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FEMINIST PRACTICE IN ALBERTA IN THE 1980'S: A STUDY OF THE LOBBY FOR THE ALBERTA ADVISORY COUNCIL ON WOMEN'S ISSUES

BY

MONICA BLAIS

A thesis submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts.

DEPARTMENT OF SOCIOLOGY

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The undersigned certify that they have read, and recommend to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research for acceptance, a thesis entitled Feminist Practice in Alberta in the 1980's: A Study of the Lobby for the Alberta Advisory Council on Women's Issues here submitted by Monica Blais in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts in Sociology.

Susan McDaniel (Supervisor)

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Harvey Krahn

Linda Trimble

April 24, 1992

Abstract

In 1970 the Royal Commission on the Status of Women recommended the establishment of a Federal Status of Women Council. It also recommended that each province and territory set up a similar body. In 1986, sixteen years after this recommendation, the Alberta government created the Alberta Advisory Council on Women's Issues (AACWI).

This research will seek to explain how the Council came into being. First, feminists actively lobbied for the Council: the Alberta Status of Women Action Committee (ASWAC) in the 1970s and the Provincial Committee for Women's Affairs in the 1980s. Second, the research will show that although the Tory government categorically refused to consider establishing a council in the 1970s, over the years it gradually shifted its position.This shift in position can be attributed to several factors. In the first instance, the government's concession to establish the Council was due to some ten years of unrelenting political lobbying by feminists groups. The research will show how this lobbying occurred within the context of the broader feminist movement and what relevant observations can be extrapolated.

In the end, I will conclude that the Council was set up because feminists continued to agitate for it. Additionally, in light of unfavourable media coverage, and an impending election, the Tory government saw it as politically expedient to establish the Council.

Finally, this thesis makes some general observations about the Edmonton feminist movement in the 1980s, and ASWAC, in particular. I document a trend toward cultural feminism and a shift away from institutionalized politics.

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I wish to thank Carlyn Ching for her computer assistance. I would especially like to thank Sheila Dunphy and Malinda Smith for their encouragement and aid. In addition to these friends, I appreciated the support from: Lisa Bonato, Marie Carlson, Moira Hecker, Shelagh McAnally Kubish, Scott McLean and Sheryl Watt. Most importantly, I thank my sisters, Denise and JoAnn, who, by their example and solidarity helped me survive. Finally, I express my appreciation to Martin Émond, for being 'mon amour' through a difficult time.

Preface

Once one's eyes have been opened to feminist analyses of women's oppression, once one can no longer deny these analyses because years and years of daily experience confirm otherwise, it becomes impossible to shut out the clamour reverberating inside one's head. Politics, literature, film images, a doctor's appointment, a casual conversation - - these are rarely exempt from the scrutiny one calls her feminist consciousness. On numerous occasions throughout my studies, I have been struck by the brilliance of certain sociological inquiries. Yet, the clashes occurring between my feminist perspective and the sexism that often manifests within this discipline have contributed to the vociferous clatter in my mind.

In theory, sociology purports to be the scientific study of human societies; however, in practice, much of sociological inquiry has excluded or distorted the experiences of many (marginalized) people. Traditional sociological knowledge has been criticized for predominantly privileging one standpoint - - that of western, white, upper-middle class, heterosexual men (Stacey and Thorne, 1985:306).

In working toward correcting androcentric biases in academe, feminist sociologists have identified deficiencies in studies where women were: ignored; excluded from research but had the findings applied to them anyway; briefly mentioned in a descriptive manner but not incorporated into the analysis; included but treated in the "add women and stir" fashion; and/or subjected to unquestioned assumptions (see Eichler, 1985; Stacey and Thorne,1985; Smith,1979 and Walby, 1988).

By attending to women's experiences, feminist academics have examined topics that had previously been distorted and/or devalued and they have opened up new research areas (Stacey and Thorne, 1985:301-302). Some of these new research topics are the study of women's movements, gender politics, and political theory

from a feminist perspective. Political sociology has been a notable bastion of 'male-stream' thought. For example, Walby argues that at worst, it has regarded women as irrelevant to politics, this being illustrated by work such as Lipset's (1968) which designates certain societies as democratic even when women in them did not have the vote (1988:215). Furthermore, Stacey and Thorne's literature review shows that studies of social movements, stratification, politics and the law have virtually ignored women (1985:306). As well, Eichler's (1985) examination of Anglo-Canadian literature demonstrates the lack of focus on women's political activities. She discovered that, as recent as the 1970s, there existed only one major work on the women's suffrage movement.

