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**Trouble on the Home Front:
Perspectives on Working Mothers
in Winnipeg, 1939-1945**

by

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of
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ABSTRACT

The Second World War created a shortage of labour in Canada, and by 1942 mothers were encouraged by the National Selective Service to accept opportunities for paid employment. The federal government responded to the need for child care by initiating a cost-shared program with interested provinces. The Dominion-Provincial Day Nursery Agreement was enacted in Ontario and Quebec cities, but despite significant need for quality child care, Winnipeg did not take advantage of the day nursery program. What factors lead to this uneven acceptance of social patriarchy?

Many levels of Winnipeg society were uneasy about the rapid increase of women and mothers in the workforce. Evidence suggests that many citizens shared paternalistic views of women in society, and were reluctant to sacrifice traditional ideals of family even during the wartime labour emergency. As well, professional social workers in Winnipeg's Council of Social Agencies compromised their commitment to modern methodology and instead relied on conservative assumptions of mothers' responsibility to the home. The Council's decision whether to implement the day nursery scheme coincided with a period of jitters Winnipeg had over a perceived rise in delinquency by adolescents. Since delinquency was considered a sign of social instability, this moral panic did little to ease concerns that the absence of mothers from the home would cause problems. In all, these factors created little enthusiasm to fund and create a day nursery that would entice more mothers away from their family duty.

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PREFACE

A mother of two teenage daughters in East Kildonan responded to the National Selective Service's (NSS) wartime call for female labour by accepting work on the "graveyard shift" at a Winnipeg cannery two miles from her home. Her husband, a veteran of the Great War's Vimy Ridge reacted to the news that his wife had a job by digging out his old uniform from the cellar and parading around the kitchen with a broom on his shoulder. He announced that if his wife was needed for the war effort, he might as well re-enlist, too. The wife, reputed to have had a "mind of her own," persisted and worked for a couple of years until the war ended. The husband remained concerned, especially since his wife had to trudge nightly across the open prairie from her home to the cannery downtown. For reasons of reputation, her daughters hated that their mother worked. The girls were certain some boys they knew at the cannery would recognize her, and they were ashamed that their mother would be seen there.¹

The NSS campaigned hard to attract this East Kildonan cannery worker, but also offered the provision of government sponsored Day Nurseries so that mothers of young children could take up jobs more easily. The NSS promoted the advantages of the proposed nurseries in a radio play that featured 3 1/2 year-old "Aeroplane Johnny." Johnny slipped away from a neighbour's home where the boy's mother had left him to be minded while she went to work. The mother blamed herself for her boy's disappearance, exclaiming, "If I hadn't taken this old job...If anything's happened...I thought I'd help out by working. With Ed overseas and them needing air-plane parts. I'll never forgive myself!" Johnny was later found on a roof, and was brought home by police. His

¹ Mrs. Molly Hill, telephone interview by author, April 17, 2000.

homecoming was marked by a battle to get him to eat his vegetables. Later, Johnny's aunt showed his mother an advertisement for a nursery school for war-workers' children. When the mother balked at the idea because of Johnny's age, the aunt suggested she give up her job. The mother returned that, "They need me at the plant, Millie, and...we need the money." Once the mother was assured of the presence of the nursery's trained staff, nurse and dietician, she was willing to give it a try. In the end, Johnny hated to miss a day of nursery, and the staff cured him of his tantrums when faced with a plate of carrots. Aunt Millie noted that Johnny had learned much at that school, to which the mother replied, "They've taught Johnny's mother a lot too, Millie. I'd like to give them the Worried Mother's award."²

Stories like those of the cannery worker and Johnny's mother Millie, real and fictitious, reveal the tensions working women and mothers lived with during the Second World War. In the case of the cannery worker, family respectability was at stake when women and mothers stepped out of the house to work. Husbands and children needed to accept, often to their chagrin, that their wives and mothers were willing to push traditional expectations of gender aside. The radio play addressed all the misconceptions and concerns the NSS-recruited mothers might have had about institutionalized care. The play also affirmed a mother's sense of patriotism and desire to do her utmost for the war effort, while at the same time it acknowledged the underlying reality of financial need. Finally, as shown by the nursery's cure of Johnny's unhealthy eating habits, it underscored the belief that institutionalized child care employed scientific child rearing practices that mothers often could not or refused to administer.

² Radio script for "Aeroplane Johnny and the Nursery School," NAC, RG 27, vol. 611, file 6-52-9, 1-8.

In Winnipeg, the decision to implement the Day Nursery program was left in the hands of the city's Council of Social Agencies. At first, it seemed that government funded day nurseries and after school programs would be an ideal way to release mothers in Winnipeg to work. However, by 1943, national and local concern for young people, typified by the plight of a fifteen-year-old named Betty, jeopardized any program in Winnipeg that allowed mothers to leave their domestic responsibilities easily. Maclean's Magazine recounted that Betty's father was overseas, and that her mother found it difficult to manage the household finances. Betty left school after Grade Eight to look after the home. She liked the unsupervised freedom, but not the housework. In time, the health authority condemned her as a source of gonorrhoeal infection. She confessed that she had had contact with soldiers since she was fourteen. It was assumed that a trained psychologist would have seen the danger signs before her work weary mother could, and her serious problem could have been avoided.³

The magazine article revealed the potential hazards that might befall families where mothers worked outside the home. Readers in Winnipeg would in time question whether the labour women and mothers did in the city was worth an increase in undesirable adolescent behaviour. The concern over such an increase was enough to help scuttle a child care program that ironically was based on modern principles that would have helped diminish aberrant behaviour of children and youths. This study of wartime Winnipeg will illustrate that the city's civic and social work decision-makers had not fully accepted new practices intended to fashion a contemporary society, but instead shared traditional values not unlike the broom wielding veteran left to march alone in his kitchen.

³ M. Brechin, "Danger: Child Growing Up," Maclean's Magazine, August 15, 1943, 48-49.

CHAPTER 1

WOMEN, WORK, AND WAR: HISTORIOGRAPHY AND SOURCES

The Second World War, according to Ruth Roach Pierson, offered women fleeting opportunities for emancipation.¹ Jeffery Keshen suggests that while inequalities were not overturned, sufficient progress did occur to initiate later transitions in gender roles.² Much of this freedom came as women took the jobs abandoned by enlisted men and created by the demands of war production. At the same time, Canada continued to evolve towards a modern welfare state with the development of programs such as Family Allowance. Wages and monthly "baby bonus" cheques gave women greater social equality when these new sources of income weakened the authority of male-breadwinners.

Equality and independence for women were not fully realised by the war's end, however. A study of the conditions and attitudes women faced in wartime Winnipeg reveals that while the war on the surface may have disrupted regular patterns at home and at work, patriarchal influences of society and the state ensured that traditional gender roles would not be a wartime casualty. Contradictions were at work here. Women and mothers were encouraged to work outside the home at the same time as their liberation from the home came under suspicion. State assistance, ironically while ostensibly freeing women from domestic responsibilities, simultaneously reinforced and extended patriarchy.

¹ Ruth Roach Pierson, "They're Still Women After All": The Second World War and Canadian Womanhood (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1986), 9.

² Jeffery Keshen, "Revisiting Canada's Civilian Women During World War II," Social History 30, no. 60 (1997): 266.

First, despite an official campaign that encouraged women, and later, mothers, to enter the paid labour force to secure victory, the public discourse evident in Winnipeg at the time indicates less than full acceptance of greater female participation in the work force. Even though the public outwardly supported the war effort, many citizens also shared ideals of stability and normality that were grounded in a conservative tradition, where a married woman's place was in the home as a wife and mother. Female labour needs during the war crisis were balanced by fears that women would lose or disregard their supposed inherent disposition to care for their families. Consequently, their children, lacking proper parental guidance, were at risk of becoming delinquents. Their paid labour directly threatened the control which patriarchal households and institutions needed to retain female subservience at home and in society.

Second, regardless of the emerging belief that the state had an increasing obligation to provide services to improve society, full implementation of programs intended to free women from inequity were hampered by the state's reluctance to change too quickly. The federal nature of the Canadian state also slowed the introduction of new policies. The Dominion government with its national perspective and direct responsibilities for mobilizing labour for the war effort at times moved in advance of provincial governments with narrower perspectives and concerns to preserve existing constitutional responsibilities. New social policy and increased state intervention in family matters needed to contend with traditional patriarchal concepts of gender roles, both within and outside the home. As well, Jane Ursel suggests that when women accepted what the welfare state offered them, the benevolent face of social patriarchy

greeted them.³ Once introduced, social programs were often conducted with a great degree of reservation, and not without some degree of invasive intervention. Now, bureaucrats and social workers exercised a patriarchal surveillance over women partaking of government policies. As Dominique Jean explains, government harboured ideals of family life that shaped social policy towards the war's end.⁴ Mothers found that they would have to endure scrutiny and government supervision as the state widened its jurisdiction to the home.

Third, despite the desire of social workers to create an ordered society through a rational scientific approach, the central philosophy of their profession and their social and economic background as social work staff, worked against this aspiration. Social workers who staffed social agencies commonly accepted utilitarianism, a belief that a well-ordered society was the achievement of social efficiency. They proposed state intervention as a way to ensure proper ordering of social relations. Ironically, this scientific rational approach to social work included old-fashioned scrutiny of homes to ensure this social science was being used. Gale Wills indicts this utilitarian view for the perpetuation of oppression of women and the working class. She notes that the emphasis on central authority and supremacy of expertise are "intrinsic to patriarchy and support of male dominance that characterize industrial societies."⁵ The predominantly middle-class social work profession imposed upon its clients utilitarian values that were, according to

³ Jane Ursel, Private Lives, Public Policy: 100 Years of State Intervention in the Family (Toronto: Women's Press, 1992), 2.

⁴ Dominique Jean, "Family Allowances and Family Autonomy: Quebec Families Encounter the Welfare State, 1945-1955," in Bettina Bradbury, ed., Canadian Family History: Selected Readings (Toronto: Copp Clark Pitmen, 1995), 405.

⁵ Gale Wills, A Marriage of Convenience: Business and Social Work in Toronto, 1918-1957 (Toronto, University of Toronto Press, 1995), 24.

Wills, "the strongest and paradoxically the least consistent with the humanistic and social justice goals of the profession."⁶

This study will examine the conditions working women and mothers in Winnipeg faced as they attempted to work for wages amidst the misgivings and apprehensions of citizens, school boards, social agencies and government. Despite the extraordinary demands of the wartime labour crisis, women were expected to adhere to traditional characteristics of femininity and working mothers had to continue to assume full responsibility for their families. These patriarchal expectations of women and mothers by society and state can be further measured by following the level of controversy that surrounded the decision of whether or not to implement the Dominion-Provincial Wartime Day Nursery Agreement in Winnipeg that was to help release mothers for war-related work. The Day Nursery decision was influenced by a coinciding panic over a perceived rise in Winnipeg's juvenile delinquency rate. Youth crimes became connected with the absence of mothers who were drawn away from their families to the workplace. The Manitoba government and the Winnipeg Council of Social Agencies, who were responsible for the day nursery decision, were not prepared to expedite mothers' exit from the home.

The failure to provide wartime day nurseries in Winnipeg demonstrates that civic officials and social workers did not digress from the patriarchal attitudes and traditional ideals of the family. The paternalistic decisions made in Winnipeg during the war belied the notion that modern social science needed to discard old values and replace them with methods that ensured the well being of its citizens. By denying working women state-run

⁶ Ibid.

care for their children, decision-makers made apparent their reluctance to let go of patriarchal values. This thesis contends that the assumptions and biases held by civic officials and much of the general public in Winnipeg made it difficult for women, wives and mothers to work, regardless their desires or needs. Ultimately, because of the tenacity of patriarchal influences and attitudes in Winnipeg, the presence of women in the workplace would challenge gender expectations but not appreciably change them.

Most Canadians were committed to supporting the war effort, but many women had motives beyond a sense of duty when they entered the paid labour force. For some, it was an adventure that raised possibilities for independence and escape from domestic drudgery. For most, opportunities were likely exploited for economic reasons. Their pay packets augmented family incomes, which had not fully recovered from the depression years. A 1939 report for Manitoba's Economic Survey Board recognised that "subsidiary income" by working women was the "last line of defence in many homes."⁷ Others saw jobs as a chance to afford material extras that were not possible in a single wage earning family. Whatever the reason, the official call to war veiled circumstances responsible for women taking paid labour, a situation which left closely guarded family respectability intact.

At first glance, entry to the paid labour force could be interpreted as a liberating event for women. Early work by American historians suggests involvement in the working world helped change societal attitudes towards women and in time contributed to both social and economic equality; a "full American egalitarianism (was created) by

⁷ Mary Kinnear, *A Female Economy: Women's Work in a Prairie Province, 1870-1970* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1998), 38.

democratising labour.”⁸ Later work by Susan M. Hartmann qualifies claims that women had made great strides during the war, noting that traditional sex roles were maintained. However, Hartmann concludes that the Second World War “modified women’s position both in the home and in the world outside.”⁹ In contrast, Ruth Roach Pierson questions the idea that the war advanced women’s labour and social status. She emphasises Canadian wartime “jitters” over femininity, post-war mass dismissals of female employees and dismantled government-funded day care as proof. Simply, patriarchy was served by “the claim of the family on women’s labour and time remained unshaken by the war.”¹⁰ Keshen since suggests that while progress was limited, and then curtailed after the war, but that too much had happened in too many lives for women to completely return to square one.¹¹

A social history of wartime mothers working for wages during the Second World War needs to be constructed with an acknowledgement of the prevalence and persistence of patriarchy. Academics grapple with the extent to which patriarchy subordinates women and controls women’s labour power, but the paternalistic nature it represents is evident in every facet of this study. Patriarchal influences emanating from family, workplace and state have had a significant impact on women’s status, and are widely discussed in secondary material that addresses familial relations, gender differences in

⁸ Chester Gregory, Women in Defense Work During World War II: An Analysis of the Labour Problems and Women’s Rights, (Philadelphia, 1972), quoted in Ellen Scheinberg, “The Tale of Tessie the Textile Worker: Female Textile Workers in Cornwall During World War II,” Labour/Le Travail 33(Spring 1994), 153.

⁹ Susan M. Hartmann, American Women in the 1940s: The Home Front and Beyond (Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1982), 16.

¹⁰ Pierson, 19.

¹¹ Keshen, 266,

labour, state regulations, and the application of social welfare. Considering the prevailing conventions of the time, patriarchal decisions were considered to be “just good common sense.” However, this hegemony facilitated and reinforced gender inequality during the war years.

Jane Ursel makes a distinction between “familial patriarchy,” where power and authority over women and children were exercised in the home, and “social patriarchy,” where the support and control over women and children came from laws, institutions and the state.¹² To understand the form and function of patriarchy, Ursel focuses on what she contends were the most fundamental processes all societies must organise: reproduction of its population through procreation, socialisation and daily maintenance, and production, which secures the resources to provide for that population. Whereas patriarchy is a form of organising reproduction, it needs labour and income resources to function. Here, Ursel sees the organisation of production around the wage-labour system conflicting with the organisation of reproduction within the patriarchal system.¹³

Familial patriarchy was threatened when wives worked for pay. Paid labour interrupted idealised motherhood to become an important social concern in industrialising Canada. There was also the possibility that by receiving a wage, a woman might foster an element of independence from her husband who otherwise had been able to control her body and domestic labour. When women did enter the workplace, similar tensions effectively relegated them to diminished status by determining the type of work that they could do outside the home, and what rate of pay they would receive. Joan Sangster

¹² Ursel, 2.

¹³ Ibid., 6.

suggests that women's earliest understanding of wage work, adopted and mediated by the family, facilitated sexual divisions in labour.¹⁴ Heidi Hartmann claims that male workers preferred job segregation by gender at the expense of class unity. She notes that "job segregation is not only part of the capitalist mode of production, but also a product of a separate, coexisting system of male domination, patriarchy, that preceded capitalism and is theoretically irreducible to it."¹⁵ Ursel, too, accepts that patriarchy's most evident service to production has been the creation of circumstances that offer women as cheap labour.¹⁶

Gender-based pay differentiation resulted from the designation of work as inherently "male" or "female." Familial patriarchal convention, shared by employers and husbands, and often accepted by women themselves, reinforced the gender division of labour and largely supported the idealised importance of the male breadwinner. Joan Sangster records the management of the gender division of labour in her study of working women in small-town Ontario. Employers accepted that men were the primary wage earners of households, and though a living wage was not always given, that men should be paid more than women. Supervisors hired women for less skilled and lower-paid jobs because of the "physical, psychological, and 'innate' characteristics of women, and because of the reality of male breadwinners and temporary female workers."¹⁷ So-called womanly characteristics confined females to repetitious assembly line work, whereas

¹⁴ Joan Sangster, Earning Respect: The Lives of Working Women in Small-Town Ontario, 1920-1960 (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1995), 25.

¹⁵ Heidi Hartman, "The Unhappy Marriage of Marxism and Feminism: Towards a More Progressive Union," Capital and Class 8 (Summer 1979) 1-33, quoted in Ruth Milkman, Gender at Work: The Dynamics of Job Segregation by Sex During World War II (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1987), 6.

¹⁶ Ursel, 54.

¹⁷ Sangster, 67.

men operated heavier equipment for a higher rate of pay. Supervisors rarely considered training women for jobs that were more highly paid because, they believed, they would most certainly marry and leave the plant. Even if they returned to the labour force, management felt these mothers were prone to absenteeism because of unpredictable family needs.¹⁸

The workplace offered the husband a venue to exhibit manliness, and by virtue of earning the sole pay cheque, it allowed him as the breadwinner to own the family. Mark Rosenfeld observed family rhythms in Canadian railway towns and recognised

that work itself is made palatable only through the kinds of compensation masculinity can provide. When work is unpalatable, it is often only his masculinity (his identification with the wage, 'providing for the wife and kids') that keeps him at work day after day.¹⁹

Work was less an economic necessity than a means of underpinning the patriarchal control of family the male worker desired.²⁰ Joy Parr's study of two Ontario industrial centres notes that masculinity was measured by a husband's ability to meet the household's needs; men compared themselves in this manner with their fathers, and their wives with their mothers. Women believed the cash they could earn would give them leeway in what they could buy from the market and what they had to produce at home, but their husbands placed a premium on their wives' housework, mothering, frugal

¹⁸ Ibid., 83.

¹⁹ Mark Rosenfeld, "It Was a Hard Life: Class and Gender in the Work and Family Rhythm of a Railway Town, 1920-1950," in Chad Gaffield, ed., Constructing Modern Canada: Readings in Post-Confederation History (Toronto: Copp Clark Longman, 1994), 342.

²⁰ Ibid., 342.

shopping and production of household items.²¹ The man of the house often precluded his spouse's desire for paid labour, especially if his respectability was tied solely to his ability to provide for the family.

Patriarchy persisted partially because women largely accepted and reinforced their customary role. As with their husbands, respectability within community was of paramount concern. For most women, according to Suzanne Morton, fulfilment was only possible in the home, and their ability to care for children, husband and household with the financial resources from husbands' pay packets gave them their identity. Perfect femininity was a skill that women apprenticed for, and respectability was upheld by adhering to specific codes in dress, public conduct, spending habits and sexuality.²² Young women who worked were naturally expected to conform to the traditional ideal of femininity. Joy Parr, in her study of Hanover, a one-industry Ontario town where most workers were men, finds that women workers were not wives and mothers, but unmarried daughters. Society expected that "womanliness" would be learned later in marriage rather than through their work behind a machine.²³ Sangster recognises that women embraced the ideal of female domesticity and the male breadwinner because they looked forward to leaving the workforce to undertake domestic labour that would give them familial and social respect. Once they were married and still had to work outside the home they excused it as a need, rather than fulfilling the role as breadwinner.²⁴

²¹ Joy Parr, The Gender of Breadwinners: Women, Men, and Change in Two Industrial Towns, 1880-1950 (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1990), 199.

²² Suzanne Morton, Ideal Surroundings: Domestic Life in a Working-Class Suburb in the 1920s (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1995), 38.

²³ Parr, 47.

²⁴ Sangster, 76.

Rosenfeld also argues that patriarchal practices were not wholly imposed, but were “perpetuated in the main by consent, by identification with the status quo and a belief in common interests of inevitability.”²⁵ Sangster contends that labour divisions along gender lines were not solely the creation of male management and workers, but were accepted and rationalised by women themselves. Women’s explanations for their placement in low paying, repetitive jobs with no expectation of promotion to supervisor roles did not result from passivity. Rather, women acknowledged what Sangster identifies as their “realisation of existing power structures, their daily experience of ‘female’ work, and their participation in an ideology of sexual difference and female domesticity, which in turn became an integral part of their subjective identities as women workers.”²⁶ There were few cultural or familial reasons to challenge job hierarchy or occupation changes. Parents of younger female workers urged acceptance over rebellion to maintain their daughters’ contribution to the family income. The meagre pay earned by women tied them to dependence on family or household arrangements, and left no room for risks that might cost them their jobs. Their subservience to male authority and workplace hierarchy diminished possibilities to gain overall knowledge of the plant’s production that in turn limited advancement. Women were quite realistic about the dangers in challenging rigid gender divisions, and recognised that resistance was of little use. Some women suspected that if pay disparities were eliminated between men and women, they would be laid off as the employers would lose the incentive and advantage of employing cheaper female labour. Ultimately, Sangster concludes, women often

²⁵ Rosenfeld, 343.

²⁶ Sangster, 76.

accepted male superiority in the workplace because of the perceived physical attributes and technical knowledge, affirming the “common sense” notions about work and womanhood with which they were raised.²⁷ The assumption that women’s work was unskilled work remained firmly entrenched.

The evaluation of what constituted skill in work, according to feminists and socialist feminists, goes beyond relations between men and women. Steven Maynard’s critique of the social construction of masculinity in working class history suggests that labour categorised as unskilled women’s work was more of a social-political construct than an objective decision. Maynard cites the work of Anne Phillips and Barbara Taylor who argue that “skill is more often an ideological category imposed on certain types of work by virtue of the sex and power of the workers who perform it.”²⁸ Recent analyses include considerations of gender differential in access to training, and of the connection of skill and technology, to gender identity. Maynard accepts Cynthia Cockburn’s assertion that men ascribe high value to technical work, identifying their masculinity with their skills and careers, whereas femininity is incompatible with technological competence, ultimately leading to gendered occupations.²⁹

Ruth Milkman’s studies of job segregation by sex during World War II in America concludes that even during the war’s labour shortages, job segregation persisted. Rosie the Riveter did a “man’s job,” but did so in a female department or job classification, as the “boundaries between women’s and men’s work shifted their

²⁷ Ibid., 78.

²⁸ Anne Phillips and Barbara Taylor, “Sex and Skill: Notes Towards a Feminist Economics,” *Feminist Review*, 6(1980), 79-88, quoted in Steven Maynard, “Rough Work and Rugged Men: The Social Construction of Masculinity in Working-Class History,” *Labour/Le Travail* 23 (1989): 162.

location, but were not eliminated."³⁰ At times, an analogy to housework was made in an effort to rationalise women's participation in the paid workforce. Some industrial war work once considered masculine suddenly was thought to resemble housework when the responsibilities were handed over to women. Burring and filing sheet metal were now considered in recruitment pamphlets as easy as peeling potatoes.³¹ When equal pay was given, it was intended to protect the wages of "men's jobs" until the female substitutes could be let go. It was assumed that women could do men's work, but were only expected to do it temporarily, with the explicit provision that they would gracefully withdraw from their "men's jobs" when the war ended.³²

Unions, too, made distinctions of gender in addition to class. Ellen Scheinberg's study of female textile workers in Cornwall, Ontario, during the Second World War revealed union reluctance to accept a temporary waiver of job barriers to "men's" jobs, prompted by men's desires to "preserve their dominant position in the mills."³³ The influx of women in the Canadian auto plants during the war created, according to Pamela Sugiman, "labour's dilemma." Industrial unionism normally placed great importance on worker solidarity, but there was reluctance by United Auto Worker leaders to challenge unequal pay for equal work among the sexes. Male unionists adopted a family wage strategy, guided by the assumption that male breadwinners deserved and required higher

²⁹ Cynthia Cockburn, Machinery of Dominance: Women, Men and Technical Know-How (London, 1985), quoted in Maynard, 163.

³⁰ Ruth Milkman, Gender at Work: The Dynamics of Job Segregation by Sex during World War II (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1987), 9.

³¹ *Ibid.*, 61.

³² *Ibid.*, 63.

³³ Ellen Scheinberg, "The Tale of Tessie the Textile Worker: Female Textile Workers in Cornwall during World War II", Labour 33 (Spring 1994): 171.

wages and better jobs than women workers. The union defended women's concerns only if they had "distinct implications for men's positions in the labour market."³⁴

The increased demand for women's labour followed by the immediate purge of female workers at the end of the war has served as a good example of the synonymous relationship between capitalism and patriarchy. Marxist feminists refer to the "Reserve Army of Labour" theory, according to which women's status as wageworkers fluctuated with labour demands. Married women in particular, according to Veronica Beechey, were the preferred source of reserve labour because of their flexibility. They were paid less and were easily dismissed because they had their husbands' incomes to fall back on, and therefore the women did not fully bear the costs of the reproduction of their labour costs.³⁵ However, Ellen Scheinberg cautions that patriarchal influences need also to be considered:

Capitalists may have been responsible for creating a segmented labour force through the erection of occupational barriers, but one cannot ignore the role that patriarchal actors such as company managers, male union members, and the state played in supporting this discriminatory structure.³⁶

Harry Braverman offers a contrary understanding of reserve labour. He sees women enter the reserve army when they enter paid employment, rather than when they leave it.³⁷ Braverman's argument suggests that capitalism normally assumes women

³⁴ Pamela Sugiman, Labour's Dilemma: The Gender Politics of Auto Workers in Canada, 1937-1979 (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1994), 27.

³⁵ Veronica Beechey, "Some Notes on Female Wage Labour in Capitalist Production" Capital and Class, 3(Autumn, 1977): 56-57, quoted in Sylvia Walby, Patriarchal and Capitalist Relations in Employment (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1986), 76.

³⁶ Scheinberg, 156.

should be at home and be concerned just with reproduction. Sylvia Walby, though, also suggests that Braverman has neglected the impact of patriarchal relations on the labour market, the state, and the family. As an example, she notes that skilled men often resisted de-skilling and the entry of women in their area.³⁸

Human-capital theorist Jacob Mincer also sees women's participation in paid labour as flexible, and asserts that married women would choose the best time to participate in the economy when work was most available and employment conditions most favourable. Mincer shows that women worked at times of economic expansion, but also during economic recession when the husband had diminished income.³⁹

An understanding of both capitalism and patriarchy are necessary to comprehend fully the role of women as a reserve labour force. Capital benefited from the subordination of women by men and men utilised capitalist relations in the subordination of women. Women were kept on the periphery of the labour market since temporary work would not undermine gender inequality in the family. Walby tempers these assumptions, though, and warned that this position underestimates the conflicts between patriarchy and capital.⁴⁰

One such conflict is the absence of a "living wage." Capital's employment and remuneration of labour historically jeopardised the traditional and patriarchal nature of family life. The wage-labour system made family subsistence difficult, since the cost of

³⁷ Harry Braverman, "Labour and Monopoly Capital: The Degradation of Work in the Twentieth Century", Monthly Press Review (1974), quoted in Walby, 78.

³⁸ Walby, 79-80.

³⁹ Jacob Mincer, "Labour-force Participation of Married Women: A Study of Labour Supply," Aspects of Labour Economics: A Conference of the Universities (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1962), quoted in Walby, 71-72.

⁴⁰ Walby, 89.

resources made reproduction expensive. Bettina Bradbury's study of industrialising Montreal stresses that the most logical solution to the single breadwinner's inadequate wage was to rely on resources within one's household. Apart from a few strategies that could raise income from home, this solution meant reliance on the paid labour of wives and children.⁴¹

By the 1880s and into the turn of the century, it became apparent that mothers had to leave the home to work for wages, and this raised concerns over an expected decline in birth rates. Fears were exacerbated when unsupervised daughters left home and sought work. Carolyn Strange noted these single women became a "girl problem" when they flocked to Toronto before the Depression. How they would spend their spare time became a moral concern. If these women remained childless, this moral concern became one of race and nationhood.⁴²

Groups and individuals involved in Canada's social reform movement were fearful of the erosion of family stability. Canada would be in peril if married couples were having fewer children, while the rate of illegitimate children seemed to be on the rise. The movement's largely Protestant and Anglo-Saxon cadre of educators, doctors, social workers, and churches directed campaigns to raise the moral tone of Canadian society. Mariana Valverde claims this moral reform at the turn of the century was based on social purity, which required illuminating society by casting light into "dark corners", purifying or cleaning society with liberal use of soap and water, both literal and

⁴¹ Bettina Bradbury, Working Families: Age, Gender, and Daily Survival in Industrializing Montreal (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1993), 110.

⁴² Carolyn Strange, Toronto's Girl Problem: The Perils and Pleasures of the City, 1880-1930 (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1995), 196.

figurative.⁴³ The reformers' pro-family, pro-natalist and pro-patriarchal beliefs made these social reformers the "architects of social patriarchy."⁴⁴

Governments often placed citizens with this reform philosophy on commissions and invited them to offer testimony at inquiries that looked into social and family issues. Jane Ursel views this governmental concern as the advent of the destruction of patriarchal authority over household production and deregulation of reproductive relations that led the state to assume more of the supportive responsibilities that used to belong to the family. The state served as mediator between the wage-labour system and the reproductive system. The state, through the system of social patriarchy, attempted to reinforce familial patriarchy.⁴⁵

The social reform attitude spawned many charities, often financed by businessmen. By the end of the Great War, the plethora of agencies created a concern over duplication, especially as some civic leaders considered that charity fostered, rather than abated poverty and the associated "vices" of the poor. Toronto and Winnipeg answered this problem with financial federations. Each city had community chests that funded councils of social agencies that functioned as umbrella groups for various charities and organisations. Gale Wills called this arrangement between business that demanded fiscal responsibility and agencies that sought autonomy to work on social problems, a "marriage of convenience."⁴⁶ The alliance also marked the beginning of the well-meaning volunteers' replacement by the emerging profession of social workers. The

⁴³ Mariana Valverde, *The Age of Light, Soap and Water: Moral Reform in English Canada, 1885-1925* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1991), 17.

⁴⁴ Ursel, 69.

⁴⁵ Ursel, 39.

caseworkers and the businessmen who funded them shared similar views that “strengthened the liberal, and largely Angle-Saxon, Protestant power structures of Western society.”⁴⁷ For both groups, these views included a traditional perception of the nuclear family.

By the 1920s, provinces such as Manitoba and Ontario moved away from charity organisations that dispensed welfare services by expanding government involvement. Both provinces had earlier allowed Child-Welfare Acts to be administered by volunteers of the Children’s Aid Society, but attempts to centralise operations caused the Society to be integrated into the respective provincial welfare bureaucracy.

Manitoba and Ontario also introduced Mothers’ Allowances in 1920. The Allowance appeared a positive step in achieving a welfare state, since families received a salary and not charity. However, Ursel claims that patriarchal assumptions by the state were still present. Support also meant the right to control, and since legislators and social workers shared similar views on women’s roles, the ideal of the male breadwinner remained entrenched. This situation supported sex divisions of labour that crippled a mother’s ability to support her family in the absence of a husband. The state now allocated resources to reproduction by paying a group of mothers to stay home. However, the state precluded support from many in great need, as unwed mothers forfeited state support because of their obvious unsuitability, and deserted mothers were deemed the responsibility of their husbands.⁴⁸ Margaret Little’s study of the Ontario Mothers’ Allowance notes that the intrusive moral scrutiny applicants and recipients had

⁴⁶ Wills, 45.

