### Women's Culture

In the past, the Doctrine of Woman's Sphere was described as an ideology imposed on women and one that set boundaries on their behavior. It was seen as being

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<sup>6</sup> Judith Arcana, Our Mother's Daughters (Berkley: Shameless Hussy Press, 1979), 45.

<sup>7</sup> Nellie McClung, The Stream Runs Fast: My Own Story, (Toronto: Thomas Allen, 1945), 177.

<sup>8</sup> Arcana, Our Mother's Daughters, 45.

oppressive whereas the term women's culture is seen as being a liberating force. The Doctrine of Woman's Sphere is now seen as having been socially constructed both for and by women.<sup>9</sup> It did limit women but they also found it useful in obtaining their goals without upsetting the status quo and emotionally sustaining in the way it encouraged relationships with other women.

Catherine Stimpson states recent scholars have postulated the existence of:

Two related, interdependent, intersecting worlds. The first world was that of the male. It contained production, public activity, formal culture and speech. It was the domain of power and of the father.....The second world was female. It contained reproduction, private and domestic activity, informal culture and speech. It was the domain of love and of the mother.<sup>10</sup>

The notion of women having a distinctive culture was written about in the fifties when Seely et al did their case study of a Toronto suburb. In analyzing their data, they found little difference in the values of those of different religious or class backgrounds but they did find differences between the men and women. The men "seemed primarily concerned about the preservation of life against destruction and the women seemed concerned about the creative and

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<sup>9</sup> Linda K. Kerber, "Separate Spheres, Female Worlds, Woman's Place: The Rhetoric of Women's History," The Journal of American History 75 (June 1988):18.

<sup>10</sup> Catherine Stimpson, "Women as Knowers", in Feminist Visions: Toward a Transformation of the Liberal Arts Curriculum (University of Alabama Press, 1984), 18.

elaborative processes".<sup>11</sup> These concerns meant that the men attended to the necessary conditions for living and the women to the conditions that would make life sufficing. The women in the clubs studied also focused on making life fuller and richer. They encouraged the arts and literature by fundraising for libraries, sponsoring essay contests and art scholarships and encouraging art exhibits.

Charol Shakeshaft attempts to describe the values that differentiate women's culture from that of men. She says women value orientations of beauty, freedom, happiness, self respect, independence, intellectualism and loving more highly than men. She also discusses how female administrators differ in leadership behaviours when compared to their male colleagues. Women talk less and listen more when communicating and the content tends to be centred more on emotional and personal issues. They see conflict as negative and tend to avoid it or use collaborative techniques and their decision making style tends to be democratic and participatory.<sup>12</sup>

These values can be easily discerned through the minutes of the Calgary LCW. They spent a great deal of time avoiding conflict and building consensus among their affiliates. Elections of executive officers were almost

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<sup>11</sup> Seely et al, Crestwood Heights, (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1956), p. 393.

<sup>12</sup> Charol Shakeshaft, Women in Educational Administration (Newbury Park, CA: Sage Publications, 1987).

always by acclamation. They also included a silent prayer as a means of opening their meetings in order to avoid offending any particular religion. Their meetings usually included some means of relationship building such as a social hour and they frequently included an educational component. They also sent flowers to members who were ill, acknowledged deaths in people's families and gave tokens of appreciation to members who were retiring from positions.

Although much has been written about the differences between the worlds of working-class and middle-class women, more work needs to be done on how the world of working class women has also not been the same as that of the world of working class men.<sup>13</sup> Even though Maude Riley and Jean McWilliam had differing views on what needed to be done to correct societal problems, there was a common thread to their activities and concerns. The common thread is one of valuing relationships with other women, an ethic of nurturance and a responsibility of caring for others. Carol Gilligan states this is how women define their identity and that they equate power with giving and care.<sup>14</sup>

Nel Noddings concurs with Gilligan that women have different values than men and believes women base their ethical decisions on a notion of caring. They define

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<sup>13</sup> Linda Kerber, "Separate Spheres", 36.

<sup>14</sup> Carol Gilligan, In a Different Voice: Psychological Theory and Women's Development. (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1982), 159 and 164.

themselves as both persons and moral agents in terms of their capacity to care. An ethic of caring allows for a rearrangement of the usual hierarchy of moral principles in order to give proper place value to human love, loyalty and relief of suffering.<sup>15</sup>

Both Jean McWilliam and Maude Riley were motivated to become social activists because of personal experience. Riley because of her close brush with death during child birth and McWilliam because of her personal contact with poverty. They tended to use similar strategies to achieve their ends such as allying themselves with influential people, preparing petitions, and lobbying policy makers. McWilliam had less access to influential people than Riley, so she tended to write more letters to the editor and had to be more confrontational in order to be heard. They were both strong, committed women and although it can not be said that they accomplished much in terms of furthering the equality of women, they certainly did a great deal to make a number of women's lives more comfortable.