One might suggest that the absence of research on women's organizing simply reflects the fact that they were/are relatively inactive. However, this assumption ignores both historical and global accounts of women's collective action. This viewpoint also obscures women's grass-root involvement in issues such as the environment, labour, peace, national struggles, native and minority rights, social programs and so on. It also neglects the various forms of organizing outside formal political institutions which women have undertaken in order to create social change. There is adequate evidence to debunk the myth that women have not been political. First, there exists a women's movement in almost every country. Within Canada there is an array of groups, ranging from the Raging Grannies to the National Action Committee on the Status of Women. Furthermore, as historians are unearthing more and more of women's writings and actions of the past centuries, we are gradually becoming aware that women's resistance is not a modern invention. Rather, as historians are piecing together a fragmented history, we are finding that the resistance and organizing of women have existed in many places, historical periods, and have taken on various forms. For example, in 1791, Olympe

de Gouges rewrote the Declaration of the Rights of Man and substituted the word "Woman" for "Man" wherever it occurred (Dumont, 1986).Moreover, we have also discovered that women's periodicals and bookstores are not inventions of the 1970s. Spender reports that in 1911, Britain had 21 feminist periodicals, a feminist bookshop, a women's press, and a women's bank run for and by women (1983:4). Likewise, in France, 35 feminist newspapers were produced between 1875 and 1944 (Duchen, 1986:3).

In "Gender Politics and Social Theory," Walby (1988:227) argues that "the importance and extent of feminism is grossly neglected in conventional accounts" of mainstream political sociology (1988:227). She then summarizes some of the research that supports the position that historically women have been active not only in feminist movements, but in various struggles:

> There is now widespread evidence of an earlier feminist wave in the middle of the seventeenth century in England (Rowbotham, 1972; Spender, 1983).[...] More recently there is the development of scholarship about feminists in the Renaissance, about women who raised the 'Woman Question' in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries (Kelly, 1984).
> Feminist movements have not been confined to Britain and the USA [...] During the Russian Revolution women played a leading role, not merely for workers' demands, but for feminist ones too. Likewise, women have played important roles in the French and Chinese Revolutions and many wars of national liberation, including those of Algeria and Nicaragua (Chafetz and Dworkin, 1986; Morgan, 1985; Rowbotham, 1972).

The intent of my thesis is to make a contribution to the sociological literature by examining feminist politics in Alberta in the 1980s.

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Chapter 1. Feminist Politics in Alberta in the 1980s

1.1 The Problem

If we were to compare provincial social policies in the 1980s, we would find that some governments have incorporated feminist demands more than others. We would also discover that Alberta has lagged behind many of the provinces in terms of implementing policies and programs for which feminists have lobbied. For example, in 1985 journalist Suzanne Zwarun compared the legislation of all the Canadian provinces and territories in the following six areas: equal pay, day care, family law, wife battering, parental leave and affirmative action. Alberta was never cited as an exemplary model on any of these issues. On the contrary, Zwarun singled out Alberta to illustrate the lack of progress; it was the province where a woman could still be fired for being pregnant.[1]

This situation led me to ask: what factors served to inhibit the adoption of feminist policy demands by the Alberta government? In contemplating this question I began by examining the feminist movement. Could the lack of feminist policies in the 1980s be, in part, a result of a movement that was relatively small, inactive and politically weak?

In the 1970s there was only a handful of feminist organizations in Alberta; however, by the 1980s there was over two hundred women's groups (Kulyk,

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[1] Vivian Wong was fired from her job because she was pregnant. In 1979 she complained to the Alberta Human Rights Commission. The case was referred to the Court of Queen's Bench for clarification: was pregnancy a form of sex discrimination? In June of 1983, the Court ruled that sex discrimination in employment does not include discrimination based on pregnancy (Webspinner, June 1983:4). In 1985, the Individual Rights Protection Act was amended to include protection against this form of discrimination. It was in this year that the Canadian Charter of Rights came into effect.