⁴⁷ Ibid., 26-27.

⁴⁸ Ursel, 157-158.

to endure did not wither away with the welfare state, and the “gender, race and sexual definitions of morality predominated the everyday administration of this policy.”⁴⁹

The labour needs of the Second World War changed the state’s mediating role between production and reproduction. First, by campaigning to attract women to the workplace, restraints on the use of women in labour were diminished. Second, the state’s evolution from social patriarchy towards a welfare state continued by reallocating income to the reproductive sphere, the family.⁵⁰ The most significant example of state mediation during wartime was the Family Allowance Act, which resulted from the stalemate between business and labour over wages. The Act signalled the arrival of a new welfare ideology. In contrast to the social reform movement’s desire to “protect” female labour, the state now provided income and social services to the family.⁵¹

The Family Allowance Act was inaugurated in 1944, but the debate that led to the passing of the Act provides another example of the new welfare ideology’s revelation of the state’s persistent paternalistic nature and influence. Dominique Jean points to a inclination of politicians to favour individual over state responsibility. Concerns were raised over the wisdom of providing cash payments to families even though the government could not be assured that the money would be used for the welfare of the children. Though most MPs believed that education was the best way to ensure the proper allocation of funds, the law in the end specified that parents had to spend the money exclusively for their children or risk a stop payment if money was misused.

⁴⁹ Margaret Jane Hillyard Little, “No Car, No Radio, No Liquor Permit”: The Moral Regulation of Single Mothers in Ontario, 1920-1997 (Toronto: University of Oxford Press, 1998), xvii-xviii.

⁵⁰ Ursel, 176.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 205.

Suspected misuse of funds led to investigation. According to Jean, the "government's mistrust was the product of many biases, which quickly compromised the initial message of universality."⁵² A contradiction is evident between the federal government's attempt to respond to "the family problems posed by dependence on wages,"⁵³ and the state's inability to shed traditional assumptions when programs were developed and administered. The patriarchal state would continue to intervene in matters of family economy and autonomy.

Social patriarchy was also evident when government social security policy continued to preserve traditional gender roles within the labour market during the war. Ann Porter argues that the federal government, through the 1940 Unemployment Insurance Act, reinforced "women's marginal economic position by channelling women into low-wage sectors and by limiting women's access to income security benefits."⁵⁴ Despite the varied and extensive labour services women had provided during the war, the government continued to consider women's places to be predominately in domestic pursuits. Leonard Marsh's Report on Social Security for Canada (1943) assumed that women workers would return to resume household chores when the war ended. Marsh concluded that social security would apply to women most often as housewives.⁵⁵ Pierson added the UI contribution and benefit structure reproduced sexually unequal wage hierarchies. Female employment patterns and traditional childcare responsibilities

⁵² Ibid., 408.

⁵³ Jean, 407.

⁵⁴ Ann Porter, "Women and Income Security in the Postwar Period: The Case of Unemployment Insurance, 1945-1962," in Canadian Women: A Reader, ed. by Wendy Mitchinson, Paula Bourne, Alison Prentice, Gail Cuthbert Brandt, Beth Light and Naomi Black, (Toronto, Harcourt Brace and Company, 1996), 322.

limited opportunities to qualify for benefits. As well, the ideology of a "family wage" provided by a male head of the household led to the inclusion of dependants' allowances in the UI benefit structure. This meant, "women's principle access to benefits was to be indirectly through dependants' allowances."⁵⁶

The development of the welfare state did not come without criticism from influential social welfare practitioners. Charlotte Whitton, executive secretary of the Canadian Council on Child Welfare (CCCW), was adamant that the best way to improve the lot of disadvantaged children was to limit all existing welfare programs by offering assistance in emergencies rather than for continual care. Programs such as Mothers' Allowance would encourage people to be dependent, lazy and immoral.⁵⁷ In 1943, Whitton produced a comprehensive statement on social security which admirers and critics dubbed the "Whitton Plan." Many experts favoured cash benefits and allowances for needy families, but Whitton rejected the distribution of cash intended for children since there was no guarantee that the allowances would directly benefit children.⁵⁸ Whitton's opinions were significant, as her biographers, Rooke and Schnell note that she was committed to a conscious and aggressive program to raise standards of child care to a uniform level. Her CCCW served as a quasi-public federally funded agency which concerned itself with child hygiene, child labour, education, and care of dependent and deviant, including delinquent, children. The Council assumed the mandate of moral

⁵⁵ Ibid., 325.

⁵⁶ Ruth Roach Pierson, "Gender and the Unemployment Insurance Debates in Canada, 1939-1940," Labour/Le Travail, 25 (1990): 102, quoted in Porter, 325.

⁵⁷ Little, 81.

⁵⁸ P.T.Rooke and R.L. Schnell, No Bleeding Heart: Charlotte Whitton, A Feminist on the Right (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1987), 117.

watchdog, and placed social workers who shared Whitton's and the Council's philosophies in key government and social agencies throughout Canada.⁵⁹ Influence in Manitoba was assured, as the province's Minister for Health and Public Welfare "retained her services and heeded her advice."⁶⁰ Her counsel usually included admonishment of any authority unwilling to spend money on modern childcare programs and who would not change outmoded practices.

Whitton's belief in modern methods included commitment to the development of professional social workers through creation of a scientifically based body of professional knowledge. Social workers would look to experts for support and guidance, and many relied for advice on Dr. William E. Blatz, Canada's world-renowned child expert, for advice. Blatz stressed education to avert problems, followed by removing children from troublesome homes if prevention was too late.

Blatz also advised parents about their child-rearing practices from the mid-1920s. Jocelyn Raymond's work on Blatz's techniques reveals approaches that were considered revolutionary for that time. Blatz advocated that the long held principle of unbending parental authority now had to yield to the idea that children could think for themselves. Blatz confirmed that a proper environment could accommodate children of all ranges of intelligence. To this end, maintaining schedules became a recommended and important part of family regime, though it was advised that daily routines were to be set after

⁵⁹ P.T.Rooke and R.L. Schnell, "'Making the Way More Comfortable'" Charlotte Whitton's Child Welfare Career, 1920-48," *Journal of Canadian Studies* 17, (Winter, 1982-83): 34.

⁶⁰ P.T. Rooke and R.L. Schell, "'An Idiot's Flowerbed'" A Study of Charlotte Whitton's Feminist Thought, 1941-1950", in Veronica Strong-Boag and Anita Clair Fellman, eds., *Rethinking Canada: The Promise of Women's History* (Toronto: Copp Clark Pitman, 1986), 213.

observation of the baby's needs. Parents were encouraged to think through situations rather than to follow instructions blindly.⁶¹

Mothers were targets for practitioners eager to dispel the "myths" passed from earlier generations or concerned neighbours. Cynthia Comacchio identifies a movement of "scientific motherhood" which swept Canada after the Great War. The movement's origins initially lay in the attempt to stem Canada's high infant mortality rate. Experts concluded "that Canadian mothers were handicapped in their child rearing duties by an ignorance that could be remedied only through expert tutoring and supervision."⁶²

Comacchio argues doctors became family advisors who made parents feel inadequate. The home came under scrutiny and regulation of the state, especially since a "saved" child would repay society by becoming a productive and worthy citizen.⁶³ Katherine Arnup also recognises the patriarchal assumptions medical leaders and the state had about parenting. She suggests that the twentieth century in Canada marked a period of new standards of mothering, based largely on an Anglo-Saxon, middle class family model which attempted to dictate a way of life for modern mothers and their children.⁶⁴

Social agencies, and later the medical community, extended their scrutiny of the family to the dinner table and into lunch sacks, by placing the responsibility for good nutrition on the mother. Wills describes Toronto agencies' attempts to determine the nature and cost of minimum nutrition. Prevention of poverty rested on the health of the

⁶¹ Jocelyn Motyer Raymond, The Nursery World of Dr. Blatz (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1991), 33.

⁶² Cynthia R. Comacchio, "Nations are Built of Babies": Saving Ontario's Mothers and Children, 1900-1940 (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1993), 4.

⁶³ *Ibid.*, 11.

⁶⁴ Katherine Arnup, Education for motherhood: Advice for Mothers in Twentieth-Century Canada (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1994), 117.

male breadwinner, and on the women who bore and cared for children. But many working-class housewives were assumed to be incapable of following the scientific procedures deemed necessary to purchase and prepare good food.⁶⁵ Toronto and Winnipeg civic leaders employed visiting housekeepers to shepherd “inadequate” mothers towards modern homemaking. Nutrition issues became an even greater concern when more mothers entered the work force during the Second World War, as social agencies wondered if mothers were abrogating their responsibility to provide proper lunches and suppers daily for their families.

The concern for nutrition was only one dimension of wartime fears about family well being. Owen Cardigan argues that fathers sent overseas and mothers in the workplace contributed to a weakening of traditional family life. Noting the historical correlation between child neglect and juvenile delinquency, he concludes that the increase in delinquency was “real and not merely a reporting anomaly.”⁶⁶ Five major cities, including Winnipeg, undertook studies that hinted that the problem might have been even larger than the statistics suggested. Reports of gang activity that led to petty theft, vandalism, immorality and gambling offered more evidence of the social impact of the war.⁶⁷

Traditional expectation of gender roles meant that young females were subjected to the greatest scrutiny. This was consistent with the findings of Mary Louise Adams, who cited the example of a pamphlet, “Teen Trouble,” distributed by the Canadian Youth Commission during the war. Adams asserted that the pamphlet gave the message that

⁶⁵ Wills, 92.

⁶⁶ D. Owen Carrigan, Juvenile Delinquency in Canada: A History (Concord: Irwin Publishing, 1998), 113.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 113-114.

"delinquency meant girls on the streets and in taverns, girls capturing soldiers or going to juke joints. It was also truancy and vandalism, but these behaviour received scant attention compared to those more obviously connected to sex."⁶⁸ Social stability was at risk, especially because when the girls "kept late hours," it suggested that the girls were outside parental control, and once "outside that control girls would express their sexuality in a manner dangerous to themselves and to their communities."⁶⁹ Standards were different for boys who were not necessarily assumed to be "in trouble" when they were outside parental control.⁷⁰

The rise in juvenile arrest rates corresponded with an increase in attention to rooting out the causes of the actions of so many idle and disaffected youth. Jeffrey Keshin's work on Canada's wartime delinquency "scare" recounts the many conditions the media and social agencies believed contributed to the crisis. Children were surrounded by reports of death and destruction that were believed to foster a "devil may care" attitude, coupled with a need to indulge themselves while they still had the chance. Commentators also pointed to the family challenges created when they tried to respond to wartime economic opportunities that often included relocation. New jobs in cities sparked housing shortages, which concerned the likes of Charlotte Whitton. Overcrowding caused depressed living conditions, and a poisoned atmosphere resulted

⁶⁸ Mary Louise Adams, The Trouble with Normal: Postwar Youth and the Making of Heterosexuality (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1997), 59.

⁶⁹ Ibid, 64.

⁷⁰ Ibid.

from congestion and family bickering. Working parents seeking some relaxation and quiet were prone to push children out on the street without proper guidance.⁷¹

Concern was also raised over the number of hours some youths worked in jobs after school hours. Parents who sought work permits were criticised for exploiting their offspring, and other parents were chastised for their loose supervision when their children cut classes. Many work opportunities were in what were considered sleazy establishments such as pool halls and bowling alleys, and therefore the young workers were more likely to be exposed to unsavoury influences.⁷²

While better housing and tightly enforced curfews and school attendance laws would help correct the behaviour of youth, most Canadians believed that these steps were ineffectual unless the family structure was solid. They believed that stability would never be regained if high paid mothers would “permanently discard their family responsibilities.”⁷³ Newspapers and magazines reported stories of latchkey kids coming home to cold meals, with only strangers in the community to look after them. It was assumed that children of indifferent or overworked parents would inevitably find company in a gang.⁷⁴

The imperative of mothers’ familial responsibility is best exhibited by the limited government action to provide day-care to wartime working mothers. England’s day nursery program was dogged by delays over concerns for “standards,” which Walby interpreted as an example of rival demands on the use of women’s labour between

⁷¹ Jeffrey Keshen, “Wartime Jitters over Juveniles: Canada’s Delinquency Scare and Its Consequences, 1939-1945,” Jeffrey Keshen, ed., Age of Contention: Readings in Canadian Social History, 1900-1945 (Toronto: Harcourt Brace & Company, 1997), 365-6.

⁷² *Ibid.*, 368-9.

⁷³ *Ibid.*, 369.

interest of the waged economy and the “patriarchal interest in the maintenance of the privatised organisation of domestic labour in the household.”⁷⁵ In Canada, government day-care was not developed sufficiently to meet the demand, or, as this study in Winnipeg will determine, was considered unnecessary. Even when day nurseries were provided, it was clear that they would operate on a temporary basis during the crisis, and would be dismantled when the traditional family would no longer need them. Keshen suggests this move to traditionalism

drew strength from the consequences of the government’s parsimonious approach to state-supported childcare – a growing number of youngsters who, Canadians were constantly reminded, were too often left without adequate supervision.⁷⁶

Patriarchal influences and attitudes were not limited to the workplace, social agencies or government ministries. Women and society were exposed to a variety of media that subtly or blatantly tried to shape the public's opinion of women during the war. Messages which trumpeted government programmes or pitched soap products manipulated images of women which satisfied traditional expectations required of wives and mothers. Maureen Honey examines what she defines as home-front propaganda in America. The Office of War Information directed magazines, advertisers, novelists and movie producers to try to unite and mobilise the home front into efficient economic production, often depicting women workers as a “paragon[s] of virtue, capable of

⁷⁴ Ibid.

⁷⁵ Walby, 190.

⁷⁶ Keshen, 370.

shouldering any burden and meeting any challenge."⁷⁷ Honey tracks the transformations of female images as the need for labour waxed and waned. Magazine articles were written to present child care centres in a favourable light when mothers were needed in factories, and a few years later, articles pondered the link between busy working mothers and juvenile delinquency.⁷⁸

In Canada, Prime Minister MacKenzie King needed to have Canada's war effort made better known. John Grierson assumed this task by managing the government's Wartime Information Board while also serving as film commissioner of the National Film Board. Gary Evans considered Grierson to be a "propaganda maestro" who orchestrated numerous national campaigns. Evans asserts that Grierson saw no distinction between propaganda and education, and used film to promote a mass suggestion. This mass suggestion appealed to wartime Canada, as it offered a unifying element that helped ease the individual's fear of having to cope with crisis alone. Grierson hoped to inspire and promote hope rather than to question and raise cynicism and despair.⁷⁹ Films that addressed women reflected a positive view towards the changes in traditional attitudes that were brought on by the war. Films such as "The Home Front," which tried to underscore the importance woman played in the total war effort, were considered to be progressive without preaching. One film, "Proudly She Marches," even suggested women's changes in status might be permanent, since "women had realised in their day-

⁷⁷ Maureen Honey, Creating Rosie the Riveter: Class, Gender, and Propaganda during World War II (Amherst, University of Massachusetts Press, 1984), 6.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, 50.

⁷⁹ Gary Evans, John Grierson and the National Film Board: The Politics of Wartime Propaganda, 1939-1945 (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1985), 10-11.

to-day work both personal fulfilment and development and a fuller sense of participation and pride in the very life and destiny of Canada."⁸⁰

The apparent progressivism the National Film Board exhibited towards women's wartime roles was not common in other elements of Canadian media. Susan Bland studies of Canadian magazine advertising in Maclean's Magazine during wartime found that advertisers changed the roles women portrayed in advertisements to reflect the realities of war, and at the same time exploited feelings of patriotism. Time-saving household products were crucial purchases for wives who had other wartime activities to deal with. Yet, an underlying message always catered to "traditionally feminine aspirations," where, "whatever their role during wartime, they were women first and foremost."⁸¹ Other advertisements also chastised mothers who ignored the move to modern parenting. Products featured the paternalist advice of doctors, dieticians and scientists to remind mothers that when it came to the care and health of their children, they did not know best.⁸²

The plethora of patriarchal influences and expectations borne by women catalogued in the secondary literature here were certainly all relevant in Winnipeg during the Second World War. Evidence of the effect of patriarchal control can be determined by a study of the wartime war work experiences women had in the city. An account of the economic and social pressures which beset typical Winnipeg families during wartime will also reveal the paternalistic attitudes held by governments, social agencies, school

⁸⁰ Ibid, 138.

⁸¹ M. Susan Bland, " 'Henrietta the Homemaker', and 'Rosie the Riveter': Images of Women in Advertising in Maclean's Magazine, 1939-50," Atlantis 8, no. 2 (1983): 82.

⁸² Ibid, 75.

boards and society when large numbers of women entered the work force. General concern mounted when it became evident that many of these working women were mothers who had to juggle the demands of labour with traditional expectations of caring for children.

The following chapter will outline the wartime mobilisation of female labour and the reaction to it. In particular, this thesis contends that women in Winnipeg needed to conform to specific gender roles in those war years, and cultural expectations of femininity would transcend every facet of the city's social and civic structure. Regardless of the economic strain families faced, unattached women, wives and mothers endured both subtle and overt messages, most commonly in the national and local media, that were intended to shape their actions during a national crisis. Mothers were to fulfil the paradoxical role of nurturing their children in a modern and scientific manner within a traditional framework of compassion and care with which mothers were to have been inherently blessed. If children were believed to be neglected or ill cared for, various social agencies in Winnipeg were expected to step in to enlighten mothers on new methods to raise the child. It was evident that the paternalistic actions and attitudes of these local social agencies which espoused a commitment to foster a new age in social welfare also believed that mothers, especially those who worked outside the home, were often incapable of meeting their familial responsibilities.

With the traditional conservative conditions in Winnipeg established, the next chapter will partially explain why Winnipeg refused day nurseries under the Dominion-Provincial Wartime Day Nursery Agreement. Nurseries were set up in large urban centres in Ontario and Quebec, though not without some controversy and caution.

Despite some concerns, central Canadian cities took advantage of the Agreement and established the day nurseries. Similar controversy existed in Winnipeg, but mothers there did not have the same opportunity to place their children in government run day nurseries. It was officially determined, largely from the interpretation of a Winnipeg Council of Social Agencies survey measuring child-care needs of working mothers, that there were insufficient levels of war industry activity in Winnipeg to warrant day care facilities. This survey, however, clearly revealed many women were working in sectors other than war industry, and many of these mothers needed more suitable care for their children. As well, employment statistics show that the rate of increase of women entering the work force, and the likelihood of family disruption, was greatest in prairie cities like Winnipeg. Authorities responsible for the Day Care decision were influenced by traditional ideals of motherhood, and in anticipation of social instability, ignored contemporary social scientists who advocated institutional child-care. Instead, social workers and officials with the Council of Social Agencies were not comfortable with so many mothers working, and they were not eager to supply the means to make the employment of mothers convenient by advocating the establishment of government funded day nurseries.

This conservative view of women and family, though, was not enough to deny women access to day care. The final chapter examines the concern Winnipeg citizens had with the perceived rise in the rate of juvenile delinquency, and concludes that the timing of this unease over delinquency contributed to the decision not to take advantage of the Day Nursery Agreement. Youth crime seemed an inevitable nation-wide consequence of a home front involved in a total war effort. However, the mantle of

blame was in part placed on the shoulders of mothers, who were believed either incapable of handling their children with their husbands absent, or too busy working to provide care and adequate supervision. On the heels of a sensational murder of a Winnipeg juvenile detention centre guard by three youths, a study was conducted by the Council of Social Agencies to find the cause and develop solutions for troubled youth who were believed to have been left adrift. Invariably, traditional and patriarchal perceptions of family held by the Council led them to believe that inadequate parental supervision was largely responsible for juvenile delinquency. In response, social workers in Winnipeg chose to spurn the contemporary measure of providing quality child care that would have supervised the city's swelling ranks of idle or neglected children.

The primary sources for this last chapter are varied. The following chapters all draw upon local and national media sources of the era that offer insight to the city's mood, and on occasion, angst that working women created in Winnipeg. The city's two dailies, the Free Press and the Tribune, reported women's response to the national call to work. Letters to the editor and advice columns served as lightning rods to express fears about women abandoning their traditional responsibilities. Editorials, in contrast, tended to voice more enlightened aspects of the female labour phenomena. A review of articles and advertisements in the national newsmagazine, Liberty, determined that this weekly journal available in Winnipeg did not offer anything but traditional interpretations of gender roles to its readers. Two interesting sources of wartime information and messages directed to the nation came by radio and film. By examining abstracts of films shown in Winnipeg, and transcripts of broadcasts of the Director of Public Information's "As a Matter of Fact," aired nightly during the war, it is obvious that The National Film Board

and the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation served as conduits of national propaganda that applauded the contributions of patriotic womenfolk. A locally produced radio spot on behalf of Winnipeg's Health Department, "Your City's Health," also reinforced what good mothers needed to do for their children. Professional journals from the war years, Canadian Welfare, and its American counterpart, Survey Mid-Monthly, offer valuable testimonies of social caseworkers, and of what was considered cutting edge social work theory for the time.

A large body of primary material was gathered from the holdings of Winnipeg's Council of Social Agencies at the Provincial Archives of Manitoba. Minutes of the Board of Directors of the Family Bureau of Winnipeg and Annual Reports reveal much about the conditions and attitudes towards families in dire need during the war years. The collection also contains surveys gathered by the Winnipeg School Board, which questioned children of working mothers about the lunchtime and after-school care they received. The surveys were intended to determine the necessity of day-care for families with working mothers. A most important document to this thesis, a copy of a report on juvenile delinquency prepared by the Council of Social Agencies, was found in the Manitoba Provincial Library.

Further to the day care issue, the National Archives of Canada holds files that address negotiations for and development of childcare facilities under the Federal-Provincial Wartime Nursery Program. Letters, memorandum, surveys and published reports by the federal government's National Selective Service and the National Welfare Council help outline the circumstances authorities considered when nurseries were

proposed and planned. These circumstances are relevant for the discussions and decisions surrounding Winnipeg's candidacy for similar child care.

The City of Winnipeg Archives contains special and annual reports from the Department of Public Welfare and the Committee on Health, including reports on the city's wartime housing conditions and surveys on working youth. The youth labour survey had direct relevance to measures the City of Winnipeg implemented to eliminate potential sources of delinquency. Minutes of the Winnipeg School Board reflect that female employment and youth concerns were also common discussion topics at Board and committee meetings.

Finally, the author conducted a few interviews with wartime working mothers and their children. Caution is needed, however, when evaluating such sources. Joan Sangster reminds historians that narratives do reflect experiences, but they are "always mediated by cultural codes, which may in turn come to shape their interpretations of experience in a dialectical sense."⁸³ In all, the sources studied suggest that Winnipeg women responded to extraordinary challenges during crisis, though they remained all the while bound in the traditional patriarchal attitudes and assumptions long ascribed to their gender.

⁸³ Sangster, 12.

CHAPTER 2

ANSWERING THE NATION'S CALL TO WAR WORK

If women during the war needed an inspirational role model, they had only to flip through a wartime newspaper or magazine. It became acceptable for commercial interests to use the war to sell products, and they often used smiling paragons of womanhood to pitch them. In a 1941 advertisement, for example, Westinghouse featured a handsome woman who proudly announced, "Now I Have Four Jobs." Her picture was surrounded by banner insets of her duties: Wife, Mother, Hostess and War Worker. Westinghouse refrigerators, automatic irons and electric washers were now available to allow women to cope with this myriad of responsibilities. As the advertisement noted: "No wonder Canadian women seek by every means to save time and money and energy for these surpassing services."¹

Such images did not just sell appliances. The consummate wife and mother theme also reassured the public that the home front effort need not diminish the feminine qualities and responsibilities required to tend home and hearth. These overt messages were congruent with traditional social expectations, and it was clear to women that despite their seemingly independent status as wage earners, they must continue to fulfil their familial duties as wives and mothers.

Women's extraordinary involvement in the wartime labour force would not secure them a new and lasting status in the minds of government officials and social welfare agents. The need to encourage the wartime employment of married women and mothers

¹ Echoes, Official Publication of the Imperial Order Daughters of the Empire, (Summer 1941): 42.

contradicted the patriarchal and natalist values that the state had traditionally reinforced in Canadian society. Where wartime working women provided the state and society an opportunity to afford them greater equality, their involvement was seen as a temporary novelty that, if continued for any length of time, would create long term consequences. Rather than discounting old values, the state advanced a synthesis of old and new that proclaimed the serious threats that married women's work presented to the family at the same time as it defined for itself and for social work professionals a new role, based in social science, as guardians of family life.

This chapter examines the level of involvement of Winnipeg women as they responded to wartime labour needs. It demonstrates how their participation in the labour force challenged their respectability as women, wives and mothers, as viewed through the sceptical, scrutinising and patriarchal eyes of citizenry, government, school boards and social welfare agencies. Primary sources for the initial portion of the chapter rely greatly on articles, letters and editorials found in Winnipeg's Free Press and Tribune. Since I have been unable to find or have access to the records of companies that did war work in Winnipeg, the dailies were used to gather sufficient descriptions of work that women carried out. The newspapers were also useful in gauging the city's reaction to increased female employment. Most significantly, the newspapers chronicled a shift in public mood.² Initial excitement and appreciation of women registering for work with the National Selective Service would later give way to criticism and doubt when it appeared that too many wives and mothers were out of the home too often and too long. The

² Newspapers that served a major centre during the war are considered indicators of social change. The power of the media to shape and reflect reality mounted during the war years. Keshen, "Canada's Civilian Women," 240-241.

newsmagazine Liberty, available in Winnipeg, and transcripts of the radio programs "As a Matter of Fact" and "Your City's Health," aired in the city, offered working women mixed messages. Articles and broadcasts raised guilt if women chose not to work and support the war effort, and paradoxically, if women did choose to work guilt was ascribed over the possibility that household and family responsibilities may be neglected.

The chapter then examines the response made by social agencies that had long been established to help families bridge crises in times of stress. While less critical of mothers than the general public, the social welfare system operated with traditional expectations of motherhood that in the end governed their responses to the needs of working mothers. Minutes and annual reports of the Winnipeg Council of Social Agencies, particularly the Family Bureau of Winnipeg, exhibit a largely patriarchal attitude towards its clientele. The philosophies and actions of the Council of Social Agencies and the Family Bureau as recorded in the minutes and reports also need to be put in a wider Canadian context. The Winnipeg Council of Social Agencies was a member of the Canadian Welfare Council, and its workers undoubtedly subscribed to the journal that the Canadian Welfare Council published. Canadian Welfare served to shape and guide social workers and many of the articles pertained to the negative impact on the family and the home when wives and mothers worked outside the home. These sources suggest that even though many social workers knew poverty to be the most common root of familial disharmony and suffering, the advantages of increased family income did not outweigh the perceived disadvantages of a mother away from the home.

Many Canadians left unemployed by the Depression found new opportunities for work when Canada prepared for the Second World War. Economic mobilisation began

slowly, but the nine per cent unemployment level in 1940 fell dramatically to two per cent by 1941-42, and less than two percent through 1943-45.³ Women experienced only moderate expansion in employment during the first two years of the war, as unemployed men were first to be absorbed into new opportunities. This soon changed. Men left to serve in the armed forces, and the April 1942 plebiscite on conscription showed that Canadians believed that even more soldiers were needed to fight. War labour needs, fuelled by increased wartime industrial development, became almost entirely dependent upon women workers to staff the converted and newly constructed war plants. The federal Department of Labour estimated that in 1939 one out of every six persons who worked in industries other than agriculture was a woman. In 1942 increased need for female labour sparked a successful nation-wide recruiting campaign. Additional 200,000 women entered the paid labour force, with one out of every three workers being female. By October 1943 the peak in female employment in war industry was reached with an estimated 261,000 women employed in either direct or indirect war production.⁴ For many families, husband, wife and eldest daughter now had all the work and overtime they wanted.⁵

The number of women participating in the labour force in Manitoba rose dramatically during the wartime labour crisis as well. The 1931 Census of Canada reported 17 per cent of the working age female population in the labour force, and this

³ Robert Bothwell, Ian Drummond and John English, Canada, 1900-1945 (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1987), 352.

⁴ "Wartime History of Employment of Women," in "History of Wartime Activities of the Department of Labour," NAC, RG 35, Series 7, File 10, Pt. 1, 80.

⁵ J. L. Granatstein, Irving M. Abella, David J. Bercuson, R. Craig Brown and H. Blair Neatby, Twentieth Century Canada (Toronto: McGraw-Hill Ryerson, 1983), 275.

rose to only 18 per cent in 1941.⁶ Participation increased significantly as the war lagged on when Winnipeg secured war orders for aircraft parts, gun components, and other steel parts.⁷ The Dominion Bureau of Statistics reported in 1942 that 21 per cent of working age women in Manitoba had entered the work force, 27 per cent in 1943 and almost 28 per cent by 1944.⁸ The percentage increase in female labour compared to men in Winnipeg proved even more dramatic.(Table 2.1). By October 1943, one year after the government's recruitment campaign began, 32 per cent more women were recorded to be working. When the ratio of men to women employed in Winnipeg is compared to other Canadian cities, only Toronto and Ottawa boasted higher percentages of female involvement in the work force.

Table 2.1: Women's Employment, 1942-44, Selected Cities

<i>City</i>	<i>1942</i>		<i>1943</i>		<i>1944</i>	
	<i>Number</i>	<i>% of Labour Force</i>	<i>Number</i>	<i>% of Labour Force</i>	<i>Number</i>	<i>% of Labour Force</i>
Toronto	92,932	36.6	107,903	40.4	109,157	40.8
Ottawa	9,280	37.2	10,308	39.1	10,172	39.2
Edmonton	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	6,474	37.5
Winnipeg	16,915	28.2	22,131	35.0	23,239	36.0
Hamilton	18,339	28.9	19,061	31.5	19,829	32.9
Calgary	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	5,265	30.0
Windsor	6,394	14.9	7,374	18.0	7,299	18.6

Source: Labour Gazette, January 1944, 90; and Labour Gazette, January 1945, 86.

Labour for the war effort was the responsibility of the NSS that was mandated to co-ordinate and direct the full mobilisation of the Canadian labour force. Recruitment of women was the most important component of the program, and in May 1942 a division of

⁶ Kinnear, 105.

⁷ Bothwell, Drummond, English, 355.

the NSS was created to deal with employment of women and related services.⁹ Mrs. Rex Eaton, Assistant Director of the NSS in charge of the Women's Division, set out to create an inventory of available labour, with women between the ages of twenty and twenty-four required to register. This registration had a two-fold purpose: to mobilise single women, and to make employment of women with children unnecessary.¹⁰ With the help of an aggressive publicity campaign, enough single women were attracted to fill labour needs. By 1942 greater labour needs drew married women to the shop floors, largely on the strength of an economic incentive. After July 1942 a revision of the income tax law allowed a husband to keep his married status exemption regardless of the amount his wife made.¹¹

By 1943 war related factory jobs siphoned many single, and later, married but childless women from service jobs to create labour shortages in traditional female labour sectors. Essential services within hospitals, restaurants, hotels and laundries saw their employees drawn elsewhere. It became apparent that the NSS would have to wade deeper into the reserve labour pool. Mothers with children would be called to fill the breach.

⁸ "Sex Distribution of Persons in Recorded Employment at October 1, 1944," Labour Gazette, (January 1945): 86.

⁹ Pierson, 23.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 24.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 48.

Table 2.2: Women's Employment, 1942-44, Selected Provinces

<i>Province</i>	<i>1942</i>		<i>1943</i>		<i>1944</i>	
	<i>Number</i>	<i>% of Labour Force</i>	<i>Number</i>	<i>% of Labour Force</i>	<i>Number</i>	<i>% of Labour Force</i>
Ontario	208,200	26.7	238,481	30.2	245,127	30.8
Quebec	147,213	25.1	161,310	26.2	159,413	26.9
Manitoba	19,782	21.2	25,727	26.9	27,150	27.7
Alberta	10,956	17.0	14,265	19.9	16,139	22.1

Source: Labour Gazette, January 1944, 90; January 1945, 86.