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<sup>15</sup> Nel Noddings, Caring: A Feminine Approach to Ethics and Moral Education, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984), 42.

Splendid Results of Benefit to the Community<sup>16</sup>

Generally speaking, the years between 1870 and 1920, the Progressive Era, were the high-water mark of women's public influence.<sup>17</sup> In Western Canada the Progressive Era was compressed into the time between about 1912 to 1935 but it too was a time of great influence by women on social policy. In the early 1900s there was no unemployment insurance, universal old age pensions or medical care insurance. In Alberta, the last of the western frontiers, there was almost no health care and what little existed was too expensive for the majority of people. The care of the unemployed, the aged and the ill was a family responsibility and thus of particular concern to women and their clubs.

It was women who advocated for a national scheme of medical care. As Mary Corse testified at the Mather's Commission in 1919:

During the war the Government has proved that the nationalization of the medical profession is a possibility. The doctors were taken and sent overseas, and the percentage of losses by either death or wounds among our soldiers was reduced to a minimum. The doctors were well cared for, their families comparatively prosperous.....I think it has been proven very successfully that the medical

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<sup>16</sup> CLCW Papers, Box 3, File 20, terminology used in 1930 Year Book, 76.

<sup>17</sup> Kerber, "Separate Spheres", 27.

profession should be nationalized for the benefit of the people.<sup>18</sup>

Corse was a colleague of Jean McWilliam and was speaking from a labour point of view but wealthy women such as Maude Riley were also in agreement with subsidized health care. The Calgary Child Welfare Association, which she controlled, passed a number of resolutions in favour of providing free hospital accomodation for sick children and for maternity cases. Riley was also a firm believer in preventive health programs and was opposed to the baby clinic she pioneered being regarded as a charitable institution. She believed it should have the same dignity as other public services.<sup>19</sup>

According to Koven and Michel, the emergence of large-scale state welfare programs and policies in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries were influenced to a large degree by women's social action movements.<sup>20</sup> They did not include Canada in their study but the same claim can be made for the influence of women on Canadian policies and Wendy Mitchinson does so. She states the groundwork for state intervention in social welfare was laid by the myriad of women's reform organizations which awakened their members

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<sup>18</sup> Evidence given at Royal Commission on Industrial Relations, 1919, 882.

<sup>19</sup> Calgary Herald 5 August 1922.

<sup>20</sup> Seth Koven and Sonya Michel, "Womanly Duties: Maternalist Politics and the Origins of Welfare States in France, Germany, Great Britain, and the United States, 1880-1920." American Historical Review 95 (October 1990):1076.

to the problems of Canadian society and the difficulty of coping with those problems.<sup>21</sup>

In doing so, they frequently did their own fund raising and provided services such as a children's shelter, baby clinic or tuberculosis hospital on a voluntary basis until the need was acknowledged by the government which then took over its operation. As one member of the Women's Institutes states:

The Institute started something and then it was taken over by the people who should have done it in the first place.<sup>22</sup>

In Calgary, it was the Local Council of Women that allowed a number of disparate women's clubs to come together and act as a combined voice for social welfare reforms. Despite Veronica Strong-Boag's contention that the National Council of Women was primarily comprised of middle class, protestant organizations, the Calgary LCW seems to have had a more egalitarian membership especially in the thirties. It provided a forum for most women, including those with socialist beliefs, and they exerted a considerable influence on public policy especially during the years that the United Farmer's formed the provincial government.

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<sup>21</sup> Wendy Mitchinson, "Early Women's Organizations and Social Reform: Prelude to the Welfare State," in The Benevolent State, ed. Allan Moscovitch and Jim Albert (Toronto: Garamond Press, 1987), 77.

<sup>22</sup> Cited in Carol Dennison, "Housekeepers of the Community", in Knowledge for the People, ed. Michael Welton (Toronto: OISE Press, 1987), 66.