1984).[2] Moreover, the movement included more than these groups, for much of feminist organizing occurred outside of any formal structure (ibid). In addition, the movement in Alberta has been active (Mair, 1983). This became apparent to me in 1989 when I worked in the library of the Women's Program and Resource Centre (WPRC). Among other things, this centre houses newsletters, communiqués and unpublished materials from local women's groups. It was there, as I sifted through the collection, that I learned of the multitude of actions and projects undertaken by Alberta women in the 1980s (see chapter 3).

My research on the political strength of the movement revealed that feminist lobbyists encountered much difficulty in their interactions with the government. For example, in 1976 the Alberta Status of Women Action Committee (ASWAC) compiled a report entitled, Joint Initiatives: A Goal for Women and Government in Alberta. The Tories, claiming that ASWAC's proposals were unnecessary, dismissed this document outright (see chapter 2). ASWAC continued to lobby the government, but with little success (the Matrimonial Property Act was one exception). The following passage reflects the government's indifference to ASWAC's lobbying:

> The belief persisted that if enough evidence were gathered, enough statistics collected, enough well thought out, well written briefs were presented, bearing irrefutable evidence about the problems facing women in areas such as education, social services, employment, that the government - SURELY- would acknowledge the problems and work towards the solutions [...] The belief was in vain (ASWAC Newsletter, Vol.1(8), 1980).

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[2] Not all of these groups have/had a feminist orientation, but they are/were all concerned with the well-being of women.

In its early years, ASWAC's primary focus was to change legislation (Mitchell, 1986:3) by being "an effective lobby group for women in Alberta" (Baradoy, 1985:5). However, after 1979 there was a decline in lobbying and the emphasis of the organization shifted to public education.

In investigating this decline in lobbying, I was cautioned by one activist who asserted that:

> By even studying and picking out that relationship, 'the relationship of women's organizations and government,' with that comes an assumption of a value system and of reality. That is, the only arena within which we can struggle for change is within that relationship. It doesn't question, at all, what other ways there are of doing it. It assumes that without lobbying, nothing would happen (Int. H).

In other words, to focus solely on women's lobbying amounts to a serious omission - - it would exclude from consideration the important ways women are organizing outside of formal political structures and how these influence social change. There are a variety of means used to work toward personal and social change, such as: academe, feminist psychology, unobtrusive mobilization within institutions,[3] literature and the arts, spirituality and healing[4] and the politics of everyday resistance.

In Ryan's (1986) study of the contemporary feminist movement in the United States she found that feminist practice in the latter years (defined as 1975 to 1986), differed from that in the 1960s. In general, practice is thought of as following from ideology. However, Ryan's research on the latter period showed a

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[3] See Mary Fainsod Katzenstein (1990),"Feminism Within American Institutions: Unobtrusive Mobilization in the 1980s," Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society,16(1).

[4] See Diane Mariechild (1988), Mother Wit: A Guide to Healing and Psychic Development, California: The Crossing Press.

weakening in the link between ideology and practice - - one does not necessarily follow from the other. Her findings suggest that:

> In the current period, the various "types" of feminism have blended into a related ideology, each borrowing from the other. Out of the generalized ideology there are two "ideal types" of practice: political activism and expressive/interactive activism (1986:146-147).

Political activism takes place in the political and public arenas, whereas expressive activism is situated, most often, in the personal and symbolic realm. The strategy of the former is to empower women through reforms and structural change. The latter is geared toward achieving power within the person (a changed self-image, for example). For expressive activists, "women must begin on the personal level to rid themselves of internalized oppression" (Ryan, 1986:156).

Like Ryan, Pat Rasmussen, the current Director of the WPRC, also observed a change in the women's movement in the 1980s. In Alberta, according to Rasmussen, the emphasis shifted away from lobbying and the structural analysis of women's oppression to a focus on personal development. She stated that this change occurred around 1983. This year was also designated as a turning point for the movement by one ASWAC member. Respondent D recalled that in 1983, she witnessed the emergence of cultural feminism and "goddess stuff" in ASWAC and remarked that "the work became the feminist analysis but the analysis wasn't translated into political action." Cultural feminism, as used by this respondent, refers to feminist practice which is more concerned with changing lifestyles and modes of behavior than influencing political institutions.