Winnipeg women were able to monitor changes in Canada's labour situation through the public medium of radio, newspapers and magazines. The government often supplied news releases and features. The Director of Public Information aired "As a Matter of Fact," a nightly radio program during the week, that answered questions from listeners by mail, phone and telegram. The program highlighted important issues directed at shoring up the home front effort, and on occasion the show's host would chastise listeners for their lassitude in face of the ultimate test. A February 1942 program commended the public for its interest in the women's war effort, and declared that this important issue "should be stressed on all occasions, until the job is accomplished."¹² It was announced that female university graduates and undergraduates were needed for inspection work on essential war necessities such as gun barrels, explosives and radio parts. The Inspector General of the Inspection Board of the United Kingdom and Canada was quoted as saying that while the girls would not wear dazzling uniforms, get their pictures in the paper, nor "march behind brass bands," they would do essential work to win the war.¹³

¹² "As a Matter of Fact," February 16, 1942, 1, NAC, RG 36, vol. 18, file 10-A-4pt4, 1.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 2.

At this time, however, the labour needs had not yet warranted an open call for women to enter factories. While women were lauded for their ability to operate a 15 ton crane, the radio host noted that there were only 75,000 women in munitions work and over two million listed as homemakers. These homemakers were called "guardians of the morale front," women who followed a usual routine which "in a world gone mad takes more than a bit of doing." Many, it was noted, carried on with loved ones in danger zones. Others, who did not have to "march behind a brass band" to feel important, kept house for husbands who did war work. These industrial warriors were in need of "the sight of attractive-looking, cheerful, even tempered wives and a home that is a haven of comfort after the exhaustion of offices and factories."¹⁴ For the time being, the need for women in the workforce did not supplant the ideal of home and hearth.

By late August 1942 labour shortages were sharply apparent, and the tone and message of "As a Matter of Fact" changed. The government's rationale for compulsory registration of unemployed women was the subject of one evening's broadcast, and that program clearly wished to soothe any concerns that registration signalled. The broadcast acknowledged that in normal times there were a few women who kept working "for one reason or another," but most gave up their jobs for homemaking once they got married.¹⁵ However, the war had drained men from factories to overseas and to other labour opportunities within the country. It was now reported that the labour supply in industrial centres had been quickly used up. Listeners were told that women in these centres would work only if they knew they were needed, and women in less industrialised areas would

¹⁴ Ibid., 3.

¹⁵ "As a Matter of Fact," August 21, 1942, 1, NAC, RG 36, vol. 18, file 10-A-4pt4.

move if they were sure they could get jobs. Therefore, registration was necessary so the NSS could get a complete picture of the available labour supply and employment offices could have a list of names to call when workers were needed.¹⁶

Registration began for women between ages twenty and twenty-four years followed by women of all other age groups. Married women were assured that they would not be asked to work until all the single women were called. However, the radio host cautioned, "If it comes to a choice between calling out the married women and losing the war the married women will be called."¹⁷ If the women were called, they were to appear for an interview, but taking a job was not compulsory. The program ended by chiding women for complaining about the "sacrifices" they might have to make: to give up some of their leisure, to leave their homes, or to do the type of work which they might not prefer as a career. Women were reminded that the men going overseas and offering their lives for their country were really the only ones who were entitled to use the word "sacrifice." They were also reminded that Canadian women always shouldered their responsibilities, and they would do it again.¹⁸

Winnipeg's daily papers also alerted women to the unfolding labour crisis. Data gathered by registration was promptly published so women could see for themselves that their labour was needed. It was reported that only 22.6 per cent registered for full time work, which would fill only two months' requirements for industry and military service. Many women who were already fully employed were unwilling to change their present occupation to more essential work. Since the registration showed fewer numbers of

¹⁶ Ibid., 3.

¹⁷ Ibid., 4.

women available for war work than was expected, many of the single and married women who had registered for part time work, but who admitted no home responsibilities, were encouraged to consider full time work.¹⁹(Table 2.3) Again, no action would be taken if women chose not to accept work. Mrs. Eaton, did not believe it would come to that since the "spirit of the registration showed that they will take work willingly."²⁰ Eaton partially relied on public pressure to encourage this willingness. She had warned that the time was not far off "when any able-bodied Canadian woman who is not tied to her home by responsibility, who can work and does not work, will be conspicuous -and perhaps not in a way she would like to be."²¹

Table 2.3. Work Preferences of Women, 20-24 years old, Toronto NSS, 1942

<i>Work Preference</i>	<i>Single</i>	<i>Married</i>
Unwilling to change	72,618	103,850
Will work part time (with children)	411	7,629
Work part time (home duties)	694	1,046
Work part time (no responsibilities)	4,901	8,799
Work full time (with children)	967	6,344
Work full time (home duties)	1,366	581
Work full time (no responsibilities)	36,937	12,440
Subtotals	117,894	140,689
<i>Total</i>	258,583	

Credit: "Ottawa Sidelines," Winnipeg Free Press, October 28, 1942, 15.

At this stage of the war, the Winnipeg Free Press clearly supported the call to women for paid labour positions. An editorial commended the NSS for registration, as it

¹⁸ Ibid., 6.

¹⁹ "Ottawa Sidelines," Winnipeg Free Press, 28 October 1942, 15.

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ "Aid to Women War Workers Planned at Y Council Meet," Winnipeg Free Press, 14 October 1942, 10.

would help reach a target of 25,000 women a month for the war industry during the next three months. Reference was also made to Eaton's promise of equal pay for equal work and the establishment of nurseries for the children of married women accepting employment.²²

Single prairie women were especially receptive to registration. Nearly every second single woman, and one out of eighteen married women, filled out cards. By comparison, Ontario had one out of three single women, and one out of twelve married women register. In Quebec, one out of eight single women, and one out of twenty-five married women chose to do so.²³

Women who were undecided about entering the paid labour force faced no dearth of messages designed to persuade them. The National Film Board produced and distributed "*Women are Warriors*," which depicted women, who by the "thousands labour day and night in factories turning out the tools of war,"²⁴ and "*Women Don Slacks and Hair Nets*" which urged women to do their part by working in factories.²⁵

Winnipeg's dailies also projected positive images of female labour with occasional articles that featured women in war work. The Winnipeg Free Press reported that Manitoba women were doing well in eastern Canadian munition plants.²⁶ The next day, the newspaper devoted a full page to a pictorial essay that depicted a female worker's day

²² "Women for War Industries", Winnipeg Free Press, 12 October 1942, 15.

²³ "Ottawa Sidelines."

²⁴ The NFB Film Guide: The Production of the National Film Board of Canada From 1939 to 1989, Donald W. Bidd, ed., The National Film Board of Canada, 1991, 544.

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ "Munition Plants: Personnel Manager in Factory Praises Work of Manitoba Girls," Winnipeg Free Press, 25 September 1942, 6.

in a munitions plant.²⁷ By early November 1942, enough married Winnipeg women found themselves in unconventional occupations to warrant an article in the women's section featuring a photo of two housewives and mothers turned mechanic, with one leaning over an engine and the other hoisting a large can of lubricant.²⁸

The novelty of the female labour situation was accentuated by the attention given to the dress of female workers. The Free Press noted "Once upon a time befurred and beveiled ladies about town used to turn up their aristocratic noses at the sight of a fellow member of their sex striding down Portage Avenue in slacks and a windbreaker."²⁹ Glamour had been replaced by masculine apparel to complement masculine occupations. The article trumpeted the wives' responsibilities, where the city could boast "a full-fledged feminine truck driver" alongside a female cadre of tire vulcanizers, milk deliverers, aircraft fabricators and mechanics who were "proud to combine their housewifely endeavours- mending, looking after the children, cooking- with service to their country."³⁰ Each description of duties included the combination of slacks, sweaters, smocks and kerchiefs the women chose or were expected to wear on the job. If the examples of these plucky married women were not enough, the article urged women to "unpack the slacks, forget about glamour and go to it."³¹

²⁷ "Canadian Women From every Walk of Life Flocking to Munition Jobs," Winnipeg Free Press, 26 September 1942, 3.

²⁸ Winnipeg Free Press, 7 November 1942, 3.

²⁹ "Fripperies and Frills Are Out as Common Sense is Queen," Winnipeg Free Press, 7 November 1942, 3.

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ Ibid.

Patronising articles were still evident in the Free Press a year later. Titles such as “Pampered Sex Delivers on Production’s Front” were common when home front labour conditions were updated.³² Much attention was given when women began taking over men’s jobs in the Winnipeg Electric Company. It was still news to report that women were ready to drive streetcars.³³ A subsequent issue covered three housewives, who cleaned buses, but liked it--“no softie’s job.” The men expressed their admiration stating, “They’re all right,” and the story ended with another comment on working apparel, where the new workers did not wear coveralls--just shirts and slacks.³⁴

By late August 1943 the Free Press acknowledged that the wartime labour shortage had come to Winnipeg. The NSS prompted employers to continue “trying out women in tasks where only men were employed before.”³⁵ In department stores, women no longer filled just traditional female jobs, but were assigned manual labour jobs in the store’s shipping department. McDonald Aircraft, Midwest Aircraft, Pacific Airlines and Leaders Ltd. used women on the assembly line and on instrument and fabric work. Manitoba Bridge and Iron Works and Western Steel used women in the core department, and to grind bolts, rivet, and operate drill presses and work as welders. Service industries such as laundries, bakeries and breweries began to use women in heavier jobs normally done by men. The article affirmed employers' general satisfaction with the women’s work and noted that many firms were making a labour survey with the intention of substituting women wherever possible. It was cautioned, though, that this survey

³² “Pampered Sex Delivers on Production’s Front,” Winnipeg Free Press, 6 October 1943, 11.

³³ “Four Women Ready to Drive Street Cars,” Winnipeg Free Press, 5 August 1943, 3.

³⁴ “Women Cleaning Winnipeg Buses,” Winnipeg Free Press, 6 August 1943, 5.

³⁵ “Women Taking Men’s Places in Many Winnipeg Firms,” Winnipeg Free Press, 24 August 1943, 9.

would be conducted "only where there is a manpower shortage."³⁶ The public had to be assured that cavalier and unnecessary use of female labour would be avoided, especially if the flood of women in the workplace would jeopardise the status and demand for the male breadwinner.

The Winnipeg newspaper articles reflect a general, and at times a bemused, acceptance of large numbers of women and mothers in the workplace. However, it is clear that only the exigency of war made this female employment situation possible, and that the NSS and some elements of the national media were not completely comfortable with this state of affairs. Concern was rooted in the widely held notion that the "fairer sex" would not be up to the task, and questions about the suitability of exposing the nation's womenfolk to the home front's wartime hazards were raised.

Women workers were considered less hardy and reliable than male employees. The NSS files contained a British study that tried to determine trends and reasons for female absenteeism in factories. While the study admitted that very few women were in the habit of losing one or two shifts each week, the "reasons were as varied as individual needs and desires." Married women, in particular, lost more time that was spread over more weeks, than single women did. Female absenteeism was higher for the morning shift, and on Saturdays. The absentee rate was lower on pay-day.³⁷ On all shifts, absenteeism was higher for married than for single women, and married women tended to miss Saturday shifts more often than single women did.

³⁶ Ibid.

³⁷ "Study of Absenteeism," NAC, RG 27, Vol. 605, file 6-10, 11.

Married women probably were absent because of the needs of their families. Most often it would be mothers rather than fathers that stayed home when their children were ill, or if child-care arrangements fell through. However, a factory management that consisted mostly of men may have readily assumed that absenteeism of the “weaker sex” must be attributed to “debilitating” menstruation. The message feminine hygiene companies used to sell their products in magazines read by the general public confirm this suspicion. Commercial interests used advertisements to validate this natural occurrence as a reason for absenteeism, and offered strategies to help women buck up and get on with it. One advertisement depicted a bedridden woman who knew how much her country depended on her, lamenting “How *can* we keep going, at times when we feel like this?” The advertisement quoted a war plant nurse who reported that “their *greatest* number of absentees are women who miss 1 to 3 days every month, frequently on those ‘trying days’.” The company who sponsored the advertisement referred to itself as the “problem day” specialists, also offered a pamphlet, “Don’t Lose Another Minute!” to aid these workers and the war effort.³⁸

The shop floor, pushed to meet war production quotas, gained a reputation in the popular media as being a dangerous home front battleground that was no place for a woman. An article in Liberty reported that carelessness was the major culprit that caused injury and death to both men and women on the shop floor. Women were believed to be inherently more careful than men in dangerous occupations, but their vanity made them equally prone to accidents. Elsie doffed her safety cap while operating her punch press because it was hot and gave her a headache, and she “thought it ruined her looks.” Her

³⁸ “I Don’t want to be an Absentee-but what’s a girl to do?” Chatelaine, April 1944, 47.

hair was drawn by static electricity and became tangled in a generator belt. Elsie was scalped and subsequently died. Her foreman had fainted upon witnessing the tragedy and fell against his machine where he was blinded by a protruding steel rod. Other female workers reportedly courted disaster because, "though forbidden to do so, many a damsel wears high heels around the plant, then trips on something and nose-dives to destruction."³⁹

Even if women showed that they could endure the rigours of the workplace despite their perceived physiological and psychological deficiencies, apprehension persisted. Would it be possible to shepherd women back into the fold when hostilities ended? The NSS had not argued that women had the equal right to work, but stressed that women would only replace men temporarily.⁴⁰ However, by early fall 1943 some wondered if these women would ever go home again. Liberty posed the issue for its readers in a candid article, "But when the golden goose gives its final quack there'll be a long female wailing for a day that has passed. Unless--"⁴¹ The author observed a restless spirit among the single and married women working in eastern munitions industries. He also predicted that the increased knowledge and skill of Canadian workers, many of them women, would be matched by the increased demand for Canadian products at war's end. The article suggested that if the women of Canada wanted to work, the work would be there. However, the author hinted that women were fickle, and cautioned that "the boom

³⁹ Ted Shane, "Killed in Action on the Home Front," Liberty, August 28, 1943, 20-21.

⁴⁰ Pierson, 61.

⁴¹ Harold Dingman, "Our Boom Girls--Now and Later," Liberty, September 11, 1943, 5.

can go on for quite a long indefinite period--if the girls don't get tired of it and go back home and have babies."⁴²

Many readers would have been surprised by such articles that described Canadian women workers as self-serving. A research agency, Elliot-Haynes Limited, published a survey of public attitudes in 1943 that found fifty-seven percent of Anglophone Canadian respondents felt that women took jobs in war industry solely for patriotic reasons.⁴³ Government was less idealistic. In March 1943, the Women's Division of the NSS in Toronto questioned their married female applicants over age 35 and found that only ten percent had a husband in Active Service. The Ontario Regional Superintendent of the Unemployment Insurance Commission hoped to highlight for Mrs. Eaton⁴⁴ that only nine percent identified patriotic reasons for securing employment, whereas fifty-nine sought work to supplement the family income and thirty-two percent cited personal needs.⁴⁵

Government was never naïve about women's motives to work, and since labour needs were being filled, there was no desire to offer female labourers concessions beyond what was necessary. By late winter 1944, fewer articles lauding women's labour contributions were published in Winnipeg newspapers, though labour issues involving women did garner some attention. The manager of the women's section, Mrs. E. W. Gerry of the NSS, Manitoba division, warned women that if they expected pay and

⁴² Ibid., 38.

⁴³ Diane G. Forestell, "Necessity of Sacrifice for the Nation at War: Women's Labour Force Participation, 1934-46," *Social History* 22, no. 44 (1989): 340.

⁴⁴ B. G. Sullivan to Mrs. Rex Eaton, April 8, 1943, NAC, RG 27, Vol. 605, file 6-24-1.

⁴⁵ "Summary of Questionnaire re: Married Female Applicants over 35 years of age for March 30, 1943," NAC, RG 27, Vol. 605, file 6-24-1.

treatment equal to that of the men, they would have to accept equal conditions. She cited women's reticence to do shift work as an example, and cautioned that women would have to "revise their ideas of what they want, what salaries they will accept, what work they will do and what hours they will work."⁴⁶ Mrs. Gerry added that women still had the idea that there were plenty of jobs available, but in reality, there were more applicants than jobs. The only serious problem lay in the sewing trade, largely because workers were leaving it because they did not want to work at it anymore. Women were urged to change their outlook toward employment and no longer refuse positions for which they were suited, but which paid less than they expected.⁴⁷

Mrs. Gerry's admonishment must have perplexed women who hoped to offer their services but who were denied the opportunity because of longstanding conventions to leave their jobs when they became wives. Winnipeg's education system during the war offers a good case study where patriarchal attitudes and a desire to model a stable social order overrode national need. In Winnipeg schools, women traditionally lost their teaching positions upon marriage, and this policy did not change when the war began. By early 1942 some interest in changing this policy surfaced when the Winnipeg School Board's Superintendent, Dr. J. C. Pincock, raised the possibility to the management committee of securing temporary replacement assistance when necessary from competent but married female teachers. It was stressed that only competent substitutes would be sought and that they would be "in receipt of only moderate incomes."⁴⁸ The suggestion

⁴⁶ "Women Are Given Warning As To Attitude On Equal Pay," Winnipeg Free Press, 4 February 1944, 4.

⁴⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁸ "Minutes of the regular meeting of the School Management Committee," March 5, 1942, Committee Minute Book No. 19, A-1540, Winnipeg School Division Archives.

to employ married women for classroom work met with resistance among elected Winnipeg school officials. Board member, Mrs. M. E. Jenkins, urged the committee to survey the field and try to get young teachers first, as “there is no use for any married woman to be teaching when she has some other means of support.”⁴⁹

The need for teaching staff was still apparent a year later. Board member Dr. Mindel Sheps felt it necessary to permit married teachers to work, and she presented the Winnipeg School Board with a motion. She reasoned that appointment to staff should be based on merit only. Member Adam Beck spoke against the motion, and suggested that employment of married women deprived young girls and returning men of jobs.⁵⁰ He also reflected a pro-natalist position when he pointed to an annual drop in Winnipeg’s school population, which he attributed to women who were “going out to work instead of taking their place in the homes.”⁵¹ Member Joe Zuken countered married women should not be discriminated against if they could make a substantial contribution to the city’s education system. Dr. Sheps suggested that working married women actually created jobs, for they would hire domestic help, eat in restaurants and spend money.⁵² The motion was defeated nine to six, with the labour block of councillors voting in favour of the motion. The defeat of the motion was greeted by Zuken shouting, “Hitler would just love you guys!” After calls for his removal from the meeting, he later revised his

⁴⁹ “Temporary Help: Plan to Add Married Women to School Staffs Where Needed,” Winnipeg Free Press, 6 March 1942, 13.

⁵⁰ “Should Schoolmarms Get Equal Pay To Men?” Winnipeg Tribune, 10 March 1943, 5.

⁵¹ “Same Pay for Same Work is Urged,” Winnipeg Free Press, 10 March 1943, 3.

⁵² Winnipeg Tribune, 10 March 1943, 5.

statement to, "these anti-democratic practices are best exemplified by the actions of Mr. Hitler."⁵³

The editorial page of the Winnipeg Tribune called the School Board decision "antediluvian," and chastised the Board because married women were good enough for war jobs and branches of the armed forces, but not for the Winnipeg School Board. The editorial suggested that the Board had not yet heard of the Second World War, and chided them for barring highly qualified teachers who had "committed the sin of holy matrimony, which, in the School Board's eyes, appears to be a serious fall from grace."⁵⁴

The same School Board meeting also had to consider a motion for an elimination of salary differentials between men and women. Dr. Sheps questioned the argument that men should be paid more than women because they have greater family responsibility, for if this were indeed true, "the schedule would have been arranged to allow for appropriate increases according to the number of dependants of male teachers."⁵⁵ Sheps also rationalised the potential impact pay schedules based on gender would have for men. There would be a danger of boards retaining less expensive female teachers when men were once again able to return to the classroom, and there might also be a tendency to draw the male schedule down to the level of the female schedule. Immediately after speaking, W. S. McEwen suggested that the motion should be laid over until the following year, and moved that the matter "lay on the table."⁵⁶ This passed nine to six,

⁵³ Winnipeg Free Press, 10 March 1943, 3.

⁵⁴ "The 'Sin' of Holy Matrimony," Winnipeg Tribune, 11 March 1943, 6.

⁵⁵ Winnipeg Free Press, 10 March 1943, 1.

⁵⁶ "Minutes of regular monthly meeting of the Winnipeg Public School Board," March 9, 1943, Board Minute Book, No. 14, Winnipeg School Division Archives, 17.

which the Tribune was quick to identify as “the time-worn device of the politician for getting rid of a hot potato.”⁵⁷ The Winnipeg Free Press editorial staff also acknowledged the merit of equity. One editorial warned “such conversations would sit more gracefully upon us when we had cleared away the injustices on our own doorstep, injustices to which every last one of us is a party.”⁵⁸

The question of married female teachers was partially resolved a few weeks later. The Board now pondered whether it was acceptable to hire female teachers who had married a member of the armed forces. Member Mr. Petursson stated that Winnipeg was the only place where there was any discrimination in the employment of married women teachers. After much discussion, Petursson moved that teachers married to members of the armed forces be retained on the staff without change of status.⁵⁹ This motion passed. Superintendent Pincock also noted that if a teacher got married and lost her position, but could prove financial need, she could then be re-employed on the substitute rate or would be assigned at the minimum salary.⁶⁰ The Winnipeg Tribune was quick to point out the consequence for some teachers: a precipitous drop in annual salary from \$1,500 to \$1,000.⁶¹

⁵⁷ Winnipeg Tribune, 11 March 1943, 6.

⁵⁸ “Salary Differentials,” Winnipeg Free Press, 31 March 1943, 13.

⁵⁹ “Minutes of meeting of the School Management Committee,” April 13, 1943, Committee Minute Book No. 19, School district of Winnipeg No. 1, A-1616, Winnipeg School Division Archives.

⁶⁰ Ibid.

⁶¹ “Married Teacher Problem Up Again,” Winnipeg Tribune, 14 April 1943, 13.

The editorial reaction to the School Board decisions suggested that the Winnipeg dailies supported progressive women's issues.⁶² However, both newspapers reflected similar contradictions in their attitude to female employment. Where the challenges of modern times begged for the acceptance of new ideas and attitudes, the Free Press and Tribune were unable to shed traditional thinking. It was not uncommon for a given issue that carried an article or editorial that supported female paid labour and equity in the workplace to also contain features, letters and advertisements which were subtly or blatantly wary of women's attention being diverted from the home and family. When women in the workplace became common, newspapers, magazines and radio, offered advice, caution and techniques to balance factory and workshop responsibilities with domestic household duties. If the mixed messages printed in daily papers were any indication, it would be clear to any woman who wished or needed to work that she must do so without unanimous societal support.

The issue of women and mothers performing paid labour warranted lively discussion through letters and advice columns found in the daily papers. Debate was polarised. Support for working women was grounded in the need to end war by all means possible, or in a liberalised acceptance of gender equality. Detractors feared that large numbers of women working outside the home could open a Pandora's box of social concerns. The public and journalists seemed aware that women were the centre of the contradiction that had emerged during this wartime emergency, and were eager to argue the issue in the press.

⁶² The Winnipeg School Board was sensitive to press criticism, and held a special meeting of the Board to consider the articles that dealt with the Board's decision on the two motions that were defeated at the March 9th meeting. "Minutes of Special Meeting of Winnipeg School Board," March 19, 1943, Board Minute Book No. 14, School District of Winnipeg No. 1, Winnipeg School Division Archives, 17.

One reader wrote, "It is time a law was passed against improper dress as women are gradually losing their femininity and becoming too mannish. Nations are showing signs of waning as too many women are neglecting their duty of becoming mothers."⁶³ Another worried that natural order was being ignored when wives worked, as he believed "man was intended by the Creator to be the burden-bearer of the family." This author believed that women who marry and follow a career "are not the best of partners in holy matrimony," and their place should be at home "as mothers of the human race." His letter predicted there would be trouble when the war ended and these women would decide to continue working. It was the man's proper place at the head of the house, "working by the sweat of his brow to purchase for his family all they needed, until they get to the age of helping themselves." Ultimately, he did not believe that "the emancipation of women has proved such a blessing as was hoped for."⁶⁴

These patriarchal opinions did not go unanswered. One reader responded to an earlier letter submitted by "C. E." who feared "the dire results of entrusting to women the job of running street cars and buses." Citing the world's state of affairs because of males such as Hitler and Mussolini, the female author suggested 1943 was not a good year for a man to run down the accomplishments of women. She had heard of no complaints about the women who drove taxis and delivery trucks in Winnipeg, and felt it was also a "significant fact that women drivers of cars seldom figure in car smash-ups; the villain of the place usually seems to be a man who has not been drinking lemonade."⁶⁵

⁶³ "Sees Women Losing Their Femininity," Winnipeg Free Press, 5 September 1942, 18.

⁶⁴ "Reader Says Woman's place is in the Home," Winnipeg Free Press, 14 August 1943, 20.

⁶⁵ "Deplores Reader's Letter About Women," Winnipeg Free Press, 7 August 1943, 23.

While biting responses that defended less traditional female activities were rare, it was not uncommon to read articles that continued to shape and reinforce the notion of women's subservience. Belittling articles appeared in the women's section of the Winnipeg Free Press, clearly intended to put wives in their place. One weekly feature, "Boy Tells Girl," by George Antheil lectured young wives to stop grumbling about loneliness because their husbands were overseas. They were instructed to use their time learning about the care of babies and "delve into some of the womanly arts you will need when HE comes home." The same column printed a letter from a wife who was slapped by her husband when she tried to leave with her baby after a quarrel. Antheil sternly outlined her responsibility: "You have just one duty now and that is not to upset your husband while he is in the service." Domestic violence was not a sufficient barrier to the fulfilment of the national imperative. The "spoiled brat" was instructed to, "take care of your baby yourself, help with the war effort, write often to your husband-- no complaints in those letters either, and learn to stand on your own feet."⁶⁶

Some columns and articles did offer strategies to run the house in the face of domineering husbands, though women who sought advice about their household affairs were expected to replace one source of scrutiny for another. In "Mrs. Thompson Advises," a wife and mother complained about her service husband who nagged her about money problems and embarrassed her in front of friends over her inability to save money. Thompson advised her to remain good natured, to give her husband credit for all his good points, and to chalk up his nagging to ignorance of how a dependence allowance should be used. The column then suggested she submit her income and expense records

⁶⁶ "War Brides Must Grow Up," in "Boy Tells Girl," Winnipeg Free Press, 6 October 1943, 11.

to the dependants' advisory committee, because the husband "likely would accept as reasonable a budget approved by this committee."⁶⁷

The advice columnists had opinions that considered the merits and drawbacks of mothers seeking employment outside the home. The columns did not express jingoistic reasons to seek paid labour, but instead focused on more practical aspects of women's dilemmas. Interestingly, Antheil, who had sanctioned spousal abuse in order to have wives stand by their men, also supported women who were restless and were "beginning to resent the old regime where hubby doled out the shekels as he pleased." With reference to mothers of older children, he was heartened by the sight of "these veterans of the dishpan sallying forth to punch time-clocks," which would allow them to buy the things they always wanted.⁶⁸

Mrs. Thompson, too, was supportive of women working, though only if their circumstances made employment logical. Thompson acknowledged that many mothers were anxious about working, whether for patriotism or for extra income, and still being able to give fair care to young children. She shared a letter from a mother of a seven and one half year-old son, who wanted to work to stave off boredom. Her husband was overseas, and she had no one to care for the boy. She knew she could not afford to hire someone and wondered about the availability of nurseries, since she wanted war work that likely had night shifts. Thompson validated the mother's needs, for she felt it "wasn't fair to either yourself or the boy to let yourself get lonely and bored."⁶⁹ She

⁶⁷ "Husband Nags About Money," in "Mrs. Thompson Advises," Winnipeg Free Press, 26 March 1944, 9.

⁶⁸ "Women Have Their Own Money Now," in "Boy Tells Girl," Winnipeg Free Press, 24 August 1943, 9.

⁶⁹ "Mother Wants to Work," in "Mrs. Thompson Advises," Winnipeg Free Press, 13 June 1944, 10.

suggested inquiring with Selective Service about work and perhaps finding a boarding place where she would not have to worry when her son came home from school.

Other situations, according to Mrs. Thompson's columns, did not lend themselves to mothers seeking work, even when their husbands were strongly encouraging them to do so. A mother of a two-year-old son and a "delicate" one-year-old daughter wrote that marital strife existed because the family was financially strapped. House repairs and payments had left them with insufficient clothes for the winter and little furniture. Despite the wife's care with the money her husband gave her, he blamed her for being wasteful. The husband had suggested she get a job, but without skills and suitable, affordable child care, she saw this as impossible. Thompson forcefully noted that until it was law that the mothers of small babies needed to work, there was no excuse to listen to her husband. She was instructed to tell her husband, "If he can find you a job good enough to pay for someone to look after the children and leave a profit, also find a housekeeper, you will go to work." Thompson suggested she was safe in making this offer, since no such caregiver would be found, and no nurseries were yet available. When the husband did the arithmetic, he would see that his scheme would not be practical. Thompson also warned that the mother would get sick "under the nursery plan, when he isn't around to help with the housework and baby-tending." Finally, the mother was instructed to tell the husband that when the children were older and stronger she would be glad to work, but that she would never forgive herself or him if she "went out now and the baby died."⁷⁰ The possibility of the woman living with such guilt should

⁷⁰ "Job Not Wise For This Mother," in "Mrs Thompson Advises," Winnipeg Free Press, 20 October 1942, 9.

certainly have been an effective deterrent, and despite Thompson's heavy-handed response, most readers at that time would have agreed with her advice.

Impropriety was also perceived as a likely by-product when women found themselves on shop floors with men. While it was probable that affairs could begin in the workplace, imaginations raised questions about the suitability of having wives mingling with men when their husbands were not present. During the summer of 1943 the silver screen depicted the factory as a convenient venue for "boy meets girl." Hers to Hold featured Deanna Durban⁷¹ as a debutante who met an aircraft supervisor, and decided "he's her man."⁷² The object of her desire, awaiting his commission, tried to fend her off, but in the end could not resist.

The advice columns in Winnipeg's dailies also reflected the fear of infidelity. "Boy Tells Girl" observed that it was not the women her husband would meet in their own social circle, but the women who worked beside him in defence plants that were "giving wives the jitters these days."⁷³ The column writer sympathised with the husband who could not ignore his fellow worker just because she was a woman, and it would have been "silly, indeed, were he to announce he was married and hands off." At issue was a letter by a wife who had been married for 32 years and had four children. When a neighbour told her that her husband was talking to a woman at his plant, she wrote, "It nearly knocked the props from under me. I was stunned. He is always calling her by her first name." The columnist had no sympathy. He called her "a very foolish,

⁷¹ Durban was from Winnipeg. She was a singer before she became a big star in Hollywood, and many Winnipeggers followed her career. Her mother remained in Winnipeg, and eventually raffled off the house Deanna was raised in. Dora Giesbrecht, interview with author, November 11, 2000.

⁷² Review in Liberty, August 28, 1943, 43.