In a history prepared for the 1941 LCW Year Book, the writer summarizes the Council's accomplishments as follows:

While on guard especially to look after the interests of women and children, they keep a watchful eye to the well-being of the prisoner, the unemployed, the immigrant,--in fact, any class that is in need of remedial legislation....While they tackle the most intricate and difficult problems, such as amendments to laws concerning marriage, divorce, the liquor and drug evil, the ringing of the curfew bell, slot machines, free swimming pools, the Plimsoll mark to safeguard the sailor, prison reform, etc., their housewifely souls press urgently upon City Councils the need of clean streets, properly inspected meat and milk, wrapped bread, proper ventilation and lower steps on street cars, and the need of effective garbage collection.<sup>23</sup>

Other accomplishments mentioned by the writer include penal reform, old age pensions, preventive treatment for goitre, medical examination of all public school students, the treatment of babies eyes at birth to prevent blindness from gonorrhea, government licensing of stock yards, a civic clinic for preschool children, compulsory reporting of venereal disease, government care of the indigent poor, custodial care of the mentally defective, standardized hospitals, and government control over fees charged by physicians.<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>23</sup> CLCW Papers, Box 3, File 21, 1941 Year Book, 30.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid., 31-36.

Other Areas of Interest

Much of the history written about women has focused on the struggle for suffrage. The impression left is one of a relentless march toward achieving the vote, and that once it was won, women retreated to their homes and left public life to the men.<sup>25</sup> However, as the lives of Maude Riley and Jean McWilliam illustrate, a number of women were involved in lives of activism around issues other than suffrage.

It is unfortunate that the accomplishments of such women are not commonly known. Neither Riley nor McWilliam has been commemorated in any way. A public school was named after Harold Riley but there is no school named for his wife who did so much for the children of Calgary. If Jean McWilliam had not written her Memoir, there would be no trace left of her life.

It is also commonly assumed that almost all female activists were from the middle class but, as Jean McWilliam's activities demonstrate, there certainly were exceptions to this assumption. McWilliam was unusual in that, despite her lack of formal education, she loved to write and left a Memoir behind. There were probably many other working class women who led active lives and were just

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<sup>25</sup> Linda Kerber, "Separate Spheres," 14.

as involved in a number of causes but did not leave a written record as proof.

As this thesis was being researched, the names of a number of other women were illuminated and their lives and activities should be further explored. Women such as Mrs. F.G. (Alice) Grevett. She was involved with Jean McWilliam in the Next of Kin Association and the Women's Labour League but also served as the president of the Local Council of Women during the thirties and as the provincial and local president of the WCTU. In the forties, she unsuccessfully ran for Calgary City Council and became involved with the Social Credit party.<sup>26</sup> Although she was prominent in the LCW, her background appears to have been working class. Her husband, from whom women of this time period took their social standing, is listed in the 1935 Henderson Directory as being a railway conductor.

Another woman of interest is Mrs. Margaret Birch Lewis who came to Calgary in 1911 from England where she had been active in the suffrage movement. Her husband was killed in the war and she supported herself by working as the provincial factory inspector.<sup>27</sup> She may be one of the few Canadian equal rights feminists. In 1921 she addressed the Calgary Woman's Labour League regarding her concern that

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<sup>26</sup> CLCW Papers, File 20, Newspaper clipping of obituary, nd.

<sup>27</sup> Sheila Johnston, "Giving Freely of Her Time and Energy", (MA Thesis, University of Calgary, 1987), 79.

female wages had only risen by 15% while men's had risen by over 50%<sup>28</sup> She also served as the Convenor of Trades and Professions for the Local Council of Women during the twenties and thirties. She was one of the few women who spoke out on behalf of married women having the right to work as she urged the Council to:

Do everything possible to suppress the campaign now being conducted against married women holding positions outside their homes as infringing seriously on the right of women, equally with men, to keep or obtain paid work, regardless of whether they are married or single.<sup>29</sup>

She also recommended revising the League of Nations Code which prevented women from doing night work. There is almost no evidence of anyone else opposing the protective legislation other reformers put into effect.

Mrs. William (Marion) Carson, is also worthy of further study. She came to Calgary from Ontario in 1898 and was involved with Jean McWilliam in the Next-of-Kin Association and as a member of the Women's Labour League in the early days. However, she was married to a wealthy grain merchant and occupied a position of prominence in Calgary society.<sup>30</sup> She was also a close friend of Maude Riley and a

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<sup>28</sup> Alberta Labour News, 10 September 1921.

<sup>29</sup> CLCW Papers, Box 26, File 288, Scrapbook of Newspaper Clippings, Albertan, 17 March 1934.