⁷³ "Overworked Imagination," in "Boy Tells Girl," Winnipeg Free Press, 12 January 1944, 11.

unreasonable woman,” who could be cured of her troubles if she herself got a job in a war plant. This would help, he wrote, “because your imagination works overtime and your common-sense doesn’t have a chance.”⁷⁴

Antheil’s dismissal of possible workplace transgressions was not universally accepted. In an era where it was new to have both male and female colleagues on factory shop floors, it was assumed that instability and moral degeneration could only be the result if women were left to their own devices while their husbands were called away for duty. Again, Mrs. Thompson’s advice column served as a mirror that reflected social concerns. A wife wrote about a woman, whose spouse was overseas, who was chasing after her husband. At first, the husband and wife helped the woman pick up groceries and took her and her children on picnics. Eventually, the husband was meeting the temptress in a car parked in a bush. The devoted wife knew “for a fact she is really bad and has men there all the time, even all night, and her children see and hear all that goes on.”⁷⁵

Mrs. Thompson’s solution placed the largest measure of responsibility and consequence on the adulteress. Her conduct as an inadequate mother could result in her allowance being stopped and her children being taken away. She and the men she entertained could also be charged with contributing to the delinquency of the children. Armed with proof, the wife could report the troublemaker to the Dependents’ Allowance Board in Ottawa and to Child Welfare authorities in Winnipeg. The wife could also consider confronting the woman with the evidence, and merely threatening her with reporting her if she did not leave her husband alone. Thompson suggested the latter was

⁷⁴ Ibid.

⁷⁵ “Soldier’s Wife Is Menace,” in “Mrs. Thompson Advises,” Winnipeg Free Press, 13 January 1944, 11.

the best course of action to follow, because “if she just suddenly gave him the air, and you were not implicated, he would probably turn to you again.”⁷⁶ It was significant that no onus of responsibility or moral restraint was expected from the husband.

Mrs. Thompson also counselled women who had been reported to authorities. A soldier’s wife, and mother of a little girl, enjoyed good support from her in-laws during the first year of her husband’s absence. However, when she began to work, she chose to leave the daughter with her own mother. Jealousy motivated the in-laws to report her to the Children’s Aid Society and the Family Bureau because her employment had caused her to neglect her child. When this went nowhere, threats followed to have her dependants’ allowance cut because it was rumoured she had lived with another man whose wife was away. When these charges could not be substantiated, the in-laws began writing their son overseas.

Thompson regretted the woman’s circumstances, but could only advise the woman “to make sure that everything about your conduct is blameless.” Thompson admitted that jealousy was probably the root of this problem, but gave credence to the in-laws’ actions because “possibly they thought they were right.” Wartime women were ultimately responsible even for other folks’ unfounded suspicions about them. Thompson warned, “It isn’t enough for a soldier’s wife to behave well, she has to avoid even the slightest appearance of wrong-doing, for a lot of evil-minded people are ready to pounce on the flimsiest evidence against her.”⁷⁷

⁷⁶ Ibid.

⁷⁷ “In-Laws Persecute Wife,” in “Mrs. Thompson Advises,” Winnipeg Free Press, 11 April 1944, 9.

Some evidence suggests that Winnipeg wives of servicemen were considered of dubious character. Lack of housing was a constant issue that surfaced in civic government reports and media, and wives and children of men fighting overseas found themselves without adequate accommodations because they were seen as potentially problematic tenants. One mother wrote a letter to the Winnipeg Free Press stating that she expected deprivation, hardship, loneliness and worry, but not the "treatment meted out to us by people who have places to rent that our boys are fighting to preserve. If one applies for a suite in a block or a house the answer is: sorry no soldiers' wives; if there are kids it is: sorry no children."⁷⁸ The letter referred to a recent case where a mother had been squatting in a condemned house on Corydon Street with her four children. Her children had since been placed in a home and the mother now lived in one dingy room by herself. The writer concluded her letter by pronouncing, "We don't ask to be babied, but we do ask the public to be fair."⁷⁹

If the character, devotion and fidelity of Canada's working women and wives were in doubt, suspicions about their ability to mother Canada's future children were sure to follow. Since the turn of the century, mothers had been the targets of authorities' desire for a modern society. Science had to supersede parental intuition, and the war only intensified the urgency to enlighten mothers who already had many calls on their time. The underlying assumption remained that Canadian mothers were not doing their primary jobs well, and mothers' decision to work outside the home was likely a superfluous if not short-sighted activity that made matters worse.

⁷⁸ "Says Soldiers' Wives Not Treated Fairly," Winnipeg Free Press, 5 December 1942, 11.

⁷⁹ Ibid.

The social welfare community strongly advocated modern methods to protect the family, for in doing so, the nation was protected as well. The Canadian social work journal, Canadian Welfare, determined that the health of mother and child formed the background of wholesome family life. Family life was considered the ideal pattern for national life, and was referred to as the “threshold of democracy.” It was feared that this cradle of society was in jeopardy “in a nation at war, and in days when the disrupting forces of emotional upheaval are at work to undermine family loyalties and customs.”⁸⁰ The mother was seen as the central figure in every family group, caring for her children and overseeing their health. The mother and child, therefore, must receive the benefits of modern public health.

These benefits, according to officials, often seemed to be ignored. After one year of war, the Director of Health Services for the Department of Pensions and National Health stated that infant deaths had increased by 1,500. The factors responsible for this were thought to lay in an increase in illegitimacy, hasty war marriages, poor housing, the health of the parents, and “their ignorance of home making and child care.”⁸¹

The issue did not go unnoticed by the media. Liberty pointed to Canada’s “shameful” infant death rate, which was the highest “of any of the white races of the Empire,” because “Canadian wives have never learned to be mothers.”⁸² The article touted the virtues of “Mothercraft,” a movement that began in New Zealand, which was developed by “an accumulation of scientific knowledge and tested rules of child care.”⁸³

⁸⁰ Janet K. Lang, “Maternal Health is Family Welfare,” Canadian Welfare 16, no. 7 (January 1941): 12.

⁸¹ Esther M. Beith, “Child Health In Wartime,” Canadian Welfare 18, no. 8 (March 1943): 8-9.

⁸² Lou and Allen May, “Canada’s Shameful Infant Death Rate,” Liberty, February 10, 1945, 5.

⁸³ *Ibid.*, 35.

For three dollars a day, a nurse would stay for a week, the result being a baby who would have a "thoroughly competent, trained and skilful mother, a father who would never have to walk the floor at night, and a home organised on an efficient schedule."⁸⁴ A key component to the "Mothercraft" regime was the clear refutation of the mother's natural aptitude for child rearing. In regards to nutrition, for instance, it was considered "another fallacy that mothers know by instinct just when they should begin to give their babies the food which adults eat. They don't. Neither do the mothers' mothers, nor the mothers-in-law, nor the grandmothers."⁸⁵

Commercial interests exploited, and therefore promoted, the pre-eminence social science and the medical community's advice over a woman's common sense and knowledge. In many disinfectant advertisements, doctors' advice on cleanliness explicitly tied the mother's sense of duty to the war effort. The text beneath a grinning cherub offered, "That's right, Baby. Your Mother's first duty to her country is to see that you-- and your whole family-- keep well this winter."⁸⁶ One baby food advertisement printed a message from Meredith Moulton Redhead, who held the position of "Baby Counsellor of Heinz Home Institute." She advised mothers to call the doctor at the first sign of their baby's illness. She assumed that he would instruct mothers to put baby to bed and follow routine precautions. The advertisement then added, "Of course every mother knows that a well-balanced diet, rich in vitamins and minerals, is an important factor in keeping baby well." Happily, these mothers could rely on Heinz's "highly

⁸⁴ Ibid.

⁸⁵ Ibid, 36.

⁸⁶ "We've all gotta keep in Fighting Trim," *Liberty*, January 1944, 33.

nutritive” products.⁸⁷ Children’s constipation also seemed to be a wartime worry. One advertisement depicted a young mother who overheard two friends criticising her special treatment of “her little queen,” even in the choice of laxative. The three squared off in the grocery store aisle, where the charge of “fussing and spoiling” was met with the mother’s knockout blow. “I’m acting on our doctor’s advice. Why, *he* was the one who suggested Castoria. It’s made especially for children, with no harsh drugs in it to upset the baby’s stomach or digestion.” Now the wiser, the two gossips loaded up on the laxative to dole out to their own children.⁸⁸

Proper nutrition became a wartime preoccupation, since the home front effort relied on suitable fuel to maintain healthy families. Winnipeg listeners had the issue put into perspective when they tuned into “As A Matter Of Fact.” The broadcast promised to open another battlefield, and wage “an all out roar against Canadians who are neglecting themselves and the home front.”⁸⁹ In a clumsy analogy, food was likened to ammunition, and the government’s Nutrition Service was the gun. The logic continued, “This gun with our food ammunition needs but our intelligence to act as the trigger. THE GUN WORKS!! Are we going to let our ammunition turn out to be a dud? If so we are saboteurs—and of the worst kind! We are not blasting a bridge or an inanimate object—but our own families—for whom the armed forces are willing to die.”⁹⁰ The announcer noted that forty-three per cent of young men examined for military service were found to

⁸⁷ “If Your Baby Catches Cold,” Liberty, February 3, 1945, 41.

⁸⁸ “Betty is one mother who’s got a lot to learn!” Liberty, September 23, 1944, 31.

⁸⁹ “As A Matter Of Fact,” June 4, 1942, NAC, RG 36, vol. 18, file 10-A-4, pt. 3, 1.

⁹⁰ Ibid., 2.

be physically unfit, with the major cause being stomach and intestinal trouble. The radio host bluntly blamed the housewives of Canada for this situation.

Scientific knowledge again was hailed as a possible saviour. The man behind the Nutritional Services' gun was Dr. L. B. Pett, whose mandate was to improve national health and efficiency through good eating habits.⁹¹ Pett himself recognised that being well fed was more than just appeasing hunger. Food choice must also promote health and vitality. He attributed these modern nutritional concepts to social and scientific development in the last thirty years.⁹²

The onus was now clearly on Canadian women to use the Services' nutritional information to buy and cook food wisely. Some believed it was necessary for the state to become proactive to ensure mothers did so. A month into the war, Dr. Alan Brown, Professor of Paediatrics at the University of Toronto and Physician-in-Chief for the Hospital for Sick Children in Toronto, argued that since physically defective and under-nourished children often become wards of the state, government should assume the responsibility for child care. He recommended that community centres be established to teach mothers how to adjust family income to the food needs of growing children, and how to cook simple balanced menus.⁹³

Information on proper meal preparation became readily available. The National Film Board produced a battery of films that targeted housewives with nutrition messages. The bulk of these films were released in 1943-1944, and were distributed for viewing during community events in schools, churches and meeting halls. Manitoba's annual

⁹¹ *Ibid.*, 3.

⁹² L. B. Pett, "Nutrition as a National Problem," *Canadian Welfare* 18, no. 1 (April 1942): 21.

wartime attendance for NFB distribution circuits reached close to 30,000 viewers.⁹⁴

“Nutrition” and “Thought for Food” was joined by “Get Your Vitamins” which featured an animated troupe of barn-dancing letters that revealed vitamin food sources and benefits. Rationing was to be less of a concern after following the advice of a frugal housewife in “The Main Dish.” The importance of milk was the primary message of “Children First,” and “School Lunch” illustrated the need for hot, nourishing lunches.⁹⁵ Prairie listeners faced with the problem of providing nutritious school lunches also received helpful hints from the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation’s “Better Canadians” series that aired Wednesday evenings. Three consecutive programs were devoted to the lunch topic during late winter 1944.⁹⁶

Despite efforts to educate them, Manitoba mothers appeared remiss in their duty. The International Order of the Daughters of the Empire reported early on in the war that thirty percent of Manitoba children were underweight, and that in some communities, the rate was as high as fifty percent.⁹⁷ Children’s nutrition remained an issue as the war wore on. By spring 1944, listeners heard a radio broadcast, “Your City’s Health,” sponsored by Winnipeg’s City Health Department. One edition featured Miss Isabel Robson, Supervisor of Home Economics for the Winnipeg Public Schools, who chose “*School Lunches to Come*” as her topic that day. She felt that the “school lunch of the past, has in

⁹³ “Child Care In War Time,” Canadian Welfare 15, no. 4 (November 1939): 40-42.

⁹⁴ National Film Board national information circuit for March, 1942, NAC, RG 36, Series 31, Vol. 15, file 8-22-5.

⁹⁵ The NFB Film Guide: The Production of the National Film Board of Canada from 1939 to 1989, 100-479.

⁹⁶ “CBC Monthly Guide to Broadcasts of Educational and Cultural Value,” 2, no. 5, (February 1944), NAC, RG 36, Series 31, Vol. 18.

⁹⁷ “Maintain Health on the Homefront,” Echo, May 1940, 32.

most cases, been a rather deplorable affair."⁹⁸ A rather condescending interview followed. After Robson informed the audience that nutritionists recommended that a lunch should total one-third of a child's daily nutritional requirements, Miss Maher, the interviewer, responded, "'Nutritional requirements' sounds so very scientific—could you tell me in simple language just what should be included in those lunch boxes?" Robson then listed a litany of drink and foodstuffs that would provide enough protein and vitamins to "be sufficient lunch to keep any boy or girl going until supper time." The interviewer wondered why Robson felt that not all school children carried such nutritional lunches. Robson admitted not having stopped a child on the street to look inside his lunch box, although she "was tempted to do so." However, when she had seen lunches opened up to be eaten, she found them lacking in the fresh food and milk. When asked if mothers did not care what went into the lunch box, Robson refuted that suggestion, though she suspected that lunch preparation was merely "looked on as just another chore to be done as quickly, and with as little effort as possible."⁹⁹ She noted few men or women would not think of starting off in an automobile without providing gas and oil for the engine, "but they sometimes do start a child off for the day without providing the necessary fuel for his needs."¹⁰⁰

⁹⁸ Transcript of "Your City's Health," April 27, 1944, Department Radio Broadcast, Health Department, Monthly and Special Reports, City of Winnipeg Archives, 1.

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, 2.

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, 3.

Few children needed to take their lunch to school, and Robson referred to a recent survey¹⁰¹ that identified very few “doorkey children.” However, she was highly concerned about the health of these few children. Robson acknowledged that rationing and other difficulties faced by the wartime homemaker made it harder to reach nutritional standards. However, she lectured mothers to plan lunches with the same consideration they used when they prepared other meals for that day, and that if their children had to carry their lunch to school, they should be sent off with a heavier breakfast than those who could come home for lunch.

Robson’s concern had its limits, though. Little expense and trouble had been incurred for these “latchkey children.” A small number of empty classrooms were converted to lunchrooms, replete with colourful posters of health habits and food rules. Some schools offered milk and hot drink service, but Robson did not see a need to establish cafeterias in Winnipeg schools. She noted that most pupils were able to make the trip back home for lunch, “and very few mothers of young children are employed in industry and therefore absent from their homes at noon.”¹⁰² For the comparatively few children who remained at school for lunch, Robson made it clear that their welfare was solely their mothers’ responsibility, and that “more care should be taken in the preparation of lunches.”¹⁰³

Most Winnipeg listeners likely shared Miss Robson’s blunt supposition that mothers needed to attend to their duty. However, national and civic social welfare

¹⁰¹ The survey was conducted in Winnipeg schools on behalf of the Winnipeg Council of Social Agencies. The survey will be discussed in greater detail in the third chapter of this thesis.

¹⁰² Transcript of “Your City’s Health,” 4.

¹⁰³ Ibid.

agencies placed meagre school lunches, and other shortfalls in caring for family, into a wider context. Enlightened social workers recognised that those economic constraints, along with spousal strain and misfortune, created complex pressure on modern families that often led to substandard conditions for each family member.

Social scientists came to accept that the modern world would beget a host of new social problems, and adopted new philosophies to deal with them. By the Second World War, social welfare practitioners looked back at earlier days of their craft where social and community conditions may have been improved so people could “pull themselves up by their own boot-straps,” but with strings attached, that implied, “Do as I say or I won’t help you!” Now, the profession proclaimed ideas to “stimulate the desire and develop the capacity of the individual to help himself rather than to make him the passive recipient of our alms.”¹⁰⁴ Acceptance of science and the role social workers and agencies now played in society became more evident. Kennethe M. Haig, a regular contributor to the Winnipeg Free Press editorial page, recognised social work as a profession, and offered that social science was the most difficult science of all. Haig noted that the social scientist “is always up against the human equation,” which denied him or her “the infinite satisfaction of the conclusion absolute. She always must add the rider that room must be reserved for X the unknown quantity.”¹⁰⁵

The profession admitted that attending to the inconsistencies of the human condition was exacerbated by the demands of total war. The

¹⁰⁴ Mary McPhedran, “Social Work with Families-Then and Now,” Canadian Welfare 16, no. 6 (November 1940): 11-12.

¹⁰⁵ Kennethe M. Haig, “A Journalist on Social Work,” Canadian Welfare 16, no. 8 (February 1941): 11.

defence of the realm of Canada, as of the Empire is urgent, but that that defence does not lie in armed conflict alone, but in this combat, all long the line, and in defence, within the homes and lives of the people, of the minimum standards of decent living which can be taken from them, as surely by lack of wisdom and foresight at home as through the ruthless action of a heartless invader.¹⁰⁶

Under the strain of war, the family unit was believed to be the strongest element in the welfare of children. The Canadian Welfare Council pointed to the increased community resources offered to parents to provide a good level of care for their children. The family and the community were no longer separate or distinct. Educational, health and welfare services combined with state legislation that ranged from labour laws to the Mothers' Allowance Act to ensure the child's needs were adequately met. State patriarchy became absolute with basic child protection legislation and enabled Children's Aid Societies to assume responsibility of children whose parents could be proven as unfit guardians. However, in keeping with the new philosophy of social welfare, social agencies pronounced that their primary concern was to strengthen "family life in order that parents may themselves carry out their responsibilities adequately."¹⁰⁷

The social agencies and caseworkers may well have been able to congratulate themselves on their more progressive approach. However, the new philosophy of social welfare did not include a progressive attitude towards changes that women may have contemplated from their traditional roles. An editorial in Canadian Welfare worried that "the employment of women and young persons is cloyed with all the dangers which have led to the slow and patient erection of safeguards it has taken years to throw about them."

¹⁰⁶ "It Will Not Be Easy," Canadian Welfare 16, no. 3 (July 1940): 17.

¹⁰⁷ "Day Care of Children in Wartime," prepared by the Canadian Welfare Council, November 1942, NAC, RG 27, Vol. 609, 3.

Separation of mothers from young children and the disruption of night work cast the “blacker cloud of the threat to all the fundamental bulwarks of our life.”¹⁰⁸

Social agencies, called upon to deal with the needs of families in financial straits, were faced with an increase in the number of service requests. Agencies attributed the bulk of these requests to character flaws and inadequacies of wives and mothers that cropped up under the strain of the war. Some wives, bored and lonely, proved irresponsible, and sought escape in “unwholesome amusements.” Others, “the clinging vine type of wife,” were unable to cope with the task of disciplining their children and did not know where to turn. Even the stoic wives had problems, for they were “so tied by family duties that they never have an opportunity to forget the haunting fears of an insecure future.”¹⁰⁹ Men created caseloads for social workers, too, but they did so for admirable reasons. An enlisted father or son would write, “Will you or one of your associates occasionally drop around and see Mrs. K? I know she is alright but I would feel more comfortable if you were doing that as I have every faith in your organisation.”¹¹⁰

Concern was also directed to wives who succumbed to moral lapses. An article in Canadian Welfare commended women who faced loneliness and household tasks while their husbands were overseas, and it was acknowledged that most wives of service men “are of this stamp.” Unfortunately, the article noted, there had been much talk of the unfaithful wives who did not have “the strength to carry on home and family in strange

¹⁰⁸ “Ol’ Man River,” Canadian Welfare 15, No. 5 (October 1, 1941): 5.

¹⁰⁹ Viola Gilfillan, “Our Stock in Trade and the War Effort,” Canadian Welfare 16, No. 5 (October 1940): 16.

¹¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 17.

and often disinterested surroundings with husband and father far away.”¹¹¹ These fallen wives would add a sense of guilt to the already conflicting emotions which would “cause a hard and unapproachable exterior.” The social worker needed to understand these particular wives’ emotions in order to help them build a firm home and family, as the returning sailor would need a stable home, and from his wife, “understanding and wholesome activity.”¹¹²

Home stability was certainly compromised if the soldier returned to find an additional child in his family. Elsie J. Lawson, Assistant Director of Child Welfare for Manitoba, wrote in Canadian Welfare that it was policy, dating back to the Great War, to remove such children from the home, either before or after the father returned. Lawson lamented the lack of research work in the social treatment of such problems, and worried over the undoubtedly weakened morale of the soldier-husband. Women, again, were determined to be the root of the problem, and Lawson was left to hope that “education and character building seem to be necessary if we are to combat such problems as these.”¹¹³

Winnipeg had its share of families in crisis, and the strains of war only exacerbated their situations. These circumstances become readily apparent in the records of the Council of Social Agencies in Winnipeg. The Council was formed in 1919 as an umbrella for thirty-eight affiliated agencies, ranging from the steering of the Community Chest and Christmas Cheer Board to the development of a school of social work. This

¹¹¹ Helen J. Burgess, “Down To The Sea,” Canadian Welfare 20, No. 6 (December 1944): 20.

¹¹² Ibid.

¹¹³ Elsie J. Lawson, “On the Prairie Lands,” Canadian Welfare 17, No. 7 (January 1942): 28.

administrative structure aimed at improving co-operation by advancing new activities and providing for united action to carry out programs for social development. The Council oversaw the Central Volunteer Board during the Second World War, and combined war work with community social services.

The Family Bureau of Winnipeg was a Council agency that had direct involvement with citizens in unfortunate circumstances. Much of its work involved short-term intervention when families broke down and needed immediate physical assistance, or where for other reasons, the family was intact but could not cope. A significant portion of the Bureau's budget was directed at placing housekeepers in homes under stress. Direct financial aid was also provided to carry out a "treatment plan for a given family situation."¹¹⁴

The Family Bureau expressed conservative sentiments. While benevolent, if not interventionist, it laced condescension along with its concern, and could not be considered a vanguard of progressive attitudes towards women. For example, its position on married women in the workplace did not vary from the one held by the Winnipeg School Board. A good portion of the Family Bureau's meeting in April 1940 was consumed with deciding the fate of a female staff member who had married. She was retained, albeit under exceptional circumstances, but it was carried that in future, "any member of the staff who decides to marry, will be advised that there is no possibility of employment afterwards."¹¹⁵ Once married, women were considered prone to irresponsible money management, for "too many housewives, who have been

¹¹⁴ Fifth Annual Report of the Family Bureau of Winnipeg, September 1940-August 1941, PAM, P 4650, file 3, 3.

unaccustomed to handling money, the weekly or monthly wage has meant reckless spending."¹¹⁶ The Family Bureau often took it upon itself to help these households set budgets. When they became mothers, women were not given credit for their own abilities and aptitudes. Advice and intervention offered by the Family Bureau and the Council of Social Agencies would be consistent with the modern child-rearing philosophies of the likes of Dr. Blatz.¹¹⁷

As with social agencies across Canada, the war greatly increased the Bureau's caseload. A discharged soldier needed financial help for two weeks until his employer issued his first cheque. A wife became in need because her overseas husband received word of her suspected infidelity, and cancelled his assigned pay.¹¹⁸ The most common cause for the Bureau's involvement came from families who, according to their minutes,

are so close to marginal existence that sudden catastrophes throw them over the brink....The breadwinner who in the past year received the same weekly or monthly wage as in 1939, found it very difficult, nay impossible, to meet the increase in cost of living and was forced to ask for help. During the past year we have had over thirty families where there were six children and the income was less than \$90 a month....the minimum food budget for health for this size family is \$66 per month which leaves little of the man's earnings for shelter and operating expenses and nothing for clothing.¹¹⁹

¹¹⁵ Minutes of the Thirty-Sixth Meeting of the Board of Directors of the Family Bureau of Winnipeg, April 23, 1940, PAM, P 4650, file 24, 1.

¹¹⁶ Minutes of the Forty-Fourth Meeting of the Board of Directors of the Family Bureau of Winnipeg, March 18, 1941, PAM, P 4650, file 24, 5.

¹¹⁷ Dr. W. E. Blatz, Director of the Institute of Child Study of the University of Toronto, spoke to the general public, assembled guests of the Home and School Associations of Winnipeg and Council members of the Council of Social Agencies. His address, "Towards Emotional Maturity," stressed that the first five years of a child's life were critical in the formation of the personality, and also emphasised the importance of understanding and training young children. "General Meeting of the Council of Social Agencies, April 3, 1944, PAM, P 642, file 29.

¹¹⁸ Minutes of Board of Directors of the Family Bureau, March 18, 1941, 4-5.

¹¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 3.

The Bureau recognised that higher rents were a concern, particularly when many homes were no better than hovels. At one of its monthly meetings, the Bureau cited an example of a soldier's wife and her five-year-old daughter who had taken two rooms on the third floor of a house. In September 1940 her rent was \$19 a month and her income was \$67 a month. Later she took another small room and paid a total of \$25 monthly. On the first of March her rent was raised to \$30 and on the first of April to \$35.¹²⁰

The Family Bureau understood that housing conditions created more than financial stress.

Mrs. M., a soldier's wife who had been looking for rooms for herself and six children, felt she was extremely fortunate when she secured three upstairs rooms in Mrs. B's home. Mrs. B., another soldier's wife, and her three children, lived downstairs. The cooking facilities of one kitchen was shared by both women. One can readily guess the outcome—quarrelling, bitter accusations, gossip in the neighbourhood.¹²¹

Such a conflict seemed beyond mediation, however, as the Bureau evidently held the view that trouble was inevitable when two women occupied the same kitchen.

Regardless of extenuating circumstances, the Family Bureau was able to exert considerable influence in family affairs. It not only attended to short term physical needs of client families, but could also scrutinise family relationships and intervene if it saw fit. While Annual Reports may have lamented the conditions in which Mrs. M. and Mrs. B. were living, they expressed greater concern about the welfare of the children in such cases. The living conditions were partly blamed for the apparent behaviour problems of three of the teenage boys in this household. But the Bureau also attributed their

¹²⁰ Minutes of the Forty-Fifth Meeting of the Board of Directors of the Family Bureau of Winnipeg, April 22, 1941, PAM, P 4650, file 24, 3.

¹²¹ Executive Director's Annual Report, Family Bureau of Winnipeg, 1942-43, PAM, P 4650, file 5, 6.

unacceptable behaviour to their fathers' absence; "when large numbers of men have left their homes to serve their country, there are some new problems, and old ones, aggravated to a marked degree."¹²² Clearly, the Bureau had doubts about some mothers' abilities to discipline older children, especially boys. A Director's meeting recorded that "many mothers, who had relied on the threat, 'Your father will make you do it when he comes home' found the increased responsibility a heavy one."¹²³

Perhaps echoing the public opinion of the day, the Family Bureau placed much of the responsibility for the children's wayward actions on the parents. Many parents "do not take the trouble to understand their child or his needs until his behaviour constitutes a problem in the school or community."¹²⁴ The Bureau reasoned that the unhappy, frustrated parents of the problem child "must be given help so that they may become adjusted, and in turn satisfy their child's needs."¹²⁵ In his annual report, the Executive Director used the case of young Dick as an example. The boy's father worked late hours in war industry and was too tired to be bothered with the boy. His mother wanted a "nice home of their own so she went to work," and left Dick under the care of teenaged girls and maids, while she "worked to buy furniture." As a result, Dick became a "lone wolf" who craved attention and stole money to "buy friends." A solution was reached whereby Dick was moved to a new school where he could make new friends and have disciplined and regular hours. His parents were counselled to help them understand their own

¹²² Ibid., 7.

¹²³ Fifth Annual Report of the Family Bureau of Winnipeg, September 1940-August 1941, PAM, P 4650, file 3, 6.

¹²⁴ Executive Director's Annual Report of the Family Bureau, 1942-43, PAM, P 4650, file 5, 6.

¹²⁵ Ibid.

problems, thereby building up their "family relationships so when Dick comes home, it will be a normal family."¹²⁶ The Children's Aid Society did have the authority under the Child Welfare Act to take into care children who were neglected, but "frequently all the parent needs is the opportunity to 'think through' the situation with the help of an understanding skilled person such as the social worker."¹²⁷

While it was not new to hold parents accountable for their children's upbringing, the manner with which social agencies attempted to foster parental responsibility was. Modern times could not accept old fashioned parenting, and Winnipeg agencies like the Family Bureau hoped to be in the forefront with its delivery of family welfare services. By identifying parental rehabilitation as a key ingredient in Dick's well being, the Family Bureau and other affiliates of the Council of Social Agencies were not operating solely on a good dollop of common sense, but were likely using the diagnostic route social scientists were now expected to follow.

Nonetheless, the practitioners of this fashion of social welfare could not escape the prevailing notions of the times. The rational scientific approach intended to create an ordered society met the same contradiction that characterised state, media and public attitudes to working women. A rational approach had to accept that it was an essential reality that women and mothers needed to support the war effort with their labour. However, the discomfort society and state had with so many women and mothers working suggest that rationalism had been left out. Patriarchal tension created by the fear

¹²⁶ Ibid., 7.

¹²⁷ Transcript of "Your City's Health," Department Radio Broadcast, April 6, 1944, p. 2, Winnipeg Health Department, Monthly and Special Reports, City of Winnipeg Archives.

that society was not following a proper order ensured that wholehearted support needed to make female employment widely available was never completely evident.

Even in the face of widespread employment of mothers, and the inevitable strain and chaos that families needed to adjust to, little tangible help was offered. Whether it was believed that families would make do, or whether the state feared that it would create even greater disruption to the family, Winnipeg mothers found themselves on their own in their workday and traditional home responsibilities. Patriarchal sentiments were most evident when mothers sought help to care for their children when they attempted to work out of the home. Women and mothers who could not completely be committed to their homes created general apprehension. With this fear in mind, the next chapter will reveal that when called upon to render a decision whether to offer state subsidised child care to wartime mothers who wished to work, the professional social welfare community's judgement was quite predictable.

CHAPTER 3

CHILD CARE NEEDS AND THE DOMINION WARTIME DAY NURSERY AGREEMENT

Working mothers during the Second World War challenged the model of the home that was widely accepted by guardians of social policy. In her study of British emergency wartime nursery experience, Denise Riley has identified the interests of "the family" as the always harmoniously unified needs of women, men and children. When mothers worked, these assumptions of unity were strained, and the subsequent social cracks exposed conflicting philosophies. Government set out to "free" mothers from the drudgery of unrelieved childcare by means of nurseries. At the same time, pronatalists wanted to "free" mothers to a "more relaxed" and wholehearted support of the family through having more children. Whereas the war effort needed mothers in the work force, an underlying sentiment still defended the mother at home as the "real" worker, equal to if not greater in value than the waged woman worker.¹

Riley's assertion that working mothers strained family unity and generated conflict between the public and government is partially sustained in wartime Winnipeg. However, Riley's suggestion that government was in direct conflict with a maternalist public does not completely fit Winnipeg's wartime experience. Here, the federal government's National Selective Service and the Winnipeg Council of Social Agencies did not oppose traditional social assumptions, but were ultimately inclined to comply with them.

¹ Denise Riley, "'The Free Mothers': Pronatalism and Working Women in Industry at the End of the Last War in Britain," *History Workshop*, (Spring 1981): 60-61.

At first, federal government proposed changes and invited provinces to enter the Dominion-Provincial Wartime Day Nursery Agreement. This shared-cost program was designed to offer superior care for the children of mothers who worked in war industries, and later was expanded to accommodate the children of all working mothers. This program, though, cannot be construed as an intentional attempt to give women equitable status. Applicants to the programme faced patriarchal scrutiny when they tried to have their children placed in government subsidised child care. As well, it was clear from the outset that these day nurseries would be temporary. As Pierson points out, "while government policy toward women had been modified to meet the emergency of war, patriarchal ideology had not changed."²

In Winnipeg, the conflicting public views of mothers' status were evident when the provincial government, and in particular the Council of Social Agencies, addressed the widespread disruption by the war of family life. The dilemma of how to stabilise family stress and dislocation in a time of crisis worsened as wartime labour needs drew mothers from the home and into paid labour. The Council assumed the responsibility of weighing the benefits of government sponsored day nurseries against potential consequences if parents, and especially mothers, no longer accepted complete responsibility for the care of their children.

The Council's caution was ultimately responsible for the decision not to develop such nurseries in Winnipeg. The professional social workers shared the same contradictory view of female status as government and society at large. Despite surveys that pointed to a need for quality day care, social workers and Council directors were

² Pierson, 94.

unable to integrate modern principles of social planning with the traditional concept of family that included a mother fully committed to household and child rearing responsibilities.

Local variations across the country, inevitable perhaps in a federal constitution that placed family policy within provincial jurisdiction, demonstrated the extent to which a national consensus on social patriarchy was still in formation. Thus, a comparative approach, examining Toronto, Calgary and Edmonton, will demonstrate the range of opinion on this issue and will show that Winnipeg was among the least committed to changes in state policy on the family. This failure contributed to uneven access to government day nurseries, and left mothers in Winnipeg in want of quality day care.

Scepticism among administrators was evident about the social merits of the program even where the establishment of day nurseries was successful. The staff of the National Selective Service in Toronto and other Ontario cities that sponsored the program, and the staff of the Canadian Welfare Council that offered input for the program's structure, both exhibited patriarchal attitudes as they facilitated female employment and child care. Similar misgivings about day nurseries also existed among decision-making authorities in Winnipeg. Unlike central Canadian centres that implemented the Agreement regardless, Winnipeg and other western Canadian cities did not. What other factors may have exacerbated concerns to the extent that these cities refused to participate in the federal day nursery scheme?

For the purposes of comparative study, sources are available for cities other than Winnipeg in the NSS records. Perhaps because Manitoba never came close to entering the day care scheme, these records are non-existent for Winnipeg. However, other

materials are available, in particular a school survey commissioned by the Council of Social Agencies. In particular, a survey of Winnipeg schools commissioned by the Council is valuable in discerning the obvious need for child care in Winnipeg during the war.

Wartime employment data from prairie cities also offer clues to the regional variation in acceptance of federal initiatives in day nurseries. Compared to central Canadian cities, Winnipeg, Calgary and Edmonton experienced a greater proportional increase in the number of women that left their homes to find paid labour. The denial of day care in Winnipeg seems particularly glaring since Winnipeg had more women, and presumably more mothers, conducting paid labour than some Ontario cities that took advantage of the Day Nursery Agreement.

National recruitment measures to support war industries aimed at single women were largely successful. Shortages surfaced by 1943, though, in parts of the country and in sectors of the economy that did not include war industries. The service and health care sectors incurred acute labour shortages as single women previously employed in restaurants, dry cleaners and hospitals flocked to central Canada in search of higher wages, adventure and independence.

Allan M. Mitchell, Director of Employment Service and Unemployment Insurance in Ottawa, expressed concern in a circular that "the health of the Community, its facilities to feed and house people, its cure of the sick are of vital importance and the attention of the Employment and Selective Service Offices."³ The circular recommended that a new type of recruit be mustered, "namely the housewife or others who will do a

³ Department of Labour, Employment Service and Unemployment Insurance Branch, No. 270-1, NAC, RG 27, Vol. 605, file 6-24-1, 1.

Part-time Paid Job for six days per week, perhaps only four hours per day, or perhaps three full days each week.”⁴ Mitchell assumed that it would be “possible for many women to streamline their housekeeping at home to do the housekeeping in the community for standard wages.”⁵

The NSS felt that the campaign would be more successful if sponsored by an organisation such as a chapter of the Local Council of Women rather than employers. The enthusiastic applicants would receive a badge of honour when they were referred to a part-time job and the employer might arrange “after two months of continuous service to present a silver pin which (would) be more treasured.”⁶ Mitchell knew that the promise of a bauble was not enough to entice women from their homes. He also acknowledged that in some cases even these part-time candidates would need some assistance in securing day care for their children.⁷

The willingness to provide day care, especially in more industrialised parts of Canada, was evident a year before women would be solicited for this part-time work. In June 1942, Mrs. Eaton offered suggestions to the Minister of Labour regarding day care for working mothers’ children. She noted, “Without any urging on behalf of the Government, married women, usually on the basis of need of further income, have already gone into industry.”⁸ The children of these women were cared for by the

⁴ Ibid., 1.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Ibid., 3.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Mrs. Eaton to Mr. George Greene, Private Secretary to the Minister of Labour, June 13, 1943, NAC, RG 27, Vol. 609, 6-52-1, pt. 1, 1.

mothers' own arrangements, but that these unorganised arrangements were prone to breaking down for days or weeks at a time. Haphazard child care plans led to neglected children who were "becoming unhappy, undernourished and delinquent."⁹

George F. Davidson, Executive Director of the Canadian Welfare Council, made Eaton well aware of Great Britain's preference for wartime nurseries over "minder" homes for pay to care for working mothers' children. Some British babies had known three homes in six months, and many finally entering a government-administered nursery were considered in poor physical health. In one instance, a British home earlier condemned for use as a foster home was allowed to take in children for daily minding. Under these unsupervised private circumstances, authorities argued that Public Health Services would not be aware of a child's condition until difficulty arose.¹⁰ Inconsistencies in private arrangements ultimately led to worker absenteeism and poor productivity, and in the case of Britain, critics felt that if authorities "thought that women who do war work were going to be fobbed off with a minder system then they were just wasting their time."¹¹

The Canadian Welfare Council was not completely comfortable with the idea of mothers working outside the home, but realised that planning for the inevitable was needed. Canadian Welfare featured an article by the supervisor of the family protection division of Toronto's Children's Aid Society. She stressed that if married women were required to do industrial work, "the Public and the State must also organise in such a way

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ "Care of the Under-Fives" in The Labour Woman, March and April, 1942, received from Marguerite Thibert, Chief of the Service of Women's Work and Protection of Young Workers, by George F. Davidson, Executive Director, Canadian Welfare Council, June 24, 1942, RG 27, Vol. 609, file 6-52-1, pt. 1, 1-2.

¹¹ Ibid, 2.

that the child life of the community does not suffer seriously.”¹² The supervisor was most concerned with children whose working parents left them with “hit and miss supervision,” or no supervision at all during the late hours of the evening. The country was on the verge of cultivating a “population of little nomads who run around after school getting themselves into varying degrees of difficulty.”¹³

In time stories of children in unsuitable care situations did surface in Canada. The Director of Public Information’s sponsored radio broadcast “As a Matter of Fact” acknowledged that even in peacetime there were children in Canada who did not receive proper care. However, the radio announcer, herself a recent war widow with two small children, assured the listeners that the neglect was not from a lack of love, but was purely an economic matter because there was no one to care for them. This situation was exacerbated by the wartime labour shortage as more married women entered industry.

The program featured two stories, which illustrated how great the need was. The first described a theatre manager who allowed a neatly but shabbily dressed middle aged woman to go down to the front of the theatre to make sure her children were all right. After several nights of this request the manager followed her and found her squatting on the floor in front of her children, feeding them soup from a thermos bottle. When asked to explain herself, she told the manager that she was a war worker on her supper hour. She could not find anyone she could trust with her children so she gave them money to go to the show right after school. She felt they were safer there than running loose on the street. The announcer declared that while the manager allowed her to continue this

¹² Nora Lea, “The Protection of Our Children,” Canadian Welfare 17, No. 7 (January 1942): 49.

¹³ *Ibid.*

practice, "from the standpoint of health--and well being--a picture show was no place for the children to spend every hour of their free time."¹⁴

The second story highlighted the perils of the minding system. It described a woman who, despite her lack of money, tried "her utmost to teach her children manners, morals and to give them the training necessary to make them fine young Canadians."¹⁵ She made a financial arrangement with her neighbour who tried her best, but was hard pressed with running her own family. The mother came home to her children who were "running wild, not eating their meals and behaving badly, to say nothing of having picked up a few not so choice words."¹⁶ The announcer lamented that the mother quit her war industry job, which wiped out all her years of training and held up production when she left her machine. Stories like these prompted Eaton to declare that the government must accept responsibility for such situations "in these days, when it has become a burden too heavy for private agencies."¹⁷

The government was prepared to furnish day cares in areas which showed need. The first step was to ensure that the standards of the facilities and staff exceeded the quality of care most parents were able to secure within their family or neighbourhood. The NSS asked George F. Davidson for suggestions regarding what the government role

¹⁴ "As a Matter of Fact", Director of Public Information, Broadcast No. 136, Tuesday, August 11, 1942, NAC, RG 36, Vol. 18, file 10-a-4, pt. 4, 4.

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ Ibid.

in day care supervision should be. Davidson noted that for children under five, the nursery pattern could serve as a framework for the emergency day care system.¹⁸

Any discussion about following a Canadian nursery school model had to include Dr. W. E. Blatz. Blatz had been invited by Canada to help Britain set up nurseries overseas, and his expertise was sure to be followed in Canada. The development of wartime day nurseries, as Blatz saw it, involved four key considerations: education, health, feeding and recreation. While he was primarily concerned with the first, he saw the day cares offering an opportunity for the other considerations to be improved and organised.¹⁹ Blatz emphasised the need to train workers to administer and staff the facilities, as well meaning volunteers could only confuse and upset the children in their care. A bad nursery or day care was "worse for children than a bad home."²⁰ Training under the direction of Dr. Blatz was possible at the Institute of Child Study of the University of Toronto, and there was hope that other institutions, notably the University of Manitoba, could establish training schools if grants could be secured.

Blatz and Davidson also expressed concern about the welfare of the school age children of working mothers. Davidson noted that while the day nursery program could attend to the needs of pre-school children, children at school lacked supervision between the time they left school and their mothers returned home. He looked to Britain, where

¹⁸ George F. Davidson, Executive Director of The Canadian Welfare Council to E. M. Little, Director of National Selective Service, Apr. 28, 1942, NAC, RG 27, Vol. 609, file 6-52-1, 1.

¹⁹ L. E. Westman to E. M. Little and R. F. Thompson regarding conference with Dr. W. E. Blatz, April, 30, 1942. NAC, RG 27, Vol. 609, file 6-52-1, pt. 1, 3.

²⁰ Jocelyn Moyter Raymond. The Nursery World of Dr. Blatz (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1991), 193.

school supervision was extended until six o'clock, as a solution.²¹ Blatz advised that a single board of education could work out a scheme in some detail for a particular school, complete with changes in playroom facilities and the introduction of a school cafeteria. His British experience permitted him to predict a steady improvement in the health of children handled in day care, but he also warned that desertion could increase.²²

After consultations with Davidson and Blatz, the federal government entered into preliminary talks with Ontario and Quebec to determine if Dominion assistance would be acceptable. Once an agreement was obtained, the Dominion government received authority through Order-in-Council P. C. 6242, July 20, 1942, to establish child care facilities for mothers working in war industry in any province that requested it. The Order authorised the Minister of Labour to enter into agreement with participating provinces on a cost share basis.²³ The agreement made provision for Day Nursery care for children 2-6 years old, school supervision outside school hours for children over six years old, and foster care for children under two. Parents were expected to pay a nominal fee.²⁴

Authorities were not prepared to give all mothers who worked out of the home carte blanche. Initially, only twenty-five percent of the total admission to each project could come from families whose mother did not work in what was categorised as a "war industry." Early in 1943, criticism developed over this limit, especially from clients of

²¹ Davidson to Little, 2.

²² Westman to Little and Thompson, 2.

²³ "Day Care of Children" in the "History of the Wartime Activities of the Department of Labour," n.d., NAC, RG 35, Vol. 20, file 10, pt. 2, 1.

²⁴ Mrs. Rex Eaton to Mr. V. C. Phelan, Nov. 10, 1944, NAC, RG 27, Vol. 609, file 6-52-1, pt. 1.

school care centres, where “it was claimed that all work had become essential in character and that no distinction should be made between war work and non-essential employment.”²⁵ After a June conference, it was decided that the ratio would remain in favour of mothers who worked in A(very high) and B(high) categories. Criticism, especially in the press, continued about the employment distinction. Mrs. Eaton received a Toronto Globe and Mail clipping from the Unemployment Insurance Commission’s Legal Division, which chastised the Dominion-Provincial Committee on Day Care for its division between “essential” and “non-essential” work. A mother that performed the latter would not be able to secure hot noonday meals for her children, whereas the child whose mother worked in an “essential” industry would. The committee was urged to “get behind the establishment of the plan” since there was no excuse for the continuation of the present inequitable, silly plan that “ought to be remedied at once.”²⁶ Finally, in early 1944 an amendment to the agreement covered in P. C. 2503 admitted children to the program whose mothers were working in other than war industries. However, children of mothers who worked in war industries were to be given priority over the children of other applicants.²⁷ While more flexibility was now afforded working mothers regardless of their occupation, public pressure was required to affect change. It was quite apparent that state support would come in stages, with no desire to open the floodgates for families whose mothers’ paid labour was deemed not “essential.”

²⁵ “Day Care of Children”, 3.

²⁶ V. A. Cooney, Unemployment Insurance Commission, Legal Division, to Mrs. Rex Eaton, November 12, 1943, with attached clipping, “An Inequitable Division,” Toronto Globe and Mail, n.d., NAC, RG 27, Vol. 1508, file 40-5-6.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 5.

Government reluctance to expand eligibility may have resulted from lobbying by the Canadian Welfare Council. The Council had sent a memorandum to local committees who considered acting upon the Dominion-Provincial Agreement. The information it provided was not solely intended to serve as a detailed guide to create and operate day nurseries, but to also to "relate, for these committees, the function of the day nursery in which they will be directly interested, to the child welfare field as a whole."²⁸ The Council did not relish large-scale mobilisation of mothers to the workplace, and noted that "employment of married women with small children has never been considered socially desirable."²⁹ While it was acknowledged that the war created unusual circumstances, the Council stressed that every action needed to be taken to first absorb single and married women without children. Those with children under two years of age should be employed only if the need for workers could not be otherwise met. The Council was particularly critical of the personnel policies of industry that showed no active acceptance of the Council's principles of female employment.³⁰

When the employment of mothers became inevitable, the Council offered advice on how employment could be least intrusive to the family. Half-time work was most desirable for mothers, and if not possible, day shifts with little shift change offered the least disruption for children, since long hours would harm mothers' health over a period of time.³¹

²⁸ The Canadian Welfare Council, "Day Care of Children in Wartime", Nov. 1942, NAC, RG 27, Vol. 609, file 6-52-1, pt. 1, in forward.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 1.

³⁰ *Ibid.*

³¹ *Ibid.*, 2.

The Council suggested that mothers' fatigue and worry over their families would lead to inefficient work and accidents. In light of this possibility, some wondered whether shorter work hours for mothers actually might lead to greater industrial efficiency. The British experience also raised the question about shortened hours for mothers. After a mother prepared her children in the morning to go to the nursery, delivered them, picked them up later, prepared supper and did all the household work, it became "plain that the married woman with children has at least 4 or 5 hours work to do, apart from her work in the factory."³²

In light of the unusual pressure families would experience in this extraordinary time, the Council reluctantly concurred that day nurseries were essential. However, this understanding did not come from a rational recognition that citizens called upon to do their duty deserved some consideration to accommodate their full participation. Rather, the acceptance of the need for day care largely came from fears that parents would simply abrogate their responsibilities to their children. When mothers were working and away from home, a weakened guardianship and the possibility of neglect would ensue. Therefore, for the Council it was the "improbability of mothers to make sound plans on their own in every instance (that) remains the driving force behind the development of day nurseries."³³ Nurseries had to become a substitute guardian or an extension of the home for these children during working hours, and in this time of crisis, authorities claimed the state could do a better job with children than their own parents could.

³² Ibid, p. 2, footnote I.

³³ Ibid., 3.

Once established, the day care concept confronted potential pitfalls. The Council again cited the English experience, where difficulties in maintaining the mother-child relationship became apparent when full-time care was provided for the working mother's children. It was acknowledged that "circumstances of unusually heavy strain will sometimes necessitate removal of the full burden of care from the mother's shoulders, if she is to remain at her job."³⁴ However, easing strain from mothers' shoulders had its risks. British authorities observed that for parents who used care arrangements, "responsibilities are more easily shelved and family ties are harder to maintain and re-establish."³⁵ Authorities worried that parental ties would be severed and this in turn would lead to abandonment of responsibility.

The Canadian Welfare Council's dim view of the character and quality of potential day nurseries stemmed largely from a 1933 study of the day nursery in child care. That study concluded that mothers who made an application to a specific nursery did so because of "social problems apart from the mothers' need to have a place for their children when they were away from home."³⁶ Their personal stories offered a litany of circumstances: deserted wives, widows and unmarried mothers, or wives with husbands who may have been in jail, unemployed, ill, drunk or prone to gamble. Poverty was the thread that linked these women together, and they were doomed to live in conditions that were poor and overcrowded. The mothers and children were frequently in poor health. While social agencies recognised that the mothers all wanted to "maintain their sense of

³⁴ Ibid., found in forward.

³⁵ Ibid.

³⁶ Ibid., 4.

family responsibility under difficult circumstances,³⁷ they still blamed them for being inefficient household managers.

With the increased demand for women workers, "a much greater proportion of 'normal' families"³⁸ joined the beleaguered mothers from less fortunate circumstances. The "normal" workers were married women who were taking employment by choice, and were "influenced by obligations due to war conditions."³⁹ The Council warned these mothers were more likely "to insist on good standards for nursery care."⁴⁰

The Council's predictions proved correct, as Toronto mothers from a variety of backgrounds visited local Employment and Selective Service Offices. Their applicants for child care were interviewed for their need and eligibility. If their applications were accepted, referrals were made to operating child care facilities.⁴¹ The Day Nursery Section of the NSS at the Bay Street office recorded the decisions made after mothers were interviewed. Documents from three days of interviews conducted in early November 1942, however, reveal that some mothers were in dire straits and were desperate for work. The desperate mothers were treated in the same fashion as mothers in similar circumstances were ten years earlier. The staff assumed that their plight was in some way of their own design, and help for them was not readily offered.

One mother, for example, had a four-month-old son, and a husband who had just enlisted in the Merchant Marine. He had a small allowance of \$50 a month, of which \$10

³⁷ Ibid.

³⁸ Ibid.

³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰ Ibid.

⁴¹ Pierson, 51.

a week was sent to his wife. After his six-week course, he was slated to take a boat and would not be paid until he returned to port perhaps two months later. There would be no allowance for his family, so the mother needed work. To prepare for a job, the mother planned to wean the baby but had to ask for formula from the Child Health Centre. She was unable to make arrangements for the baby's care because her two sisters living with her were working to send money to their widowed mother in Regina. The young mother also claimed to be in poor health and able to do only part-time work. She was referred to a Neighbourhood Workers Association.⁴² However, the NSS did not suggest job placement or offer her an application for day nursery care.

Others received no consideration at all. One mother with a three-year-old son and an 18-month daughter hoped for work at a small arms factory and planned to rent a room with a nursery nearby. She was separated from her husband and was on relief. Her relief officer arranged to have her admitted to a trainee course at the factory if she could arrange care for her two children.⁴³ She was not referred to a day nursery. The criteria that staff used to deny applications for day care nursery could not be found, but the examination of this small sample⁴⁴ of evidence suggests that mothers with extenuating circumstances were not offered an opportunity to apply for child care.

Some mothers were willing to work, but preferred to make their own arrangements. Contrary to suspicions that parents would be eagerly dumping their

⁴² Interview notes, Day Nursery Section of the National Selective Service, PAC, RG 27, Vol. 1508, file 19-10-6-4, Nov. 6, 1942, 2.

⁴³ Interview notes, Nov. 5, 1942, 1.

⁴⁴ The records available from the Bay Street office of NSS in Toronto spanned November 5-7, 1942. This represented only a small portion of the interviews that were conducted after the call for registration was issued.

children, the interview records suggested that many families preferred private arrangements. One mother wished to keep her seven-month daughter at home and promised to return for work referral when plans were complete. She was advised about an Infants' Home, but she preferred not to go to their office.⁴⁵ Grandmothers, husbands and live-in relatives were common sources of child-care. One mother hoped her landlady would care for her three-year-old daughter and 19 month-old son, and if this did not work out, she "could then consider Nursery care."⁴⁶

Many women who reported to the NSS office announced that they were unable to work. Most cited home responsibilities, ill health, or the young age of their children as their reasons. Some also expressed reservations about institutional child care. One mother with a three-year-old child was "not interested in nursery school care for (her) child and thus unable to work."⁴⁷ A few interviewees had the decision made for them by their husbands. One applicant initially stated that the aunt with whom her family lived would care for her three-year-old daughter. She later called at 5 p.m. "to say that her husband was not anxious for her to work unless absolutely essential and he did not approve of the aunt caring for the child."⁴⁸ Another husband worked in a munition factory on shifts and did not want his wife to work because of their baby and a disruption in preparation of meals. One husband telephoned the office to make it known that he

⁴⁵ Interview notes, "Those making private arrangements", Nov. 7, 1942, 2.

⁴⁶ Ibid., 1.

⁴⁷ Interview notes, "Those not able to work", Nov. 7, 1942, 1.

⁴⁸ Interview notes, "Those making other arrangements", Nov. 5, 1942, 1.

“does not approve of his wife working and does not wish anything further done about the matter.”⁴⁹

The interview records from the early weeks of the nursery program indicate only a moderate demand for the day care service. The Bay Street office gathered information from eighty-two mothers on November 6, 1942. Those not able to work totalled twenty-nine, while thirty-four made their own private arrangements to care for their children. Applications for day nursery care were issued to nineteen mothers.⁵⁰

This moderate demand for day care persisted into the summer of 1943, though there was some speculation that the statistics were misleading. A report by the NSS on the day care of children noted that only a sample survey was conducted, and it found that eighty per cent of working mothers made their own arrangements for the care of their children. The report urged that each mother be approached before the real need was precisely known. The fear was that “where a need would seem to be apparent, the survey will show no actual need,”⁵¹ since while child care had been secured, the circumstances may not have been ideal.

The program was also undermined by mothers who respected the quality of the government nurseries, perhaps even placing their children in one, but then made use of less expensive services provided by a neighbour. This practice renewed concerns over abuses that might occur with a lack of government control of children. A NSS official from Montreal scorned the many women who “may find it more profitable to care

⁴⁹ Interview notes, “Those not able to work”, Nov. 6, 1942, 2.

⁵⁰ Interview records, Nov. 6, 1942.

⁵¹ “Day Care of Children,” RG 27, Vol. 609, 6-52-1, pt. 1, 3.

'amateurishly' for the children of working mothers rather than working themselves and what sort of care, physical and moral, will these youngsters get?''⁵²

The concern of the NSS Women's Division for the well being of children was inconsistent and did not extend to single mothers, who according to the interview notes, were in desperate need of nursery care for their children. These mothers were then left to their own devices for child care.⁵³ NSS staff decided to withhold assistance to some mothers largely on their perception of the applicants' morals rather than on their needs. Personal patriarchal attitudes of civil servants and social workers conflicted and interfered with social programs that Wills suggests should have conveyed a "new morality in a modernism that worshipped science and technology."⁵⁴

Nonetheless, more than enough Ontario women were judged to be appropriate candidates, and nurseries were set up to accept their children. Nurseries in Ontario were open Monday to Friday, usually from 7:00 a.m. to 7:00 p.m., and Saturday morning until noon. Lunch and supper along with a snack was provided, and the facilities were usually churches or community halls. Foster home care for children under two and school day care for children between six and sixteen were also available.⁵⁵ Fee scales per day for the day nurseries charged under the Day Care Agreement were thirty-five cents for the first child and fifteen cents for additional children. If both parents worked, the fee was fifty

⁵² Madame Florence F. Martel, NSS, Montreal, to Miss Margaret Grier, Director, Wartime Day Nurseries, July 12, 1943, PAC, RG 27, Vol. 611, file 6-52-5-2.

⁵³ Though Mrs. Eaton may not have approved, the NSS officials held values similar to the administrators of the Ontario Mother's Allowance. Single mothers had to show worthiness as a "fit and proper person." Little, 51.

⁵⁴ Wills, 19.

⁵⁵ Pierson, 53.

cents a day. Day care for school children cost parents twenty-five cents a day for the first child and ten cents for additional children.⁵⁶ By the end of the war, Ontario had twenty-eight day nurseries, which cared for 9,000 children, and the Wartime Day Care Program for School Children accommodated 2,500 students. Quebec, on the other hand, had only five day nurseries, attended by about 120 children.⁵⁷

The success that the NSS had setting up day nurseries in central Canada, particularly in Ontario, was not replicated elsewhere in Canada. While the need was made plainly clear in some parts of western Canada, government funded facilities were not established because of a lack of initiative by the governments or social agencies.

Initially there was interest in the nursery program in the west. The NSS office in Ottawa had received inquiries from Vancouver, Calgary, Edmonton and Winnipeg that expressed interest and the provincial governments of Saskatchewan, Alberta and Manitoba had written for clarification of some of the provisions of the agreement. Miss Margaret Grier, Assistant Associate Director of NSS under Mrs. Eaton, was dispatched to the prairies and British Columbia to address any concerns, as it looked as if "there might be developments in some of the western centres fairly soon."⁵⁸

Alberta appeared most receptive to the federal initiative and signed the agreement in September 1943.⁵⁹ The Alberta NSS staffs shared the concerns of its national office about child care, and Mrs. Eaton arrived in January 1944 to clarify her department's intentions. The NSS concern was to keep industry supplied with necessary workers; it

⁵⁶ Mrs. Rex Eaton, NSS to Mr. George Greene, Minister of Labour's office, May 27, 1943.

⁵⁷ Pierson, 53.

⁵⁸ Mrs. Rex Eaton to Mr. A. MacNamara, August 16, 1943, PAC, RG 27, vol. 609, file 6-52-1, pt. 1.

⁵⁹ Pierson, 51.

was not interested in a mother's reason for working, or whether or not her husband was employed.⁶⁰

The Child Welfare Division of the Edmonton Council of Social Agencies set up a "Committee on Day Care for the Children of Working Mothers" in April 1943. Just before Christmas 1943, the Day Care Committee asked the Edmonton Public School Board to distribute survey forms to elementary school children to find out how many mothers were actually working, and whether mothers were finding it difficult to care for their children.⁶¹

The survey results revealed a great need for child care services. A total of 3,614 forms were returned, with 674 working mothers and 1,014 children of working mothers accounted for. Care before school hours for 123 children was requested by 78, noon care for 330 children was called for by 205 mothers, and 145 mothers hoped for after school care for 250 children.⁶² The Day Care Committee considered these to be minimum figures because several children known to have working mothers did not return their forms. One form sent in by a working mother was returned with a footnote that claimed that despite having a daytime job, no husband, two children in school and two children at home, she could look after them herself well enough. The Committee was not as convinced, and asked within its report, "Is not such care likely to be unsatisfactory from

⁶⁰ Brief presented by the Calgary Day Nursery Committee to the Alberta Provincial Day Nursery Advisory Board, NAC, RG 27, vol. 611, file 6-52-9, 3.

⁶¹ "Information Regarding Need of Day Care for Children in Edmonton," Day Care Committee of the Edmonton Council of Social Agencies, NAC, RG 27, Vol. 611, file 6-52-9, 1.

⁶² *Ibid.*, 2.

the standpoint both of the child and of the community?"⁶³ The elementary school survey statistics were enough to satisfy the Day Care Committee to recommend that services for school children "be provided without delay."⁶⁴

The fairly convincing data was passed on to the Alberta Provincial Advisory Committee on Day Nurseries to whom the provincial government gave ultimate responsibility for deciding on the need for nurseries. However, the Advisory Committee wanted more information, which led to a second, smaller survey.⁶⁵ As well, a small sample of statistics was gathered by a newspaper advertisement. Mothers who were employed in war industries and were considering placing their children in day nurseries were invited to clip, fill in and mail the blank form. Response was light; twenty-six replied from Calgary and eight came in from Edmonton.⁶⁶

The Day Care Committee recognised that the Dominion government had agreed to establish Wartime Day Nurseries in any area where mothers of 20 children needed such a service. The Committee felt that it had indeed established that there were sufficient numbers. The nurseries would relieve the serious overcrowding of the only existing creche in the area and alleviate the misery that the surrounding area appeared to be suffering. Hesitation would be "a tragedy if we are so preoccupied with winning the war that we neglect the children upon whom the future of the nation depends."⁶⁷

⁶³ Ibid.

⁶⁴ Ibid.

⁶⁵ A ten block canvass found more mothers working than suggested earlier. While many children seemed well cared for, others had no adult supervision or were living in appalling, crowded conditions. Ibid., 3.

⁶⁶ E. C. Pardee, NSS representative on Alberta Advisory Committee on Day Nurseries, to Mrs. Rex Eaton, April 27, 1944, MAC, RG 27, Vol. 611, file 6-52-9.

⁶⁷ Ibid., 4.

Unfortunately, the Provincial Advisory Committee on Day Nurseries was not favourably swayed by the survey results. The Advisory Committee gave greater weight to the information gathered by an advertisement placed in Calgary and Edmonton newspapers.

The Alberta Provincial Advisory Committee on Day Nurseries met on April 26, 1944, to determine whether there was sufficient need to implement the Dominion-Provincial Agreement. Briefs in favour of implementation were heard from the likes of the Calgary Local Council of Women and the Edmonton Catholic Women's League. A representative of the Calgary Day Nursery Committee warned that in light of the national emergency, "whether you think a woman's place is in the home, that mothers of small children should not work, these principles do not enter this agreement at all."⁶⁸ The presenter of the brief also cited the support of Calgary's Major of the Salvation Army, who, despite his firm belief that mothers of small children should not work away from the home, agreed that there was a need for a day nursery for adequate care of children.⁶⁹ A Calgary alderman appeared representing the Calgary Catholic Women's League. She "waxed eloquent about the sanctity of the home,"⁷⁰ and therefore was clearly unfavourable to the project. Votes were taken separately for each city, with similar results in both. Three members of the Committee were in favour, three were against, and the chairman cast the deciding vote against.⁷¹

⁶⁸ Brief by Calgary Day Care Committee, 3.

⁶⁹ Ibid.

⁷⁰ Pardee to Eaton, 1.

⁷¹ Ibid.

Mrs. Pardee, one member of the Committee in favour of the nurseries, wrote Mrs. Eaton that despite the large volume of evidence that pointed to day care need, the evening carried the result she had anticipated.⁷² Pardee must have read the mood of the majority of the Committee, who had to have held fairly strong traditional views on the issue of working mothers. Since the majority of the Committee chose to value the meagre response to its own ambiguous advertisement over fairly compelling statistical evidence provided by Edmonton and Calgary, Pardee probably knew that there was no way to convince the Committee members. Ironically, the Advisory Committee's patriarchal attitude about what was best for the family effectively denied Alberta mothers and their children suitable care at a time when the need for it seemed most glaring.

Families in Winnipeg shared similar economic pressures and social circumstances with those in Alberta, and the debate over the feasibility of taking advantage of the Day Nursery Agreement was similar in Winnipeg to that in Calgary and Edmonton. Though Winnipeg may have explored the possibility of establishing day care sooner than the Albertan cities, striking similarities were present in the patriarchal influences that led to similar outcomes.