<sup>30</sup> Patricia Roome, "Amelia Turner and Calgary Labour Women, 1919-1935," in Beyond the Vote ed. Linda Kealey and Joan Sangster (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1989), 110-111.

collaborator on many of her projects. They worked together on setting up the first tuberculosis hospital in Calgary and Mrs. Carson served as the Convenor concerned with peace activities in the LCW while Maude Riley was the Convenor of Laws.

Mrs. Carson was noted for her sympathies toward labour and successfully ran for the School Board on the labour ticket during the twenties. She is unusual in that she seemed to have no problem functioning in both working class and middle class circles.<sup>31</sup> Her main contribution was in the encouragement of Peace activities which are a significant component of women's culture that was not explored in this thesis.

### Summary

Calgary in the first forty years of the twentieth century, was the scene of several protest movements. The agrarian revolt led to the formation of the United Farmers of Alberta and labour unrest led to the formation of the One Big Union and general strikes. In the thirties, Calgary was also the birth place of both the Social Credit and the Cooperative Commonwealth Federation (CCF) parties. Women and their clubs were involved in varying degrees with these

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<sup>31</sup> ACCFW Papers, File 4, Note written in Minute Book after Mrs. Carson's death in 1950. The note appears to have been written by Maude Riley.

protest movements and the general scene of political chaos allowed women to have more political influence than they might otherwise have had.

Alberta women did achieve a number of advances in terms of elected officials who were women and the Famous Five will always be remembered for winning the land mark "Person's Case" which allowed women to officially be recognized as persons. However, the fact remains that little was accomplished that improved the economic status of ordinary women.

Maude Riley was used as a model of the Protestant Nun type of reformer who attempted to impose middle class and evangelical values on the rest of society. Her main goal was to create a perfect and well ordered society in which women did not need to work outside their homes and children could be moulded into perfect beings. Everyone would measure up to a predetermined standard and if they did not, they would not be allowed to reproduce. It was beliefs such as these that allowed the principles of Eugenics to permeate the activities of many of the women's clubs.

Protestant Nuns formed quasi-religious organizations such as the WCTU and the YWCA which attempted to improve the people with whom they were involved. The WCTU was particularly important in women's history because of its relationship to suffrage. Most of the Canadian suffragists were also members of the WCTU and were not motivated by a

desire for equal rights so much as by a desire to win the vote in order to bring in prohibition.

Many of the Protestant Nuns also belonged to patriotic organizations such as the IODE and the Woman's Canadian Club which wanted to improve society by assimilating the immigrants which flooded the West in the early 1900s. They played an important role in imprinting British culture and standards of behaviour on the Canadian West.

The Women's Institutes were discussed primarily in terms of their connection with the provincial government and their zeal in teaching domestic science courses to women. They are the best example of how the Doctrine of Woman's Separate Sphere was used as a social construction to direct women's public activities into unpaid labour for the good of society.

Maude Riley's main focus was the Alberta Council on Child and Family Welfare. It was this organization that was the precursor to today's Well Baby Clinics and many of their activities are now functions of the provincial Health Units. It was through the annual Child Welfare Weeks held by this council that Maude Riley was able to influence a number of mothers as to what constituted proper child care.

The organizations that Jean McWilliam belonged to were different from those of Maude Riley's in that they did not have national affiliations but were aimed more at the grass roots level. For the most part, McWilliam worked directly

with the people she was trying to help and her activities were motivated by personal need or experience, not a perceived duty to help those less fortunate than herself.

For example she founded the Great War Next of Kin Association to get better benefits for soldiers dependents at a time when she was suffering financially from her husband being overseas. By the same token, she formed the Calgary Women's Labour League as a means of providing support for the families of men participating in the general strikes when she was encouraging the men to join the strike. The League went on to a more woman centered focus and, although it supported many of the same causes as the Protestant Nun type of reformer, they put more emphasis on the need for decent wages.

They too saw married women working as a threat and in that regard were no advocates for equal rights for women. They too defined women primarily as mothers and although they were militant mothes, they were still mothers.

Women's clubs provided the means, limited as it was, for women to move into the public sphere. They also provided women with a parallel culture which nourished and sustained them in a time of social chaos. They derived pleasure from their association with other women and the clubs built upon their earlier circles of friendship and provided the means of doing worthwhile things for society as a whole. The clubs may not have been splendid in terms of

what they did to advance the equality of women, but they were splendid in the support they gave women and the social welfare institutions they built.

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