Interested Winnipeggers who followed the campaign to draw women into the paid labour force also would have been familiar with the Day Nursery Agreement. Radio listeners in the city might have caught the Director of Public Information's broadcast of "As a Matter of Fact" which featured a series of stories that illustrated the need for nursery day care. The city's daily newspapers reported government appeals for female workers, which often also included details of nurseries developed in Ontario and Quebec

⁷² Ibid.

that offered an "approach to one of the problems of working women."⁷³ On an editorial page, Mrs Eaton bluntly stated that more women were going to have to go into industry or "there will be men without guns facing men with guns." Since large proportions of single women were already employed, more married women would be needed. Eaton called for equal pay for equal work and for nurseries for the children of married women who accepted employment.⁷⁴

Mrs. Eaton came to Winnipeg in early November 1942 to speak before the third annual meeting of the Central Volunteer Bureau to offer a "correct and complete picture of working Canada."⁷⁵ Despite being faced with the reality of a labour shortage, Eaton's address indicated that the NSS hoped to tread cautiously around the controversial issue of working mothers. While she planned to answer pressing questions such as why Winnipeg women should leave their homes to work in areas of labour scarcity, her main aim was to direct single women into essential war industries rather than to "have employers build up huge staffs of married women with small children."⁷⁶ However, while NSS would not urge women to leave their families, "those who want to go will have no handicap placed in their way."⁷⁷ Eaton went on to inform the audience that women with young children who had already gone into war work had "done so on their own free will" and industry

⁷³ "25,000 Women a Month Needed," Winnipeg Free Press, 6 October 1942, 1.

⁷⁴ "Women for War Industries," Winnipeg Free Press, 12 October 1942, 9.

⁷⁵ "Mrs. Eaton to Have Answers To Women's Wartime Queries," Winnipeg Free Press, 7 November 1942, 12.

⁷⁶ Ibid.

⁷⁷ "Place of Women in War Jobs Explained by Mrs. Rex Eaton," Winnipeg Free Press, 12 November 1942, 10.

had been "glad to take them because they are among the most competent workers."⁷⁸ There were other jobs besides work in munitions plants and stressed in particular the importance of the "jobs of carrying on the important work of homemaking, of raising children steeped in the principles of democracy."⁷⁹ By placing a premium on the ideal of family and home, Eaton hoped that single women who were involved with volunteer activity would leave these responsibilities to enter war work, and where perhaps the volunteer positions then could be taken by women with greater home responsibilities. That said, mothers would still, in all likelihood, need to be mobilised, as she clearly stated that the day nursery scheme operating in Ontario and Quebec could be extended to other provinces to care for children of women workers.⁸⁰

Authorities in Winnipeg had contemplated the merits and feasibility of nurseries before Eaton's visit. Winnipeg's Council of Social Agencies had considered conducting a survey to ascertain the need for the day care facilities, but decided to postpone it when the registration of women for selective service was initiated. When an unidentified "group" approached Dr. Jackson, one of the directors, asking that a day nursery be started, the survey was reconsidered. The Council decided to focus on women who were already working and needed day nurseries for their children, rather than potential needs of women not yet employed.⁸¹ Questionnaires were sent to Winnipeg school principals and public health nurses.

⁷⁸ Ibid.

⁷⁹ Ibid.

⁸⁰ Ibid.

⁸¹ Meeting of the Board of Directors of the Council of Social Agencies, p. 3, Minute of Council, September 23, 1942, PAM, P 642, file 2.

While the Council awaited the completion of the survey, the Council Secretary, Mrs. McQueen, contacted several firms that employed married women. Several of their reports indicated that some sort of care should be established. The Council was aware that varieties of private care had been organised, and "if standards were to be set and adequate care given, action must be taken very soon."⁸² The Chairman, A. V. Pigott, formed a Day Nursery Care Committee "to study the problem of Day Nurseries."⁸³ A month later, the newly formed Committee met with Mrs. Eaton, with hopes that the Committee could tie in with the work of the NSS. Initial indications led Mrs. Eaton to believe that there would be a need for day nursery care.⁸⁴ However, the Committee required more conclusive evidence and sought additional information about the actual assistance being given to working mothers. The surveys were returned to the schools for additional details about how children were being cared for when the mother was at work. Numbers of children were being minded in the neighbourhood, which raised concerns about the quality of this care. Dr. Jackson, both a committee member and the Deputy Minister of the provincial Department of Health and Welfare, offered to send some of his workers to investigate the homes the survey identified in order to licence them under the Child Welfare Act.⁸⁵ Rather than act immediately on the Day Nursery Agreement initiative, the Committee felt that for the time being, the province's Foster Home Day Care programme was the best solution, since "they did not want to encourage parents to

⁸² Meeting of the Board of Directors of the Council of Social Agencies, p. 3, Minute of Council, October 21, 1942, PAM, P 642, file 2.

⁸³ Ibid.

⁸⁴ Meeting of the Board of Directors of the Council of Social Agencies, p. 2, Minute of Council, November 25, 1942, PAM, P 642, file 2.

⁸⁵ Ibid.

leave their children in order to go to work until all the available single girls were employed."⁸⁶

The Council of Social Agencies provided standard survey sheets to Winnipeg School Board elementary schools and to a few schools with elementary classes and higher grades in the same building. The questionnaire asked specific information: the name and address of the working mother, the number and ages of children attending school, the number and ages of pre-school children, whether the work was full or part time, and general "Remarks." Nursing districts used similar sheets, but also asked if the father was at home, and what arrangements were made for the care of pre-school and school-age children. In several instances, the same families were recorded both by the school and by the district nurse. While the records did not state whether this replication was intentional, the nursing districts were probably asked to participate since their visiting nurses were able to do house checks on students whose home situations had raised concerns.

Despite the survey sheets' standard form, the teachers were not uniform in their completion of the questionnaires. Some provided the name of the firm and the occupation of the mother. A few evaluated the home life, with a Greenway teacher noting in the remark column: "Mother working in garment factory, father lazy."⁸⁷ About the reliability of the information, one teacher from Victoria Albert School cautioned, "This information was given to me by 6 and 7 year olds so I do not guarantee the

⁸⁶ Ibid.

⁸⁷ Survey of Working Mothers for Council of Social Agencies, Greenway School, PAM, P 659, file 7. It is not clear on what evidence the teacher was able to base this remark, though anecdotal information transmitted through the community and shared amongst teachers in the staffroom, was quite likely the source.

accuracy of it.”⁸⁸ It is also possible that some students were instructed by their parents not to discuss their home situation at school. As it turned out, this caution was warranted, as the Deputy Minister, Dr. Jackson, dispatched his nurses to investigate homes where the survey revealed what was considered unsatisfactory care given to children whose mothers were working.⁸⁹ Fears of investigation, especially if word got out that visitations by district nurses had occurred, would have resulted in an incomplete survey.

The surveys indicate that many working mothers were simply taking full advantage of available work. Surveys that recorded place of work rarely listed war industry firms and jobs. Employment usually occurred in the service sector, often in retail stores like Eaton’s and the Hudson Bay Company, and in restaurants and dry cleaners. Other common jobs included food processing, seamstress work and house cleaning. When the Council tallied the responses, 1,351 mothers worked full-time, almost double the 732 women who were part-time.⁹⁰ Comments suggest that for many mothers, periods of employment were not reliable, with some of it seasonal, or a “month here and there.” While some surveys noted the absence of the husband, commonly overseas, most indicated that the fathers were still at home. Some survey recorders chose to remark whether both parents were working. Faraday School, for example, noted eight of nine respondents had both parents working.⁹¹

⁸⁸ Survey of Working Mothers for Council of Social Agencies, Victoria Albert School, PAM, P 659, file 7.

⁸⁹ Meeting of the Board of Directors of the Council of Social Agencies, p. 3, Minute of Council, January 13, 1943, PAM, P 642, file 2.

⁹⁰ Survey of Working Mothers for Council of Social Agencies, Tally Sheet, PAM, P 659, file 8.

⁹¹ Survey of Working Mothers for Council of Social Agencies, Faraday School, PAM, P 659, file 8.

Mothers apparently chose to work only if they were at a certain stage in their family life cycle. It was rare for a mother to be employed if she had a pre-schooler. The survey tally sheet recorded 3,963 children of working mothers who were school age and under, but only 374 of them were of pre-school age.⁹² These families appeared small, as it was rare to find mothers who worked with more than two children in school. It could not be determined by the documents if these families had children already out of school. However, it was evident that many mothers worked while the children were attending classes, and therefore schools were, in a sense, used as child care.

The survey offered extensive evidence of how child care was provided in the mother's absence. Dissatisfaction with the initial information received caused many surveys to be returned by the Social Council to determine the "exact status of the children whose mothers were working and the addresses of the homes in which they were being cared for."⁹³ The grandparents cared for pre-schoolers, with few exceptions. Many mothers felt that this was the only type of arrangement that was possible for their children, and the only one with which they were comfortable. One mother, Mrs. Colborne, recollected that most of her working mother friends benefited from similar arrangements, since in her Winnipeg North End neighbourhood families seemed to live close by or in some cases shared the same accommodations.⁹⁴ For another mother,

⁹² Tally Sheet, Survey of Working Mothers for Council of Social Agencies, PAM, P 659, file 8. The percentage of mothers choosing to work if they had pre-school children may have been different if the survey was done by door to door canvassers as was the case in Calgary, rather than through the school. A family's need would not be recorded when no child yet attended school.

⁹³ Meeting of the Board of Directors of the Council of Social Agencies, p. 1, Minute of Council, December 9, 1942.

⁹⁴ Mrs. Pat Colborne, interview by author, February 25, 1998, Winnipeg.

having the child's grandmother provide care as part of the live-in arrangement was the only way she could make ends meet.⁹⁵

The survey revealed that fourteen per cent of schoolchildren had working mothers.⁹⁶ Care for the school age children was more varied, both in its manner and its quality. Since the schools surveyed were in urban areas with concentrated catchment areas, children customarily went home for lunch. With mothers no longer certain to be home, who prepared and supervised lunch became an issue, as much as who looked after the children when the school day ended. Mothers relied upon resources within their own families or neighbourhood. Grandparents were called upon, but not to the same extent as they were for pre-school child care. Some parents arranged for one or the other to get home to prepare lunch or for the after-school hours. A few called upon boarders, neighbours or the "lady down the hall." A few working mothers, interestingly, relied on maids. Commonly though, the oldest sibling assumed responsibility. As recorded by Aberdeen School, "5 year old boy goes to day nursery, 436 Stella. Brought by 13 year old and called for at 4. 13 year old serves meal at noon. Meal prepared in advance."⁹⁷ A high proportion of students, usually those older than twelve, was left alone. A parent generally prepared dinner, as it was rare that children would be left alone after 6:00 P.M.

Normally teachers evaluated the quality of students' care as positive. Perhaps with the desire not to create trouble for parents, comments such as "well looked after" were noted on some students' entries. While it was rare, some teachers did point out some problems. One six year old Isbister School student's situation was described as

⁹⁵ Mrs. M. McDonald, interview by author, January 12, 2000, Winnipeg.

⁹⁶ Kinnear, 78.

follows: "Both working nights. Mother gets up and gets Gerald's lunch. Both go out at night and leave Gerald sleeping alone in suite. Child appears dirty."⁹⁸

Some had access to formal day care, like Mrs. Skibinski who dropped children off at a nursery run by the United Church.⁹⁹ From the survey, this was not common, even though mothers like Mrs. Colborne would have benefited from such an option. She recognised that if her parents had been older, she would have had to rely on informal neighbourhood home care. She knew that such care was less stable, and problems occurred when illness struck the child or caregiver.¹⁰⁰

Publicly, the Council of Social Agencies supported the concept of institutional early child care. The Council's Director, A. V. Pigott, predicted in his address to the board and executive at the 34th annual meeting of the Mother's Association and Day Nursery that while "nothing can replace a good home and intelligent mother with a knowledge of psychology," nursery schools would have an ever-increasing responsibility in the future. Pigott cited economic changes and women occupying equal status with men in the industrial world for the increased role nurseries would have to play.¹⁰¹ Increased demand for the Association's nurseries confirmed this prediction, as 7,484 children were registered in 1942 compared to 5,276 the previous year.¹⁰²

⁹⁷ Survey of Working Mothers for Council of Social Agencies, Aberdeen School, PAM, P 659, file 8.

⁹⁸ Survey of Working Mothers for Council of Social Agencies, Isbister School, PAM, P 659, file 7.

⁹⁹ H. Skibinski, interview, Women's History Project Centre, Manitoba Labour Education Centre, PAM, C 605, no. 33.

¹⁰⁰ Colborne, interview by author.

¹⁰¹ "Future of Nursery Schools is Discussed by A. V. Pigott." Winnipeg Free Press, 9 January 1943, 10.

¹⁰² Ibid.

However, Pigott did not act on his own prediction. The Council's Day Nursery Committee decided a few months later that nurseries would not be established under the Dominion-Provincial Agreement. Winnipeg's employment situation, where only four per cent of the war work in the Dominion was allocated, was cited as the key reason for the decision. The surveys were interpreted to suggest that since most working mothers only had school age children, present needs lay with group work¹⁰³ after school hours rather than investing in day nurseries for pre-school children.¹⁰⁴ The survey indeed reflected the reality that when faced with no institutional alternative for child care, parents had simply found ways to "make do." Even though the various minding arrangements parents secured were contrary to Eaton's vision of appropriate care, the Council was content with this informal manner of child supervision.

The day care issue, however, had to be visited again in the summer of 1943. Parental neglect became the focus at a Winnipeg School Board management meeting. The chief attendance officer described grim conditions that many students endured in their homes. Truancy was often attributed to a lack of proper clothes some students had in which to go to school. In other cases, the excuse often given was that the father was away from home and the mother and child could not get up in time. Or, both parents left early for work in war plants, and left young children to get to school on their own. This latter situation, it was reported, was on the increase.¹⁰⁵

¹⁰³ These after-school "clubs" or drop-in centres focused on athletic and craft activities, led by a teacher or a recreation volunteer.

¹⁰⁴ Annual Report of the Secretary of the Council of Social Agencies, June 9, 1943, PAM, P 642, file 22, 5.

¹⁰⁵ "Trustees Hear Revelations on Pupils' Home Background," Winnipeg Free Press, 11 June 1943, 3.

In light of what appeared to be an obvious need for day care, Winnipeg School Trustee Joe Zuken was amazed that so little had been done to enter the same agreement that Ontario and Quebec had with the federal government.¹⁰⁶ The Day Nursery Committee was informed that a motion was brought before the School Board by Mr. Zuken to ask the provincial government to look into the need for the establishment of day nurseries again. Zuken had no more information regarding need in Winnipeg, but the NSS had stated that the situation had changed in the last six months and more married women with children were being called upon to fill positions. The Committee now felt that both foster home day care and a downtown day nursery would be needed in Winnipeg where industries were scattered over the city.¹⁰⁷

However, the Day Nursery Committee required statistical evidence of need. It acknowledged that the school questionnaires had not been inclusive enough to reflect the actual need for child care, but believed that a more detailed survey was too complicated for the volunteer Block System to handle. The Committee reflected on the merits of a simple questionnaire that could be distributed to help direct those who were interested in planning for the care of their children while they were employed, or who were willing to offer their homes for foster home care. These parents would then be directed to a downtown office to be interviewed by a trained worker.¹⁰⁸ In the end, the provincial government wrote the NSS for their opinion about Winnipeg's present employment conditions and whether labour needs warranted increased day care for children of

¹⁰⁶ "School Board Urges Province to Establish Nursery Schools," Winnipeg Free Press, 21 July 1943, 3.

¹⁰⁷ Meeting of the Day Nursery Committee of the Council of Social Agencies, August 10, 1943, Minutes of Meeting, PAM, P 642, file 39.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid.

working mothers. If the answer were affirmative, only then would the Central Volunteer Bureau be asked to send out a "simple questionnaire" through the Block System.¹⁰⁹

The NSS saw a need for nursery care and presented the number of mothers working, noting that 112 children were involved.¹¹⁰ Miss Grier of the Women's Division of the NSS in Ottawa visited Winnipeg and stated that the need for nurseries might be great as there soon would be an intensified drive for married women to replace single girls in industry in Winnipeg. The single women would then be able to move to war industry most needing workers. Dr. Jackson had an agreement drawn up and presented to the Provincial Cabinet so those day nurseries could be quickly set up if the need arose. The Cabinet was in favour of this precaution, and the agreement was sent to the Department of Education for consideration. If approved, it would be "signed and ready for emergencies."¹¹¹

In anticipation, the provincial Minister of Health and Public Welfare sent the Council of Social Agencies a letter that requested the Council to set up another committee. This one was to be responsible for nursery care for children of working mothers in Winnipeg. The Council agreed and a tentative budget for a Day Nursery was set up with Miss Grier under the Federal Government agreement, at a cost to the province of \$5,000. The unit, though, could care for only thirty children and would release twenty-five mothers for employment.¹¹² Dr. Jackson thought that the cost was too great,

¹⁰⁹ Ibid.

¹¹⁰ Meeting of the Board of Directors of the Council of Social Agencies, August 31, 1943, PAM, P 642, file 23, 4.

¹¹¹ Ibid.

¹¹² Meeting of the Board of Directors of the Council of Social Agencies, p. 3, Minute of Council, September 1943, PAM, P 642, file 23.

and he expected yet another survey would have to be done to get correct figures. As it happened, on the Council's instruction, the Volunteer Bureau had surveys already printed and was prepared to undertake the survey through their block system. The Council's Secretary, Mrs. McQueen, was not optimistic about the Nursery's chances, as "it seemed that the Provincial Government would not make the necessary grant of money at this time."¹¹³

The records do not reveal if the additional survey was conducted or not. Despite the apparent need for nursery care, and the warnings of increased demand as unmarried women flocked east to work in war industries, little mention of the Day Nurseries was made after September 1943. Mrs. Rex Eaton later visited the office of the Council of Social Agencies, where Mrs. McQueen informed her of the unsatisfactory nature of the survey conducted in Winnipeg. However, according to Mrs. McQueen, "it was sufficient to show, she believed, that there was no urgent need for day nurseries in Winnipeg."¹¹⁴

The Winnipeg School Board raised the issue once again. Members of the School Management Committee "expressed the opinion that the need is now apparent in various areas of the City, and that the establishment of such day nurseries appears to be a permanent need and not merely a wartime emergency."¹¹⁵ A delegation was struck to interview Deputy Minister Dr. Jackson about the issue, but the records do not indicate if such a meeting occurred.

¹¹³ Ibid.

¹¹⁴ Mrs. Rex Eaton to Mr. A MacNamara, p. 4, January 20, 1944, NAC, RG 27, vol. 605, file 6-24-1.

¹¹⁵ "Minutes of regular Monthly meeting of the School Management Committee," August 15, 1944, A-1735, Winnipeg School Division Archives.

It is not clear why there was such an abrupt change in the Council of Social Agencies' and provincial government's position on the feasibility of the Day Nurseries. The Council's initial analysis of the school focused survey suggested that group work after school was needed more than Day Nursery,¹¹⁶ but since the issue of nursery care continually surfaced, demand for day care was apparent. What constituted sufficient need for nursery child care was, however, solely for the authorities to determine. The negative decision held fast even as pressure for child care spaces intensified in subsequent months. The 44th annual meeting of the Mothers' Association Day Nursery heard that double the fees were collected over the previous year, with a total of 11,324 child days recorded.¹¹⁷ The nursery only accepted children of working mothers, whose principal places of employment were factories, stores, restaurants and laundries. Though the nursery's hours of operation were 8:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m., many children arrived earlier.¹¹⁸

If the national trend had been followed, Winnipeg mothers should have been accorded nurseries. As shown in Table 2.1, Winnipeg surpassed Hamilton in the number of women working and in the percentage of women in the labour force by 1943. Also, Winnipeg had three times as many women working as Windsor. Hamilton opened three nurseries and Windsor one under the Dominion-Provincial Wartime Day Nurseries Agreement.¹¹⁹ While the steel and automobile industries located in these two eastern

¹¹⁶ Meeting of Group Work Division of the Council of Social Agencies, p. 2, Minute of Division, February 17, 1943, PAM, P 643, file 1.

¹¹⁷ "Women Told of Increased Demands Upon Day Nursery," Winnipeg Free Press, 1 February 1944, 10.

¹¹⁸ Ibid.

¹¹⁹ Pierson, 53.

cities would have been involved in producing machines of war, the NSS had designated all work that women contributed to be of vital importance to secure victory, and therefore to be considered "war work." The decision to deny day nurseries based on Winnipeg's contribution of four per cent of the nation's war work does not bear scrutiny.

Table 3.1: Women's Employment, 1942 and 1944, Selected Cities

<i>City</i>	<i>Women Employed in 1942</i>	<i>Women Employed in 1944</i>	<i>% Increase</i>
Winnipeg	16,915	23,239	37.3
Toronto	92,932	109,157	17.4
Windsor	6,394	7,299	14.5
Ottawa	9,280	10,172	9.6
Hamilton	18,339	19,829	8.1
Calgary	N/A	5,265	N/A
Edmonton	N/A	6,474	N/A

Source: Labour Gazette, January 1944, 90; January 1945, 86.

Nonetheless, the Council of Social Agencies and the provincial government were able to point to Winnipeg's limited extent of war work as a rational reason for their decision. It is likely, though, that other factors contributed to the refusal to participate in the Day Nursery Agreement, and the modest contribution of war work offered a convenient excuse. Perhaps the Provincial Government balked at the cost: \$5,000 was budgeted for 30 nursery spaces. The British found that objections to their nursery scheme were raised when public money was to be spent, and it was very obvious that it was "more economical to have a minder system than a day nursery system."¹²⁰ The Province felt that while the problem of the care of children had not reached proportions to warrant day nurseries, an expansion of some existing facilities for foster care and additional play schools would be sufficient. The Manitoba government assumed that

¹²⁰ "Care of the Under-Fives," 2.

private agencies would finance these.¹²¹ If the province could withhold day care services until the labour crisis passed, it was assumed mothers would continue to make their own arrangements for their children's care. In Ontario, as the Wartime Day Nursery Program expanded, it created its own demand for further increased service, as mothers became confident that adequate care for their children was available.¹²² Manitoba was not interested in generating any increased demand on the public purse.

Financial conservatism may serve as one explanation. Another possible reason for the rejection of the Agreement may lie in the uneven acceptance of social patriarchy. The federal state had intervened with traditional familial patriarchy by supporting the Family Allowance Act in 1944. The Act served as a wage subsidy that augmented the cost of reproduction at a time when families often did not secure a living wage. It also partially supplanted the control the male breadwinner had of the family. Now wives were less dependent on husbands to dole out money to run the household.

Family allowance did not require contributions, which ensured universal implementation as "McKenzie King used federal spending power to circumvent the provincial responsibility for welfare."¹²³ However, regional variation in social patriarchy resulted from uneven acceptance of federal social spending and programs. Ontario and Quebec opted into the Day Nursery Agreement by sharing the cost, while Manitoba and Alberta did not. It is possible that the two western provinces felt there was already too much disruption to traditional family structure, and were not eager to accept a federal initiative that would loosen mothers' ties to the home.

¹²¹ "Day Care of Children," 3.

¹²² *Ibid.*, 12.

Table 3.2: Women's Employment, 1942 and 1944, Selected Provinces

<i>Province</i>	<i>Women Employed in 1942</i>	<i>Women Employed in 1944</i>	<i>% Increase</i>
Alberta	10,956	16,139	47.3
Manitoba	19,782	27,150	37.2
Ontario	208,200	245,127	17.7
Quebec	147,213	159,413	8.2

Compiled with data from *Labour Gazette*, January 1944, 90, January 1945, 86.

While all regions and cities in Canada had to deal with social change during the war, the west was affected more than others by the rate at which women joined the work force. When the percent increase in the number of women employed in 1942 and 1944 is compared, Winnipeg experienced a much greater rate of change than eastern cities (Table 3.1). Though data for Calgary and Edmonton are incomplete, the provincial data for Alberta compared to Ontario and Quebec suggests that the two cities experienced substantial increase.¹²⁴ These statistics do not include women who had since travelled east for war work.

The increase in women and mothers leaving home for paid labour must have concerned western social agencies that had never dealt with so many "motherless" families. It is beyond the scope of this study to determine if social workers in Toronto were better equipped than Winnipeg social workers to deal with challenges expected during the wartime emergency. Yet, eastern agencies would certainly have had more experience in dealing with issues that confronted an established industrial urban population. It is likely that social work professionals in Winnipeg and other prairie cities were alarmed and overwhelmed by the rapid transformation many homes faced when the

¹²³ Jean, 403.

¹²⁴ Figures for employment of married women are not available, but it can be assumed that they experienced a corresponding increase in employment.

mother divided her time between home and the workplace. If so, it is not surprising that they would have adopted a conservative posture to a plan that threatened to disrupt what family stability remained.

Finally, patriarchal concern about parents and families had a significant impact on the decision. When Dr. Blatz visited Winnipeg in the spring of 1944 to address Normal School students, he reminded the audience that “nursery schools should not be operated for the purpose of keeping children off the streets or so that mothers may work.”¹²⁵ There was much suspicion about parents’ motives for favouring government-sponsored nurseries and day care. While the state and professionals may have agreed that institutionalised care of children was superior to care in private homes, authorities believed that any benefit to the family would be lost if the day care facilities were used simply as a dumping ground for children.

One other factor came into play that compromised any support for the Day Nursery Agreement. Blatz’s reference to unattended children came at a time when Winnipeg was gripped by fears of unruly, and in one extreme case, murderous delinquents. The rising spectre of juvenile delinquency may have given the Manitoba government and the Winnipeg Council of Social Agencies reason to pause in their consideration of the establishment a day care program. It would have seemed unreasonable to spend government funds on facilities that would entice even more mothers to leave the home and let their unsupervised children become delinquents.

¹²⁵ “Objective of Nursery Schools Explained by Dr. W. E. Blatz,” Winnipeg Free Press, 6 April 1944, 7.

CHAPTER 4

WORKING MOTHERS AND DELINQUENCY

During the war anxieties about the future focused on the vulnerability of children and adolescents. In particular, worries about youth's susceptibility to delinquency grew along side fear that parental absence and neglect during the war would have a detrimental effect on the future of the country. In the 1940s, then, a "moral panic" described by Mary Louise Adams as an official reaction that is out of proportion to the actual threat beset Canada.¹ Many Winnipeg citizens shared this "moral panic" over adolescent delinquency during the Second World War.

The perception that youth were out of control elicited a variety of responses from city officials, private agencies, and the media. These responses were not entirely conservative and retributive responses to delinquency. Keshen maintains, in the face of what was perceived to be a growing national crisis, there was a proclivity to seek out reasons for the increase and to develop modern responses informed by the growing body of social science research.² Civic authorities in Winnipeg also sought modern responses when they considered the range of factors that could set off a surge in youth crime. Among these factors, but not alone, were concerns that mothers away from work would be unable to exert adequate supervision over their children. Like many Canadians, they were eager to have women return to domestic life and assume their traditional roles and

¹ Adams, 56.

² Keshen, 365.

thus re-establish control over adolescent behaviour.³ The panic over juvenile delinquency, like the debates surrounding day nurseries, not only acknowledged the changes to family life occasioned by the war, but also expressed fears about their longer lasting effects, perhaps extending into the post-war era. Unlike the day nursery issue, however, a response to juvenile delinquency did figure into concerns for post-war reconstruction.

Primary evidence suggests that the Council of Social Agencies of Greater Winnipeg employed contemporary techniques of modern social science to quell juvenile delinquency before it became a large problem. In a survey conducted by the Council on child labour practices in Winnipeg, a perceived link was made between working youth and delinquent behaviour, resulting in a change in child labour laws. The City also made an attempt to prevent venereal disease among teenagers as conventional thinking identified the contraction of sexual disease by youth as a form of delinquency. If the opportunities to contract the scourge were eliminated, other delinquent activity could be prevented as well.

These preventive measures seemed of little consequence, though, when the public became alarmed by the tragic death of a Winnipeg juvenile hall guard at the hands of three youth in late 1943. The cases can be traced with articles from the Free Press and Tribune to show that the murder crystallized latent concern about juvenile problems in Winnipeg, and sparked an outcry for action against lawless youth.⁴

³ Ibid.

⁴ The author has been denied access to court documents that pertain to the Pearse murder.

A committee of Winnipeg Council of Social Agencies investigated delinquent activity in early 1944 in response to the apparent crisis. The City of Winnipeg gave the Council a mandate to determine the cause, prevention and cure of juvenile delinquency in the city. A variety of professionals filled sub-committees to examine different aspects of the issue, many of which borrowed heavily from the articles of an American social work journal, Survey Mid-Monthly.

The Council's report proved to be consistent with the traditional and patriarchal attitudes that were prevalent in all aspects of Winnipeg society. The study argued that a variety of conditions led to juvenile delinquency, but the family life of youth was considered paramount. The increased numbers of mothers working away from home in wartime received particular scrutiny, and despite the Council's attempt to approach the delinquency issue with modern, objective methodology, conservative and traditional interpretation persisted. While a rise in delinquency was not proven in the early 1940s, perception was reality in the maelstrom of war. State and society placed a large measure of responsibility for the perceived rise in delinquency on parents and a large measure of blame on harried wartime mothers. As Keshen concludes, "it appears that social attitudes about the proper role for mothers shaped conclusions as to the causes of and the best solutions for wartime delinquency."⁵ While these working mothers were not completely used as scapegoats the traditional assumption that home-rearing could best offer children stability gave authorities in Winnipeg one more compelling reason to deny Winnipeg mothers access to government funded day care. The commitment to modern methods of

⁵ Ibid., 372.

social work as it pertained to juvenile delinquency fell short when the Council of Social Agencies could not fully relinquish ideals of family.

The issue of wartime delinquency did indeed attract attention in Canada. Jeffrey Keshen found that Canadians were aware of the utter destruction of family life that led to bands of British youth roaming the streets and looting bombed out shops in London. Canadians read American journalistic reports of aberrant behaviour of youths left unsupervised by working parents. By 1943 Canadians concluded that the war was having the same consequences on their own youth. Juvenile arrests rose nationwide, with the highest rates concentrated in cities with war industry. Keshen suggests that the sense of crisis was heightened by sensationalistic headlines that referred to the likes of "child burglars." Press accounts of delinquency in Canada increased by approximately 125 per cent.⁶

A spike in recorded juvenile convictions did occur nationally, and also in Manitoba, when wartime offence levels were compared to the late Depression years. Owen Carrigan noted that in 1936 Manitoba recorded 324 juvenile offences and 602 in 1942. However, he qualifies the statistics by suggesting that police were more apt to settle problems informally rather than lay charges during the hard times of the 1930s. Police were less conciliatory during the war years, hoping to keep order when family life was greatly disrupted with mothers taking wartime industry jobs, and when "the influences of fathers and older brothers were removed by military service."⁷ Augustine Brannigan agrees that policing patterns changed during the war. Since conscription had

⁶ Ibid., 365.

⁷ Carrigan, 113.

eliminated many potential male offenders, it forced police “to expand to a market previously underserved when the preferred ‘clientele’ becomes unavailable.”⁸ With so much social dislocation, it seemed inevitable that offence levels would continue to climb upwards. Youth activities received more attention, and for a time police blotters reflected this increase in scrutiny. Nonetheless, most provinces experienced a downward trend in offence rates after 1942.⁹ Manitoba recorded 324 offences in 1945, the identical number reached in 1936.

The popular media in Canada, however, did not let facts get in the way of a good story. Newspapers and magazines convincingly perpetuated the belief that juvenile delinquency was on the rise during the war. Professional workers in the social service field, such as those at the Canadian Welfare Council, were more cautious. Canadian Welfare cited a 1940 survey in Toronto that indicated “that contrary to public belief, increased employment had not caused a marked increase in juvenile delinquency.”¹⁰ Even so, the article warned that both professional and lay social workers expected a rise similar to what had surfaced in England. Since Canada was “only on the backwash of war disruptions compared with England,”¹¹ Canada’s total juvenile offence rate had to be less.

⁸ Augustine Brannigan, “Mystification of the Innocents: Crime Comics and Delinquency in Canada, 1831-1949,” Criminal Justice History, Vol. VII, 1986, 126.

⁹ Brannigan presents an intriguing analysis of Canada’s juvenile delinquency statistics. After 1942 “there seems little support for the rhetoric over juvenile crime.” Brannigan refers to the increased police scrutiny that focused on youth, along with a disruption in the usual distribution in fertility that the end of the Great War and immigration created in the 1920s. The crest in offspring, he suggests, “contribute coincidentally to the later patterns of recorded crime and delinquency experienced circa World War II.” Simply, there were more youth around to get into trouble. *Ibid.*, 121-126.

¹⁰ William A. Turnbull, “War Affecting Delinquency?” Canadian Welfare, 17 no. 6, (December 1941), 17.

¹¹ *Ibid.*

Dark clouds were on the horizon, though. In 1941, the Big Brother Movement in Toronto reported that a slight increase in referrals of boys with absent fathers who needed more supervision. This was interpreted as a precursor to grave trouble. The Big Brother findings prompted the writer to suggest that "there are indications that the war's repercussions are causing tremors that will reach us. There are intimations of an increase in incorrigibility, always a warning sign of danger," and that "any marked relaxation of adult authority may well provide the impetus for a future avalanche of behavior problems."¹² By 1943 Canadian Welfare continued to warn its professional readership that war could only encourage youth to get into trouble. The Canadian journal cited its American counterpart, Survey Midmonthly, which mused that in the grip of war, the culture of a nation changed from prohibition to permissiveness of violence. With the adult world directed to destruction, adolescents would follow, albeit inappropriately. The writer feared long term consequences. "There is no guarantee that democracy will be preserved and fostered if we do not assure ourselves of a mentally sound and emotionally healthy adult of tomorrow who is the adolescent of today."¹³

Authorities in Winnipeg gave solicitous attention to this simmering national problem that only promised to grow. Initial discussion, though, focused on whether Winnipeg even had a juvenile delinquency problem. Since the fall of 1942 the members of the Winnipeg Council of Social Agencies disagreed on whether the city's delinquency levels had increased. The Director, Mr. A. V. Pigott, informed a meeting of the Council's Group Work Division that if juvenile delinquency was on the rise, they should

¹² Ibid., 18.

¹³ John Slawson, cited in "Adolescent Delinquency," Canadian Welfare 19, no. 2 (June 1943): 34.

alter their program to meet the urgent needs of youth. He personally believed that with more mothers working the city would see an upswing in delinquency rates. Other members were not as sure. The Council's secretary, Mrs. McQueen, related a conversation she had with Judge F. A. E. Hamilton of the Juvenile Court, who had suggested that juvenile delinquency was not on the rise. Mr. Pigott countered that the older boys who were most often in trouble were now in the forces, and any drop may have been the result of their absence. The issue became clouded when the Group Work Division meeting heard two members of the Division relate information that contradicted what Mrs. McQueen had received from the same judge. Judge Hamilton informed both these members that incidents that involved youth were on the rise, and one member noted that the judge had "intimated to him that juvenile delinquency was up seven percent and that girls especially were giving trouble."¹⁴

In the absence of consensus, city officials preferred to err on the side of caution. It seemed logical that with so many of mothers working and fathers away, supervision and guidance of youth would be neglected. In light of the NSS call for women and mothers to help ease the national wartime labour crisis, this situation seemed unlikely to change in the near future. K. O. Mackenzie, Director of Public Welfare for the City of Winnipeg, expressed concern that while most citizens had enjoyed a general improvement in income level in 1943, new social problems were tied to these new employment practices. In reference to the causes of juvenile delinquency, he first pointed to weakened family ties as a result of mothers in industry. He cautioned that high wages had lured youth into jobs that demanded long hours and late nights and led to truancy and

¹⁴ Meeting of the Group Work Division, October 28, 1942, PAM, P 642, file 13.

other forms of delinquency.¹⁵ Attention shifted to the marked increase of working children in Winnipeg.

As early as 1942, the Canadian Welfare Council worried about the impact of youth working. While a statistical relationship could not be drawn, both juvenile delinquency and child labour had increased during the war. The Council was certain that “the lack of judgement in spending and living habits of employed juveniles is frequently a factor in the growth of delinquent behavior.”¹⁶ In urban settings, most boys and girls who worked came from low-income groups. Their parents were thought to be prone to work for low wages because of limited skills, or because they suffered ill health and perhaps “softness after long periods of relief.”¹⁷ Some understanding was afforded to families in need, but the Council heaped disdain on “parents who are quite ready to push their children into employment in order to increase the family budget, even when such a course is not really necessary.”¹⁸

Winnipeg civic officials determined the extent of out-of-school employment in a January 1943 survey. The Child Health Services Board requested the Superintendent of Winnipeg Public Schools to direct principals to issue questionnaires to teachers, who would then gather information from their students. Names and ages of pupils employed,

¹⁵ Department of Health and Public Welfare Annual Report, 1943, City of Winnipeg Archives, Report No. 21, 201.

¹⁶ “Child Labour and the War,” Canadian Welfare 17, No. 8 (February 1942): 20.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 17.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 18.

the place and nature of employment, and hours per week were collected and analyzed by the School Board Offices. Separate studies were made for boys and girls.¹⁹

Table 4.1: Occupations of Boys Working 10 Hours or More per Week, 1943

<i>Occupation</i>	<i>Number</i>	<i>Percent</i>
Boys with paper routes	992	39.2
Delivery boys	668	26.4
Clerks in stores and offices	171	6.8
Freight handlers	82	3.2
Pin-boys in bowling alleys	81	3.2
Street sale of papers and magazines	43	1.7
Factory help	31	1.2
Theatre ushers	30	1.2
Garage helpers	23	0.9
In orchestras or bands	10	0.4
Miscellaneous	401	15.8
<i>Total</i>	2532	100%

Source: "Report of Out-of-School Employment," 2.

The survey of school boys reported 2,532 who worked at least ten hours a week out of school hours in a variety of occupations (Table 4.1). Approximately eighty per cent worked outdoors.²⁰ A special study focused on the 494 boys who were employed for more than fifteen hours a week (Table 4.2). Note was made that these lads attended school for 5.5 hours a day, or 27.5 hours per week, and when these hours were added to the time worked, the 494 boys were engaged from 43.5 to 70 hours a week. This total, the report offered, did not take into account any time for homework.²¹

¹⁹ "Report of Out-of-School Employment of Pupils of Winnipeg Public Schools as at January 1943," Child Health Services Board, City of Winnipeg, March 3, 1943, City of Winnipeg Archives, Committee on Health, 1860, 1.

²⁰ *Ibid.*

²¹ *Ibid.*, 2.

Table 4.2: Hours of Work by Age - Boys Employed More than 15 Hours per Week

<i>Age</i>	<i>Hours of Work</i>						<i>Total</i>
	<i>16-20</i>	<i>21-25</i>	<i>26-30</i>	<i>31-35</i>	<i>36-40</i>	<i>Over 40</i>	
Under 12	16	4	-	1	1	-	22
12 years	15	9	9	2	-	2	37
13 years	43	18	14	3	2	5	85
14 years	48	19	14	8	3	6	98
15 years	54	32	19	10	2	1	118
16 years	35	27	10	2	2	1	77
17 & over	23	19	10	3	1	1	57
Total	234	128	76	29	11	16	494

Source: "Report of Out-of-School Employment," 2.

Some extraordinary cases were highlighted after the survey results were compiled. One ten-year-old boy who clerked in a corner grocery 38 hours per week was paid in soft drinks and chocolate bars, and another similarly aged boy wrapped candy in a factory and sold Liberty Magazine on the street for a total of 19 hours a week. One boy of thirteen worked 52 hours a week as a handyman in a restaurant. On Fridays and Saturdays, his shift lasted until 3 a.m. Since his mother and father had separated, it was believed that the boy had to earn his own living at \$12.50 a week.²²

The report made several recommendations. It accepted that employment had some educational value, and if conducted outdoors, some benefit to health. However, long and late hours, coupled with heavy indoor work were seen as detrimental to health, especially if this led to "listlessness and sleepiness in school and retardation of educational progress."²³ With regard to age and hours of labour, it was thought that boys under fifteen should not work more than fifteen hours a week. Some types of work, such

²² Ibid, 3.

²³ Ibid., 4.

as freight-shed porters and pin-boys in bowling alleys, was considered too heavy for growing boys.²⁴ The report also suggested that a permit system be devised to regulate employment of boys out of school hours, and that certain conditions be met. These included assurance from the school principal that the educational progress of the boy would not be impaired by the work, and that a certificate be provided by the school physician to confirm the boy's good health.

The report also included information on the employment of girls. The survey recorded 621 girls working over ten hours per week in a variety of jobs (Table 4.3) and 64 girls who worked more than fifteen hours a week. The majority of these girls were employed in domestic and child-minding activities. One seventeen-year-old minded a baby 31 hours a week, which included 5 hours each school day. She was paid \$2.00 a week. She was considered very nervous and excitable, and had three failures on her last school report.²⁵

²⁴ The City of Winnipeg's Medical Health Officer sent a letter to the Committee on Health that the Health Officer had submitted a report to the Child Health Service recommending the closing of bowling alleys to conform with closing hours of billiard parlours. The Chief of Police had brought the matter of child employment to the Department of Health's attention, and the report revealed that boys were working excessive hours in bowling alleys. One seventeen-year-old worked 45 hours a week. The letter noted that the Child Welfare Act, Sect. 120, permitted a municipality to pass bylaws regulating and controlling and licensing children engaged as pin-boys in bowling alleys. M. S. Lougheed, Medical Health Officer, to the Chairman and Members, Committee on Health, March 15, 1943, City of Winnipeg Archives, Committee on Health, 1870.

²⁵ The report writer did not comment on the emotional state of boys, though it is likely that the nerves of most boys would be equally frayed with similar responsibilities. Report of Out-of-School Employment of Pupils, 7.

Table 4.3: Occupations of Girls Employed after School

<i>Occupation</i>	<i>Number of Girls</i>	<i>Percent of Total</i>
Minding children	325	52.3
Clerks	160	25.8
Domestic help	55	8.9
Theatre ushers	12	1.9
Delivery girls	11	1.8
Waitresses	8	1.3
Paper routes	4	0.6
Other	46	7.4
Total	621	100%

Source: "Employment of Out-of-School Employment," 6.

The report concluded that from the standpoint of numbers, the employment of girls out of school hours was not as serious as with boys. Still, the same considerations and recommendations were assumed to apply to the girls. The report also identified problems of special significance to the young female workers. Concern was raised over young girls of ten or eleven expected to mind children, especially at night. It was considered unsafe for girls to go home unescorted as late as twelve or one o'clock at night. Also, girls involved in domestic service were in need of more supervision. It was believed that some of these girls were being exploited, and were in need of some free time for study and recreation.²⁶

Significantly, the use of young girls for domestic work and minding children did not figure into the wider discussion about the need for day care. Concern did not extend beyond the impact on the schoolgirls, even though one half of the girls were employed in babysitting. Such employment would not have been necessary to that extent if

²⁶ Ibid., 8.

professional day care was readily available, but the report instead suggested guidelines for the number of hours and circumstances under which a child could work.

City Council passed a bylaw to regulate the employment of school children. Juveniles were now required to hold a permit, signed by a principal who had seen the youth's recent medical certificate that guaranteed good health. Adolescents who attended school could not work more than two hours on a school day or a total of fifteen hours a week during the school term.²⁷

The bylaw, as a component of social patriarchy, undoubtedly improved the lives of many youth that were lured into, or expected to work long and late hours. However, the survey documented only a few cases where visible problems resulted from adolescent labour. Some students' health and school performance issues were noted, but no comment was recorded that tied delinquency to the length or nature of work. This is understandable because few students would volunteer information to their teacher about trouble that they may have had with the law. The number of hours some youths worked, though, implies that they may have had little time and energy to get into trouble.

The problem of working youth seemingly dealt with, authorities and particularly the Council of Social Agencies, turned their attention to another vexing social concern. Cases of venereal disease were evident among Manitobans, with startling frequency among young girls. The Council included the transmission of sexual diseases among youth as a form of delinquency, and treated it as such.

Wayward girls were the main focus of a Council of Social Agencies meeting of the Social Protection Committee, Welfare Sub-Section. The committee's Chairman,

²⁷ Draft of a Bylaw of the City of Winnipeg to regulate the employment of juveniles, PAM, P 642, file 38.

Miss M. L. Moore, referred to some venereal disease case histories received from the Family Bureau, Children's Aid Society, Juvenile Court and the Child Welfare Department. Contraction of the disease came after liaisons that began in dance halls, theatres, and city cafes such as the Modern, the New Main, the Exchange, and the Shanghai. Miss Moore wondered how often the police visited these haunts if they were so well known to the Health Department.²⁸ The Committee clearly considered the girls' association with dance halls and clubs, let alone their sexual transgressions, as acts of delinquency, and believed that these "crimes" were not being dealt with early enough. Many girls had admitted, the committee heard, to having sexual intercourse as early as the age of thirteen. Apathy of parents was the main root of the problem, since it was "apparent that the parents knew of the delinquency and did nothing about it in many cases."²⁹

The Committee recommended that Social Agencies be diligent in questioning young women suffering from venereal diseases, in the hope that this information would uncover key factors that would help stem the spread of the disease. It was important to know the source of the infection to determine whether treatment was being received, and also in which café, hotel or rooming house the contact was made. Personal characteristics were also scrutinized, and the line of questioning made it evident that the Committee was looking for some common denominator that could be rooted out to rid the city of venereal disease. They wanted to know the living conditions, recreational outlets,

²⁸ Meeting of Social Protection Committee, Welfare Sub-Section, August 17, 1943, p. 1, PAM, P 642, file 38.

²⁹ Ibid.

and past employment of the infected. Were they previously delinquent or known to social agencies? What was the family background or nationality?

The Social Protection Committee's findings suggested that venereal disease among adolescents was rising rapidly, especially among girls, and concluded only formal measures could reduce infection. The Committee passed a Venereal Disease Report, which later included an amendment by the Board of Directors that the Committee, in turn, supported. The amendment equated the increase of the disease to "actual and potential sex delinquency," and that to limit this source of spread, "the hands of the Juvenile Court authorities be strengthened to enable them to deal more adequately with the situation."³⁰

The amendment offers some insight to the mood of the Council. Surely the prevention of a harmful disease was an important activity that deserved attention. However, parental influence or input was not included in any solution to the problem. If children were delinquent, only court intervention would make an impact, which signified that the state would have to supplant the control or authority of the weakened family. Finally, the moral and sexual attitudes of authorities and social welfare staff were revealed. By labeling infected girls delinquent, the practitioners of social services assumed that the female teens "were not just violating the expectations that were attached to their gender, they were also threatening notions of the adolescent as not yet sexually mature."³¹ Most of the youth workers shared society's view that these sexually active teenaged girls were not normal.

³⁰ Special Meeting of the Board of Directors of the Council of Social Agencies, October 25, 1943, PAM, P 642, file 23, 1.

³¹ Adams, 65-66.

Increased frequency of "deviant" activity signaled advancing decay of society. Anxiety over venereal disease, categorized as a form of juvenile delinquency, confirmed suspicion that these sexual transgressions were yet another symptom of general upheaval caused by war. Adams notes that "there is a striking continuity to public discourse about delinquency and to the way they connect to social fears about cultural change."³² By late 1943 in Winnipeg, preoccupation with and action on issues such as child labour and venereal disease among adolescent girls attempted to defuse a potentially volatile situation. The juvenile delinquency issue, however, exploded in the fall of that year.

On November 12 1943 Winnipeg Free Press readers were shocked by headlines that blared "Guard Slain in Juvenile Jailbreak." At 8 p.m. the previous evening, a 58 year-old guard, Edwin Pearse, died from an apparent head fracture, after being involved in a melee with three youths being held for various charges at the Vaughan Street detention home. The newspaper article described how the boys pounded the guard's head against the floor and, "after silencing the guard, the trio, attired in nightshirts, grabbed up their clothes and let themselves out of the jail with the keys they took from Mr. Pearse."³³ They made their way out the north exit, fled south behind the Legislative Buildings, and then east along the north shore of the Assiniboine River. Three hours later, the oldest, Leslie Young, seventeen, turned himself in to police. Lewis McNeil, fourteen, and George Janssens, fifteen, were arrested in St. Boniface by 10 a.m. next morning.³⁴

³² Ibid, 54.

³³ "Guard Slain in Juvenile Jailbreak," Winnipeg Free Press, November 12, 1943, 1.

³⁴ Young and McNeil at the time were waiting hearings on seven criminal charges each, stemming from separate crimes committed by gangs of juveniles and youths. Janssens had only a bicycle theft charge against him, and was awaiting trial. "Juvenile Murder Suspects are Named," Winnipeg Free Press, November 15, 1943, 1.

Coincidentally, the tragic news story shared that day's edition with a report on a Winnipeg Optimist Club lunch held at the Malborough Hotel a mere two hours after the last two youths' arrest. The guest speaker, from Los Angeles, T. F. Pierce, and president of Optimist International, offered what he believed were causes of delinquency. He cited lack of training and good example from busy parents to be main causes of juvenile delinquency. Although the Optimists were usually interested in the welfare of the under-privileged boy, Pierce offered that, "Today, the under-privileged boy is extinct; instead boys are over-privileged and have far too much money to spend."³⁵ These boys were neglected by tired, busy fathers involved in war industry and by mothers who were also in industry or "immersed in social work." He referred to an increase of 175,000 incidents of delinquency a month in the United States, and lamented that no agency or club was able to stem the wave of juvenile crime. He implored fellow Optimists to salvage any boy they could, since in his mind there was no such thing as a bad boy. Instead, he "charged that environment and background had everything to do with bringing boys to crime."³⁶

Mr. Pierce probably was not aware of the murder committed at the hands of three adolescent only blocks from where he gave his address. However, his comments were certainly considered by readers who would be trying to make sense of the same edition's stunning headlines. Pierce's supposition about the root of delinquency would provide plausible answers to what was becoming, for many Winnipeg residents, a serious and violent problem.

³⁵ "Delinquency Causes Listed," Winnipeg Free Press, November 12, 1943, 3.

³⁶ Ibid.

The Pearse murder generated a vigorous debate and inquiry into the nature of youth offences in Winnipeg. In particular, the relationship between quality parenting and delinquency became a primary focus of public discourse as the trial and circumstances of the murder unfolded.

Formal inquiry began early in the New Year. Alderman Jacob Penner presented a motion that urged Mayor Garnet Coulter to call a conference of all interested parties to deal with "the wide spread of juvenile delinquency now sweeping the country."³⁷ Penner felt it was imperative that school boards, health centres, councils and other civic bodies gain awareness of the crisis. The Director of the Council of Social Agencies, Pigott, anticipated that the City Council and the Young Men's Section of the Board of Trade would request a study of juvenile delinquency in Winnipeg. The Council of Social Agencies passed a motion to "set up a committee to look into the whole problem of the scope of Juvenile Delinquency, and report back to the Council."³⁸

The motion was not wasted. In lieu of a conference to explore juvenile delinquency, the City Council opted for the Council of Social Agencies to strike a committee to examine the issue. Several aldermen offered their opinion about delinquency at the council meeting. Jacob Penner attacked the influence of pulp magazines that often portrayed the criminal as the hero. Alderman Brotman suggested that the juvenile court was understaffed. Brotman was quickly chastised by Alderman H. B. Scott who declared that spending a bit of money to organize community clubs and recreation centres for children was the best way to cope with the situation. Alderman

³⁷ "Penner Urges Action on Juvenile Delinquency," Winnipeg Free Press, January 4, 1944, 8.

Lloyd C. Stinson cautioned that his recent interview with officials of the juvenile court revealed no increase in juvenile delinquency in Winnipeg since the war. Statistics did not impress Alderman M. J. Forkin, who feared that there was too much complacency about the situation. To make his point, Forkin played on the sensational when he reminded colleagues about the murder that had only very recently come at the hands of juveniles.³⁹

The Winnipeg Tribune was in favour of the delinquency committee initiative and a few weeks earlier, with the Capital Theatre, had sponsored a showing of the film *March in Time*. The film dealt with the question of juvenile delinquency, and had been the subject of an article in Life magazine. In an editorial, the Tribune recommended the film to its readership because of its timeliness. The editor observed, "Looking back over '43, Manitobans will note with some disquiet that the problems of Juvenile Delinquency are becoming acute again under wartime conditions."⁴⁰ Two weeks later, the editorial staff congratulated the City Council for its "excellent step forward by deciding to have a citywide study made of the cause and the cure, locally, of juvenile delinquency."⁴¹ In particular, the Tribune agreed with Alderman Forkin's declaration that, "when children of twelve have venereal disease, the problem is serious." The editorial admitted that while Winnipeg had fared better than other cities in wartime, there was no room for complacency about the facts.⁴² Satisfaction was expressed about the implementation of

³⁸ Meeting of the Board of Directors of the Council of Social Agencies, January 11, 1944, PAM, P 642, file 23, 2.

³⁹ "Juvenile Delinquency Problem is Aired," Winnipeg Free Press, January 18, 1944, 3.

⁴⁰ "Some Unfinished Business," Winnipeg Tribune, December 23, 1943, 6.

⁴¹ "Juvenile Delinquency: Facing The Facts," Winnipeg Tribune, January 19, 1944, 6.

⁴² Ibid.

the Council of Social Agencies' Protection Committee's recommendations on venereal disease by a blend of provincial government, health authorities, church, the armed forces and community action. The Tribune hoped that "the broader problem of juvenile delinquency will be handled with the same purposeful 'follow through' methods that are now being employed against venereal disease."⁴³

The Council of Social Agencies acted quickly on this ringing endorsement. By late January, a committee was called to discuss the juvenile delinquency study. The committee was comprised of a blend of interested parties. Delegates from churches, citizen groups and service organizations joined court, health, social agency and school representatives. The chairman, A. V. Pigott, asked whether a study should be undertaken, and if so, what should its scope be. Two alternatives seemed possible: to conduct an extensive and thorough survey with implementations to follow, or to prepare a short report and take immediate action where needed, enlarging the study later.⁴⁴

Upon discussion of the options, the nagging question of whether juvenile delinquency was on the increase or decrease was raised. Judge B. J. McKittrick of Juvenile Court indicated that the first step was to establish the facts and make them known to the public. Mr. P. Lowe of the Winnipeg Foundation concurred, but hoped the report would emphasize what should be done in the way of preventative work among young people generally.⁴⁵ Dr. Jackson of the Department of Health and Public Welfare noted that the Attorney General wanted the juvenile delinquency issue included in a general Welfare Study conducted by the provincial government. It was hoped that that

⁴³ Ibid.

⁴⁴ Meeting of the Committee to Study Juvenile Delinquency, January 26, 1944, PAM, P 642, file 26, 2.

study would identify facilities within the province that could diagnose and cure juvenile delinquency.

Discussion concluded with agreement that a small-scale study would be initiated, and expanded if necessary. The study would examine existing recreation facilities for youth in Winnipeg and would indicate what expansion was needed to prevent problems in the future. It was hoped that the report would result in interest and support for more recreation for youth.⁴⁶

To establish common ground on which to mediate the study, Pigott sent a memorandum reviewing fundamental principles upon which those who worked with children agreed. The underlying belief was that delinquents were made, not born. Causes were traced by psychiatrists and child care workers to insecurity in the child's environment and a lack of confidence. The child's family or society, and too much or too little parental control, rooted these feelings of rejection.⁴⁷

Mr. Pigott later reported to the Council's Board of Directors that the study would be called a study of "youth needs," rather than one on juvenile delinquency. The study would be patterned after the recently completed venereal disease study, with sub-committees responsible for specific portions of the inquiry. The sub-committees pertained to psychiatric clinic needs, current and potential recreation, church

⁴⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁷ No reactions to Pigott's principles have been found. However, the suggestion that doting parents could push a child to delinquency was likely harder for committee members to believe than the more readily held perception that parental neglect was a more common source of youth problems. If study members accepted that delinquents were the products of their environment, it was reasonable to assume that working mothers would attract more attention of committee delegates than overly involved parents would. "Memorandum Re Juvenile Delinquency Study," n.d., PAM, P 642, file 26, 1.

participation, the training of teachers and vocational guidance. It was assumed that committees could be added as needed.⁴⁸

Within a week, a new sub-committee was deemed necessary to determine the existing figures of delinquency and the level of recreation offered by the Parks Board, School Board and boys' clubs. The sub-committee heard from Judge Hamilton, who referred to cases of parental neglect. In his opinion, intervention did not occur soon enough. He suggested that the law should have more "teeth" so that potential delinquent in neglectful cases could be apprehended, or if necessary, be taken out of their homes. The judge also pointed to the possibility of tracing and apprehending parents for non-contribution to their children's upbringing by following up on the parents' Selective Service work permits.⁴⁹

The other sub-committees got to work by late February. The Sub-committee on Recreation was mandated to determine what existed and what was lacking in youth recreation in Winnipeg. It was also charged with recommending an adequate and effective program to curb juvenile delinquency in the city and evaluating existing facilities' ability to deliver such a program. The Sub-committee also wanted a clear picture of what teenagers could do in their spare time, and decided to gather information from the Guides, Scouts, Cadets, Y.M.C.A., Y.W.C.A., athletic associations and community clubs. Questionnaires and maps with census tract zones were to be used to allow correlation of the teenaged population with recreation facilities.

⁴⁸ Meeting of the Board of Directors of the Council of Social Agencies, February 8, 1944, PAM, P 642, file 23, 3.

⁴⁹ Juvenile Delinquency Committee on Existing Situation, February 16, 1944, PAM, P 642, file 26, 1.

Curiously, the Sub-committee anticipated that, as in previous surveys, the results of this inquiry would indicate a high rate of delinquency in areas where most recreation was available. If this indeed were found, the sub-committee would then examine the type of recreation available in that area.⁵⁰ The Sub-committee's attitudes towards youth are evident. First, they assumed that youth trouble would occur where youth congregated, no matter what opportunities were provided for them. Also, the Sub-committee believed some activities were more wholesome than others were and would be more effective in channeling youthful exuberance into constructive activity. The Sub-committee wished to convey to the public that recreation was valuable as one means of preventing juvenile delinquency, but it also wanted the statement to reflect what the committee felt was the best type of recreation needed.⁵¹ There was no sense inviting youth to facilities if it led to more instances of rowdy behaviour. Since much of the Sub-committee's information was solicited from traditional youth groups and organizations which they may have been involved in themselves as youths, the members likely regarded these conventional, structured activities as most suitable for idle youth. Their model of appropriate recreation may have captured little interest with youth that did not share the social and economic background of the committee. Nonetheless, the Sub-committee was not inclined to conclude pool halls and community dances would offer suitable recreation for idle juveniles.

Other sub-committees shared concerns about inadequate methods to cultivate proper young citizens, and offered what they considered to be suitable remedies. The

⁵⁰ Meeting of Juvenile Delinquency Sub-committee on Recreation, February 22, 1944, PAM, P 642, file 26, 1-2.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 1.

Sub-committee on Training of Teachers and Vocational Guidance discussed the role of school in preventing delinquency. Dr. J. C. Pincock, Chairman of the Winnipeg School Board, felt that the community should concern itself with a positive program for the physical, moral and mental development of young people, and the committee had to first decide what function the school played in such a program. The committee shared the average person's conception of the school's function: to teach the three R's. Problems, it was believed, resulted from parents who were merely "prepared to feed, lodge, and clothe their children and unload all the other responsibilities onto the school."⁵²

This Sub-committee acknowledged that were many factors contributed to the development of a young person so that he or she could assume a role in society. Home, church, school, community groups, press, radio and movies affected socialization. However, school occupied only one sixth of the child's time, and the committee heard that psychiatrists claimed that life patterns were set by the age of six. The committee understood that "if the church and home fail in their part, the school has to take care of things which would otherwise be missed."⁵³

The home was still considered vital in childhood development, and nothing could really take its place. Care had to be taken so that the education system did not weaken the home by taking away its responsibilities. At the same time, the school system felt it was their duty to "assist the home in assuming its responsibilities."⁵⁴ One suggestion was to open the schools after hours to serve as a community centre. Adults and young people

⁵² Juvenile Delinquency Sub-committee on Training of Teachers and Vocational Guidance, February 25, 1944, PAM, P 642, file 26, 1.

⁵³ Ibid.

⁵⁴ Ibid.

would be encouraged to come as families to take part in manual training programs, recreation and forums.

The committee also hoped to foster the home's commitment to its responsibilities through Home and School Clubs or Parent Teacher Organizations. In making these suggestions, it was feared that those in greatest need of this edifying guidance would not come to these meetings. This prompted a proposal that offered a more interventionist approach, where the school would go into the home by way of a Visiting Teacher Service. Intended to serve as a liaison between the home and school, the teacher would assume the job of a trained social worker, only in this case she would be able to understand the problems of the school as well as the home.⁵⁵

The belief that the home was wholly to blame for youth problems was not universal among the committee members. Mr. G. E. Parker wondered if the committee needed to reach further than the home, and examine the school curriculum for the root of youth dissent. In his opinion, "children did not like school, and there must be something basically wrong with the way we run our schools, --children are not free enough --there is too much regimentation."⁵⁶ The committee did not share Parker's opinion, and pointed to the school clinic conclusion that those children found more frustration with the home than with the school.⁵⁷

The Sub-committee on Church Participation directed the greatest amount of emphasis and attention to the virtue of a strong home life. The pejorative language used

⁵⁵ Ibid., 2.

⁵⁶ Ibid., 2-3.

⁵⁷ Ibid., 3.

in its report clearly held parents responsible for their children's delinquency. Like other sub-committees, they agreed that societal institutions such as school, Scouts and church groups could plant principles of good behaviour. However, the report noted that only the home could offer an opportunity for the "actual practice, the concrete behavior, which will influence his character more than abstract principles."⁵⁸ The Sub-committee saw the family as the secure and main place where a youth's character developed, and the church viewed the well-developed family as society's normal and fundamental unit.⁵⁹

The Sub-committee expressed concern that the valued family unit had weakened over the years. It identified the tendency of institutions, including the church's own youth groups, to replace the family in the influence of children. Broken homes through separation and divorce had become, in the minds of Sub-committee members, too common. The "craze for constant amusement" on the part of children and parents had taken children from their homes during leisure hours, and turned "houses largely into a dormitory for many children and youths."⁶⁰ Even parents who were involved with their children did not escape criticism, because they were suspected of being unable to bridge the gap between themselves and their teenagers, leaving "children who are spoiled or harshly repressed," and therefore more likely to be delinquent.⁶¹ The war may have frayed family ties, but it could not be held completely responsible if they snapped.

⁵⁸ "What Can the Church Do to Promote Stability in Family Life," Report by Church Sub-Committee, n.d., PAM, P 642, file 26, 1.

⁵⁹ Ibid.

⁶⁰ Ibid.

⁶¹ Ibid.

The broken or weak home was the Sub-committee's main target and it cited numerous surveys that linked dysfunctional family situations to delinquency. In Winnipeg, its evidence showed that if one were to rule out homes with "unfortunate features," only 7.6% came from suitable homes.⁶²

The Sub-committee used wide-sweeping criteria to classify a home with "unfortunate features". Poverty, crowding, unsanitary abodes, lack of parental control or neglect, excessive quarreling, alcoholism, obscenity, immorality, criminality and poor mental health of parents were obvious considerations. The list also included "mothers away working" as a feature of an unfavourable home⁶³ No attempt was made to qualify under what circumstances the absence of these working mothers would be most detrimental, so it seems that the Church Sub-committee saw mothers working for pay as an entirely negative development in family life.

The Sub-committee believed that strengthening the family was the key to reducing delinquency. In its recommendations to the church, it suggested using the pulpit, and even radio to promote the sacredness of the family. Also, the church could consider urging the Provincial Department of Public Health to establish family clinics, partially staffed by clergy, in "strategic locations" with higher incidents of delinquency. The church could also offer its cooperation to the social workers, truant officers and health nurses in the community. Finally, the Sub-committee determined that trained church workers should visit and intervene in homes. Like the Sub-Committee on Training of Teachers, the Church Sub-committee felt that only decisive, external action

⁶² Ibid, 2.

⁶³ Ibid.

could put degenerative households in order. Reminiscent of moral reformers at the turn of the twentieth century, trained clerical and lay church workers could only be of help "with wise guidance when they visit homes which may be possible breeding grounds of delinquency."⁶⁴ Interestingly, the otherwise high-handed and judgmental nature of this Sub-committee's report humbly concluded that their proposals might be recognized and judged to be inadequate by the larger committee that was dedicated to discerning juvenile needs. However, it hoped that by establishing a real connection between delinquency and the home, its recommendations would at least offer first steps along the road to solving such an extraordinarily hard problem.⁶⁵

All the sub-committees did their work while proceedings against the three youths believed responsible for the death of the detention guard, Mr. Pearse, moved through the courts. No doubt committee members were interested in the case's developments, and in the public reaction that ensued. Public information about the case surfaced for the first time since the arrests in early February 1944. Defense counsel appealed the transfer of the oldest youth , Leslie W. Young, from Juvenile Court to the City Police Court for the preliminary hearing on the charge of murder. Counsel argued that the juvenile court had no proper evidence to justify the transfer, and transfer could only be made if it was conclusively shown that it was good for the juvenile and that community opinion demanded the transfer.⁶⁶ The appeal was rejected. Juvenile court sentences had a five-year maximum and there was some consideration in this case for the death penalty. Crown counsel hinted at community opinion by stating that "the good of the juvenile was

⁶⁴ Ibid.

⁶⁵ Ibid.

capable of two meanings," and noted that although "many people thought all punishment should be avoided, others believed 'spoil the child if spared the rod'."⁶⁷ Denying Young considerations normally afforded juveniles sated public opinion and mood.

The preliminary hearing on March 13, 1944 attracted much public interest. The courtroom was packed as evidence was presented on the health of the detention guard. The court was told that Mr. Pearse, who suffered from high blood pressure and arterio-sclerosis, died from cerebral hemorrhage, quite possibly aggravated by the excitement from his attack by the three youths. Other inmates testified that all three boys had a role in the scuffle with the guard.⁶⁸ Two weeks later, the Police Court determined that there was sufficient evidence to charge all three boys with murder.

Juvenile delinquency continued to be an issue in Winnipeg through the spring and early summer of 1944. Along with the official work of the sub-committees devoted to this concern, citizens could read the graphic descriptions of forensic photos in the Pearse murder trial. The Free Press aptly chose the week of the preliminary trial to devote three consecutive editorials to the definition, potential causes and treatment of juvenile delinquency. The articles proved to be, for the most part, insightful and progressive. At times, though, contradictions could be found among them. While this discourse would have responsibly informed its readership, the inability to prescribe a definitive treatment to a murky problem did little to reassure Winnipeggers that the problem of juvenile delinquency would soon go away.

⁶⁶ "Young Appeal Hearing Starts," Winnipeg Free Press, February 2, 1944, 1.

⁶⁷ "Hamilton's Decision is Upheld by Dysart," Winnipeg Free Press, February 3, 1944, 1-2.

⁶⁸ "Spectators Throng Murder Hearing," Winnipeg Free Press, March 13, 1944, 1,4.

The first editorial article acknowledged the attention that had been drawn to the delinquency problem, and it was important for citizens to appraise and support the immediate and long-term plans that the experts were likely to offer after the juvenile delinquency committee concluded its investigations. Though no clear trend had yet been established, the Free Press suggested that delinquency be on the rise, as was always the case in times of stress and strain, both social and individual. On the rise or not, delinquency was a community problem. First, it endangered life and property of others, and second, "it is the community's business to care for the health and welfare of its citizens, and delinquency is a sign of the opposite."⁶⁹ Juvenile delinquency was reduced to an individual's maladjustment to authority, and this maladjustment resulted from an underlying motive of revenge or rebellion against authority. While delinquency would never disappear, sixty percent could be prevented or cured. The editor ended this first installment with a warning, "We shall defeat our own ends if we approach this problem in a spirit of moral indignation, or with fixed ideas as to causes."⁷⁰

The following day's edition offered a sweeping range of potential causes of delinquency. The author refuted the popular belief that children from poor backgrounds with negligent parents, and who perhaps attended movies instead of church, made up the ranks of the city's juvenile delinquents. As if to absolve government and society for economic disparity that may cause delinquency, the author pointed instead to personality factors as a more likely common denominator of young offenders. Delinquency was likened to a "physical allergy which is the result of a combination of circumstances

⁶⁹ "Juvenile Delinquency," Winnipeg Free Press, March 15, 1944, 13.

⁷⁰ Ibid.

coming together at the same time against an individual antipathy."⁷¹ In some cases, the removal of one or several "circumstances" might cure the child, and in more complex cases, "a special immunization against that especial antipathy may be the only method possible."⁷² In either scenario, exhaustive investigation was necessary to determine the approach that was most suitable.

The family was again considered integral to the positive development of youth. However, unlike the opinions of some, notably the Church Sub-committee, parents were not considered absolutely responsible for the behaviour of their children. The editorial did assert that delinquency was rooted in emotional difficulties arose from familial dissatisfactions, and failure of the relations between parent and child set the pattern for other future relationships. Still, parents were not wholly or directly responsible for delinquency. Under circumstances of gross neglect, cruelty, or absence of affection for the child, parents could be held accountable. Yet, where reasonable parental affection and material care was present, and difficulties with the youth still occurred, assistance was required. Even with the provision of a healthy environment, the parents in delinquency cases may not be equipped to deal with the youth's apparent "intra-psychic" issues.⁷³ Such an individual was at risk of committing "primary delinquency" offences, so-called because the crime occurred without the absence of a good environment. Early diagnosis and treatment by a psychiatrist were considered the only hope in these cases.

Attention then turned to the "milder cases" of delinquency, those that could be considered the product of a faulty environment. The author contradicted the earlier

⁷¹ "Youth Crime," Winnipeg Free Press, March 16, 1944, 13.

⁷² Ibid.

caution to the public of not over-simplifying the causes of delinquency by citing parts of the city where there were "distinct delinquent areas, characterized by poverty, alcoholism, immorality and adult criminality."⁷⁴ Social dislocation resulting from mass unemployment during depression, and the rigors of war, contributed to the breakdown of family ties, which naturally "provide[d] similar breeding grounds for juvenile delinquency."⁷⁵ Dysfunctional families did not offer an opportunity for the expression of aggressive and growing impulses of children that were buffered by tenderness and understanding in suitable homes. This ultimately left the child with a "searching for devious methods of aggrandizement or even the barest emotional gratification."⁷⁶

A defense of working mothers tempered this traditional indictment of parental failure.⁷⁷ Many readers would have concluded that with mothers absent from the home, there would be no immediate solution to the "milder cases" of delinquency that were believed to result from familial dislocation. The editorial clearly stated that there was no proven relationship between working mothers and the incidence of delinquency. The author found it curious that little public attention was given to the "legions" of mothers who worked as charwomen or in other menial tasks, but open alarm occurred when there was widespread employment of women. The public was chastised for misguided concern, as "we will allow mothers to stay in their home and do as they please with their

⁷³ Ibid.

⁷⁴ Ibid.

⁷⁵ Ibid.

⁷⁶ Ibid.

⁷⁷ The editorial did not openly explain that it was coming to the defense of mothers because they were doing their patriotic duty by working. Perhaps it was universally believed that mothers were working because their labour was needed, or perhaps the editor was aware that mothers were often working for economic reasons. Regardless, why mothers were working seemed not to be an issue for the Free Press.

children--perhaps they beat them unmercifully for all we know--but the minute they step out to work we say they should be back home looking after their children."⁷⁸ While not explicitly stated, some support for institutionalized day care is evident here, especially when the author suggested that "delinquency is accompanied more often by over-attachment to parents than by its opposite."⁷⁹

The final contribution to the editorial series dealt with prevention and treatment. The first step included the recognition that defects in the social system precipitated much of the delinquency, and this called for an improvement and extension of the relevant social welfare agencies, education system and recreational facilities. Training of workers in these fields was paramount. Second, the author identified groups of children most vulnerable to delinquency: children with mental handicaps, children living in congested areas, children of aliens and minority groups, and contrary to support given working mothers in the proceeding editorial, children of those who were employed. For these, and those prone to "intra-psychic" tendencies, the use of psychiatric principles was encouraged to diagnose and treat the inflicted. Finally, the Juvenile Court was to act as a clearinghouse for youth that were apprehended. Detention, with highly trained personnel, showed focus on treatment and re-education of its clientele. A prolonged system of follow-up was also suggested to diminish the possibility of recidivism.⁸⁰

⁷⁸ Ibid.

⁷⁹ Ibid.

⁸⁰ "Avenues of Treatment," Winnipeg Free Press, March 17, 1944, 11.

Ultimately, the Free Press stressed that existing resources needed immediate coordination "to deal with what may rightly be called an emergency situation."⁸¹ The editorials provided a fairly balanced analysis of the delinquency topic, and avoided identifying any one factor as a cause or offering a panacea for the problem. Citizens interested in the issue may have wondered if any of the suggestions outlined in the three day series would be included in the investigation and report of the Council of Social Agencies. Clear and objective public views on delinquency were difficult to achieve, as Winnipeg was again immersed in emotional and lurid details of murder as the trial of the three youths charged with the death of Mr. Pearse garnered the city's attention once more.

The trial gained increased notoriety when the unique circumstances of the case were published in a pulp detective magazine. Writers in this genre were widely known for their sensationalistic presentation of an active or past crime story. The April/May 1944 Canadian edition of Special Detective Cases printed a story by Phillip H. Godsell, entitled "Death Stalks at Night: An Amazing Saga of Juvenile Crime in Winnipeg."⁸² Now, the very type of magazine that had been criticized for inciting aberrant behavior among youths also stood to jeopardize the trial of three youths.⁸³ John L. Ross, who defended George Janssens, promised to raise vigorous objection to the pulp when his client's trial came up at the assizes. Ross believed, "Citizens who may be called on the

⁸¹ Ibid.

⁸² No copy of this article has been located. The National Library in Ottawa has some issues of the serial, but not the edition in question. Inquiries with private dealers who specialize in pulps have not been met with success.

⁸³ Joe Zuken, member of the Winnipeg School Board, introduced motion that a survey should be conducted on the out-of-school reading habits of school pupils. He referred to a teacher who indicated that in her school, out-of-school reading was largely confined to pulp magazines. "Welfare Work and Salaries Discussed By School Board," Winnipeg Free Press, May 17, 1944, 3.

jury will likely read that story, and form an opinion before the case comes up for trial."⁸⁴

A few weeks later, L. D. Morosnick, counsel for Leslie Young, tried to have his client's trial quashed when he asked for a motion to cite Godsell and the Toronto-based magazine for contempt. Morosnick declared that 1,900 copies of the magazine had been distributed in Winnipeg and that the Free Press had covered the story on April 25. Ross's and Morosnick's objections made no impact on the trial that followed a few weeks later, but the pulp story most likely sharpened interest. Under these circumstances, it would be difficult for the public to dismiss the notion that there was rampant juvenile delinquency in Winnipeg.

In the end, only one youth, Leslie Young, received a twenty-three month sentence for a lesser charge of manslaughter. It was determined that the fatal scuffle may have started with some agitation by the guard, Pearse, who entered the boy's dorm to quiet a minor disturbance. Blows were exchanged, though it appeared that a cerebral hemorrhage most likely contributed to Pearse's death. The trial's climax did not match the sensationalism that preceded the cases being heard. Yet, the conclusion of the trial of a tragic death, precipitated by the actions of Winnipeg youths, still did not diminish civic concern about juvenile delinquency.

The impression that parental neglect was largely responsible for delinquency remained. The suspicion persisted even when no concrete evidence linked indifferent parenting to juvenile crime. For instance, the parental situation and home conditions of the boys were not given much, if any, consideration in the very public trials of the three youths. Janssens' mother was the only parent called to the stand, where she informed the

⁸⁴ "Ross Plans Protest on Magazine Story," Winnipeg Free Press, April 24, 1944, 3.

court that the accused was the youngest of her seven children, and had never given them trouble. Janssens worked to support the family after his father had been injured in an accident. He had left home after a disagreement with the father, who had concerns about his son going out on evenings.⁸⁵

Wartime parenting, as it pertained to juvenile delinquency in Winnipeg, continued to receive attention and even direct criticism in the Free Press. A letter to the editor in early May 1944 referred to the paper's three part series. The correspondent commended the author of the articles, but felt the message fell short when delinquency continued to be looked upon as a "harmless indication of the natural physical changes common to those passing from youth to adult life." A solution the editorial overlooked, the letter writer continued, was the possibility of penalizing the parent when the child was brought before the juvenile court. Then, the parents "could be bound over to protect the culprit, where it can be shown plain duty has been neglected."⁸⁶

In a later issue, whether by design or by coincidence, an article covering a Canadian conference on social work, entitled "Mothers Who Work in Factories Rapped," appeared next to a story that reported Leslie Young's version of events at the Vaughan Street detention home.⁸⁷ Robert E. Mills, director of the Toronto Children's Aid society, and vice-president of the Canadian Welfare Council, charged that mothers of young children who spent their time working in war factories consequently neglected their home responsibilities. He stated, "War or no war, homemaking should have a high priority rating among essential occupations. It is difficult to visualize a satisfactory future if

⁸⁵ "Janssens" Winnipeg Free Press, May 10, 1944, 5.

⁸⁶ "Correspondent Airs Views on Juvenile Delinquency," Winnipeg Free Press, May, 6, 1944, 10.

children are to grow up without having had an adequate home life during their formative years."⁸⁸ Two other delegates at the conference tied working parents to the apparent increase in juvenile delinquency. G. Howard Young, superintendent of the Union Mission in Ottawa, and Eric Wood of Children's Aid society in Annapolis, concurred with Mr. Mills that proper parental conditions are essential, and both Young and Wood claimed that if parental conditions were proper, juvenile delinquency would decrease. Wood added, "One of the most destructive elements contributing to juvenile delinquency today was the fact that in so many homes both parents were working."⁸⁹

Later in the same week, a newspaper account of a Winnipeg School Board meeting recorded Mr. Beck's contention that mothers with children under sixteen were neglecting their homes when they took jobs. He suggested that all firms in Winnipeg be requested to fire all women in their employ with children under sixteen. His suggestion was opposed by other members who argued that mothers worked for either patriotic reasons or for economic reasons where the wife had to go out and earn enough to feed and clothe her children.⁹⁰ Evidently, the majority of the school board did not view working mothers as the root of the delinquency problem, since no motion resulted from Beck's arguments. However, as newspaper articles of the spring of 1944 indicate, the link between mothers working outside the home and delinquency had become a part of public discourse. Beck's comments must certainly have given voice to citizens with similar concerns.

⁸⁷ "Juvenile Gives Story of Hours in Prison," Winnipeg Free Press, May 15, 1944, 1.

⁸⁸ "Mothers Who Work in Factories Rapped," Winnipeg Free Press, May 15, 1944, 1.

⁸⁹ *Ibid*, 4.

⁹⁰ "Welfare Work and Salaries Discussed by School Board," Winnipeg Free Press, May 17, 1944, 3.

What connection between working mothers and youth crime did the committees examining delinquency on behalf of the Council of Social Agencies believe existed? It was quite likely that the members of the various committees had been influenced to some degree by American experiences and approaches to juvenile delinquency. During a meeting of the Council's Board of Directors, the secretary, Mrs. McQueen informed the meeting that the Council Office had received a notice that the March 1944 issue of a New York journal of social work, Survey Midmonthly, would be devoted entirely to juvenile delinquency. McQueen was instructed to purchase one hundred copies of that journal to be sold in the Council Office at twenty-five cents a copy.⁹¹

While it cannot be concluded with any certainty the degree to which the journal articles influenced the committee members who read them, the scope of topics and the conclusions found in the various articles of that issue are strikingly similar to the ideas evident in the various committee discussions of delinquency in Winnipeg. The three editorial articles,⁹² and the final report that would eventually be tabled by the Council, echoed many findings contained in Survey Midmonthly. However, it is most significant that the Council of Social Agencies did not follow some suggestions and recommendations the journal made, particularly in regards to provisions needed by working mothers and their families.

⁹¹ Meeting of the Board of Directors, Council of Social Agencies of Winnipeg, February 8, 1944, PAM, P 642, file 23, 3.

⁹² The author of the editorials on juvenile delinquency that appeared in March 1944 in the Free Press was known as "B. T." It is most likely that "B. T." was Beth Tomalin, who represented the Free Press on the committee called together by the Council of Social Agencies to study juvenile delinquency in Winnipeg. She, like other committee members, would have had access to the issue of Survey Midmonthly that the Council had recommended. Meeting of the Committee to Study Juvenile Delinquency, January 26, 1944, PAM, P 642, file 26, 1.

The American experience with delinquency patterned the Canadian situation in many ways. Survey Midmonthly acknowledged controversy over whether the war had increased youth offences, but the journal concluded, "It will help clear the ground for a vigorous, sustained and effective attack on the problem of delinquency if we stop arguing about how much it has increased."⁹³ Caution was also expressed that confusion over what to do about juvenile delinquency "stems from a too ready acceptance of superficial 'causes'."⁹⁴

Plans of action, often similar to those entertained in Winnipeg, were suggested. The journal encouraged those in charge of a community plan to prepare "delinquency spot maps" to show how much and what types of delinquency the area had, and what types of home delinquents came from. Once the facts had been gathered, the delinquents, or those with "pre-delinquent tendencies," would receive the diagnostic and treatment services they needed. Efficient law enforcement would then be relied upon to visit the dark corners of the community: the rooming houses, cheap dance halls, bars and grills, and unregulated movie houses.⁹⁵ Another article in the issue, penned by the famous Eliot Ness, suggested that instead of merely apprehending young delinquents as offenders, police should be trained to refer individual cases to the proper social agencies for guidance and care.⁹⁶

⁹³ Austin H. MacCormick, "The Challenge to All of Us," Survey Midmonthly, March 1944, Vol. 80, No. 3, 69.

⁹⁴ Sheldon Glueck and Eleanor Glueck, "What Do We Know About Delinquency," Survey Midmonthly, 80 no. 3 (March 1944) 91.

⁹⁵ MacCormack, 70-71.

⁹⁶ Eliot Ness, "New Role of the Police," Survey Midmonthly, March 1944, Vol. 80, No. 3, 77.

The journal also offered a profile of adults that should be prominent in the lives of children during wartime. The journal coined the term "adult delinquency" to describe grown-ups who had let down the children to whom they should have given guidance. To avoid being "delinquent," parents were encouraged to arm themselves with subscriptions of parenting magazines and attend parent discussion groups, since not all parents were blessed with a "sixth sense" for their children's needs.⁹⁷ This advice, reminiscent to the "scientific motherhood" campaigns that were prolific in Canada since World War One, was an attempt to popularize "scientific" knowledge of child behaviour in order to prevent juvenile delinquency just as the earlier education programs had attempted to lower infant mortality rates.

The special edition issue of Survey Midmonthly also commented directly on the inadequate or misguided parental supervision of children. It was determined that many of the youths involved in offences came from homes where both parents worked. In one case, a boy caught stealing had been away from home for three days. His mother worked the day shift, and his father worked the night shift, and each thought the other knew the child's whereabouts. One article offered that anyone who had watched a tired, nodding woman on a packed bus traveling from work at the end of the day could sense her fatigue, and could then easily believe that some mothers would be unable to care for and direct their children.⁹⁸

Survey Midmonthly offered a tangible solution to the inadequate care experienced by the children of these working mothers. It recommended that American federal

⁹⁷ Kathryn Close, "Four Grown-ups and a Child," Survey Midmonthly, March 1944, Vol. 80, No. 3, 79.

⁹⁸ Genevieve Gabower, "A Look at Ten Communities," Survey Midmonthly, 80 no. 3 (March 1944) 80.

participation in financing care for children of employed mothers should be put on a grant-in-aid basis to help support a broad range of services. These services would include information and advice for mothers, nursery schools and extended school programs, day care centres, and foster home care. The journal asserted that inadequate provision of these services for the children of working mothers was directly related to the increase in juvenile delinquency.⁹⁹

The chairman of the Council of Social Agencies, A. V. Pigott, offered a hint of the juvenile delinquency committee's findings during the Council's annual meeting. As previously noted, Pigott's understanding of the delinquency issue concurred in many areas with the contents of Survey Midmonthly. He, too, for instance, preferred not to waste time arguing whether delinquency was on the rise or not. Rather, he accepted that delinquents gave society concern, and needed study.¹⁰⁰ Pigott also stressed the importance of parents and home, but in contrast to Survey Midmonthly, he placed more emphasis on parental responsibility. The meeting was presented with statistics gathered by the Winnipeg School Board that revealed that twenty-seven percent of children from nine to nineteen years of age had fathers away from home. Six percent had fathers away, and at the same time had their mothers working. Over forty percent had both parents employed outside the home.¹⁰¹ Pigott assumed that this meant less supervision and guidance in homes, and that households had more money to spend. Pigott described a general feeling of unsettled excitement, especially among transient families. Adults were

⁹⁹ Katherine F. Lenroot, "Federal and State Action," Survey Midmonthly, 80 no. 3 (March 1944) 3.

¹⁰⁰ Annual Meeting of the Council of Social Agencies, Chairman's Remarks, June 19, 1944, PAM, P 643, file 1, p. 1.

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*, 2.

reported to be showing more anxiety, apprehension and tension, and youth in turn responded by being restless and, defiant and by exhibiting more negative behavior. Under these conditions, Pigott marveled that there had not been a larger increase in juvenile delinquency.¹⁰² To stem this tide, Pigott, like Survey Midmonthly, targeted "adult delinquency." The central assumption was that prevention was better than a cure. This prevention was considered best looked after by the home, but the school, church and service groups and agencies must be prepared to support the home.¹⁰³ This focus on prevention, though, did not include any consideration for both parents that worked outside the home and were raising families, the annual meeting heard. Unlike Survey Midmonthly, no mention was made of the provision of services and child care intended for the children of working mothers.

Pigott's omission of extended child care at the annual meeting was not an oversight. The Council of Social Agencies of Greater Winnipeg released their report, Youth Needs in Winnipeg: An Investigation into the Causes of Juvenile Delinquency, which offered greater details to the chairman's earlier comments. The report stated that there was no evidence that delinquency had reached alarming proportions in the city during the war years. Yet, it warned, "There is ample evidence to show that family life has been seriously disrupted by the war, a condition which in itself is likely to give rise to delinquent behaviour on the part of children of all ages."¹⁰⁴ The report outlined general principles of juvenile delinquency that did not deviate from the accepted understanding of

¹⁰² Ibid.

¹⁰³ Ibid., 3.

¹⁰⁴ Youth Needs in Winnipeg: An Investigation into the Causes of Juvenile Delinquency, Council of Social Agencies of Greater Winnipeg, n.d., Provincial Library of Manitoba, Rbc, HV, p. 5. This pamphlet has been misdated in the catalogue, which reads (193?). It was most likely released in 1944.

definitions, behaviours, cures, societal duties, treatments and prevention of delinquency for that time.¹⁰⁵ It did emphasize the importance of the influence of the home on the child, and the stress the home was experiencing in wartime. The report suggested that "[t]his state of affairs has its counterpart in the heavy case loads of social agencies, such as the Family Bureau and Children's Aid Societies."¹⁰⁶

The council borrowed the term "Adult Delinquency" to illustrate the need to bolster support for the family. The various sub-committees' findings and recommendations showed strong similarities to the special issue of Survey Midmonthly, where it was believed that the community and school could do much more to assist parents in fulfilling their obligations and responsibilities. Parents could be trained by a child guidance clinic or the Children's Aid Society to recognize symptoms of early delinquency behaviour. The school was charged with encouraging the development of Home and School and Parent Education Groups. As well, teachers were to be given specific training and the curriculum had to be tailored to the varied mental abilities, interests and aptitudes of youth.¹⁰⁷

The Church's portion of the report began with the statement that of all the volunteer groups interested in youth welfare, churches had been involved the longest. Figures were presented to substantiate the claim that the church was the most capable agency to prevent delinquency. In an area of the city where the total delinquency rate per 1,000 children, ages 6 to 16, was 23.7, two churches serving 562 of these children had a

¹⁰⁵ Ibid., 5-6.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid., 7.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid., 8-9.

delinquency rate of only 1.78 per 1,000.¹⁰⁸ A tangible church extension into the communities included opening church buildings as community centres to provide recreation, to be staffed with volunteers that had been given group work training by the likes of the School of Social Work.¹⁰⁹

The committee's report finished with a proposal for two new bodies. First, a Child Guidance Centre, where psychiatry, social work and pediatrics could work together to prevent delinquency and attack the pre-delinquent stage of the child's development, and where it could deal with the emotional problems of infancy, pre-school and school children.¹¹⁰ The second recommendation called for the establishment of a Central Recreation Commission, which the Council felt was "essential if delinquency is to be prevented and a constructive program for young people carried on in our city."¹¹¹

As comprehensive as the study was, the document omitted programs that would have benefited families where both parents worked outside the home. The report followed conventional understanding of youth crime concluding that it was quite likely that diminished parental supervision would lead to an increase in youth trouble. However, theorists elsewhere made it clear that improved and extended help, specifically the provision of nursery care, day care and after-school programming, would prevent many of the problems created by idle children who often found themselves alone. In light of the Council's and sub-committees' scrutiny and apparent indictment of neglect on

¹⁰⁸ This simple interpretation of the statistics ignores many other factors that may lead to lower delinquency rates among these church members. The figures could also suggest that families with greater structure and stability, which were believed to foster positive child development, are more apt to send their children to church. *Ibid.*, 12.

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, 12-14.

¹¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 17.

behalf of working parents, it was curious that the committee at large did not recommend solutions to the problem that had been suggested as suitable policy elsewhere. The report on youth needs in Winnipeg borrowed greatly from the American pattern of how to deal with juveniles with consistency, but the Council's recommendations deviated from the American approach when funding for programs such as nursery and child care was prescribed. The Council's report made no mention whatsoever of what was presented, particularly in the social work journal Survey Midmonthly, as a logical response to provide for the children of working mothers.

The Council of Social Agencies, like other authorities and decision-makers in Winnipeg, were not prepared to alter traditional attitudes and policies in dealing with family affairs. Patriarchal assumptions of the role of mothers precluded the idea that the state should provide alternative care for children, especially in a year when the public sought stability. High profile youth crimes and the moral panic promoted in public media created a reaction by the citizens of Winnipeg that was out of proportion with the actual threat it posed. As a result, Council was prepared to recommend public expenditure to refurbish existing and construct new facilities and organizations to battle juvenile crime. The Council was not prepared to fund facilities that would weaken the cradle of nationhood, the family. Ironically, in the Council's bid to examine the causes of delinquency and suggest modern methods to prevent and treat it, the Council's traditional patriarchal response to the issue chose to ignore the modern reality of working mothers. In the absence of state-subsidized care, many children would continue to find themselves left to their own devices as their fathers and mothers left the house to work.

¹¹¹ Ibid., 18.

CONCLUSION

The Second World War appeared to liberate women when they left households to enter factories and take up occupations that were usually considered impossible for women. Ruth Roach Pierson qualifies this assumption, though, by focusing on the patterns of gender ideology and government policy that set the limits of women's social existence. The tension between women's identities as wives, mothers and homemakers and as paid workers did not disappear during the wartime labour crisis. For instance, the reorganisation of household labour was not seriously dealt with, but often only broached in Winnipeg with whimsical newspaper photos of oil can wielding women attempting to replace men in a garage. Later in the war, a backlash against the expanded boundaries women enjoyed was evident, as fears over lost femininity crept into media depictions of women in non-traditional fields or occupations.¹ Winnipeg dailies and radio programming became a forum for discourse where readers' letters and journalists' articles and broadcasts either subtly or blatantly weighed the cost of having women and mothers absent from the home. It was rare to have an opinion other than one rooted in traditional and patriarchal ideal of family and home to surface.

The state made one tangible concession to working mothers when the federal government initiated the Dominion-Provincial Wartime Day Nursery Agreement. Jane Ursel questions the motives for such programs, citing it as an example of "social patriarchy" where the state replaces the male head of the household by gaining power and

¹ Pierson, 219-220.

authority over women.² The Day Nursery Agreement, though, was designed to be an emergency measure. The welfare state was not yet prepared to champion the right of women workers and gender equality. Winnipeg social leaders, such as officials from the Council of Social Agencies, were even less inclined to lessen the burden on working mothers, as it was decided that the Day Nursery Agreement was not feasible even though it was implemented in other cities with fewer working women.

While reasons were given for the decision to pass on the Agreement, they did not seem very compelling in the face of the great need for child care. This situation changed when a murder at the hands of three youth in Winnipeg contributed to the decision to deny mothers suitable care for their children, as the city experienced jitters over what was believed to be a rise in juvenile delinquency. Mary Louise Adams offers that a moral panic resulted in societies experiencing an anxiety over youth care or behaviour where reaction to a problem exceeded the actual danger the problem actually presented.³ If this moral panic had an effect on the Day Nursery Agreement decision, the decision-makers had to place blame on mothers for what appeared to be a collapse of a fragile war-worn society. While this blame may not have been clearly stated, Council of Social Agencies' documents and media reports suggests the validity of this assumption.

Women and mothers were in a situation where they could not win. They were expected to show their patriotism by working, but were to do so without flagging in their support for their fighting or working husband, and without neglecting their children and household. In Winnipeg, there would be no suitable help in caring for their children

² Ursel, 2.

³ Adams, 56.

when they worked, ironically because it was believed that children of working mothers would turn out rotten if not properly cared for.

The media recorded no real obvious voice in Winnipeg that supported women's concerns as they entered the workforce, plied for government sponsored day care, or were held up to scrutiny when delinquent children appeared to threaten civic stability. In central Canada, the public and press did not consider female labourers a novelty. The government viewed day nurseries for working mothers as a necessity, not a source of controversy. However, regional differences in acceptance to social patriarchy existed. Winnipeg's Council of Social Agencies was given the task of gathering information for the decision and would in time rule out its implementation. This same Council of Social Agencies also submitted a report on wartime juvenile delinquency that in part implicated working mothers for the rise in delinquency rates.

Women did not distinguish themselves in support of women's issues, either.⁴ While it was possible that newspapers chose not to print them, there were very few letters in Winnipeg newspapers that offered anything but patronizing sentiments about working women and mothers. Working women were silent as well, perhaps because the patriarchal traditions themselves were naturalized. Women accepted and perpetuated ideal notions of femininity and the importance of the male breadwinner that locked them into low wage gendered positions on the shop floor. Apart from the likes of school board member Dr. Sheps, female school trustees and members of the Council of Social Agencies did not waiver from the patriarchal assumptions held by most male members of

⁴ There was political response to women's working issue by the far left. Communist women emphasized women's unionization, equal pay, and women's right to a job after the war ended. Joan Sangster, Dreams of Equality: Women on the Canadian Left, 1920-1950, (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart), 1989, 191.

their respective elected or appointed bodies. All women would have had little reason to doubt that juvenile delinquency was linked to absent mothers. This reification meant that change in the status of women would come slowly, and any great advances that were hoped for when greater numbers of women entered the workplace was not quickly realised.

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