In addition to the rise in cultural feminism in ASWAC, in the early 1980s, there was a growing preoccupation with feminist process. Women began to examine how they reproduced hierarchical "power over" relations within their own

organization. Consequently, ASWAC ceased using the Robert's Rules of Order, it abolished executive positions and moved toward a consensus model of decision-making. This internal restructuring and experimentation, did not occur without controversy, and furthermore, it proved to be very time consuming (Mitchell, 1986:18; Int. D).

Because Alberta feminists were concentrating their efforts in areas other than influencing government legislation, this may help explain why there was a lack of feminist policy positions in Alberta's legislation. Although this explanation provides some insight, it is not adequate. First, cultural feminism is not a phenomenon peculiar to Alberta. Second, the organizational problems and growing preoccupation with feminist process were not exclusive to Alberta. These two points aside, it still remains to be explained why the Alberta government could so easily dismiss the demands in Joint Initiatives.

In examining the political force of the women's movement it became evident that it was not sufficient to examine the movement in isolation. Rather, the examination of the social, political and economic environment of Alberta was required in order to understand what particular obstacles the women's movement confronted therein.

Each province's political, economic, and social environment creates a particular context in which gender politics are played out. For example, women in Québec are struggling on a different political and ideological terrain than women in Prince Edward Island. This is perhaps most evident in regard to the struggle for reproductive rights. After the Supreme Court decriminalized abortion in 1988, Antonyshyn, Lee and Merrill observed:

> In the aftermath of the ruling, especially as reactionary provincial governments moved to restrict public funding and access, it became clear that the struggle for full and equal access to free abortion would still have to be fought province by province (1988:145).

The way in which gender politics[5] unfold in a specific location depends on many factors. For example, the political, economic, social, and demographic environment, the nature of the political system (its constitution and institutions) and the political representation of women and their interests are factors which determine whether particular goals of the women's movement are addressed (Trimble, 1990:47). In a study of the contemporary feminist movements in the United States, Britain and Sweden, Gelb demonstrated that external factors help structure the character and success of a movement (1989:15).[6] Such factors include the political opportunity structure - - the significance of parties, pressure groups, the bureaucracy, the nature of state power and the role of the judiciary. In Canada, feminist fortunes have risen and fallen with different provincial governments. For instance:

> The New Democratic Party has committed far more state resources to feminist-sponsored work during its one term of office in British Columbia, its longer term in Saskatchewan and its [...] mandate in Manitoba, than have the Conservatives or Liberals in their much lengthier administrations. The early days of the Partis Québécois in

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[5] I use Sylvia Walby's definition of gender politics which states that "gender politics should be defined not in terms of the gender of the actors (the politics that women do), but rather in terms of the nature of the transformations in gender relations that these political practices seek to achieve. Feminist politics usually call forth resistance from those whose interests are challenged, and these patriarchal political practices are part of gender politics too" (1988:21).

[6] The "success" of a feminist movement can be defined in a variety of ways. For example, "success may refer to legitimization of a group's goals, change in individual or group consciousness, and/or change in public policy outcomes involving redistribution of social goals and changes in power relations (Jenkins, 1983:544 quoted in Gelb, 1989:180). In this instance, I am referring to policy outcomes.

> Québec in 1976 also produced some heady times for feminists (Hamilton and Barrett, 1987:6).[7]

The examination of the Alberta political context clarifies why feminists have had difficulty in influencing the provincial government. In the early twentieth century, Alberta's social and political climate was thought to be favorable toward promoting gender equality.[8] In the 1980s, the opposite was true. Alberta was the first province to have an organized anti-feminist group: the Alberta Federation of Women United for Families (AFWUF), which formed in 1981. At this time, one of its members had vowed to destroy ASWAC (Long, 1986). AFWUF still exists today and there is some evidence that it has support from some influential provincial politicians (Long, 1986). In addition to AFWUF, in recent years, the Reform Party of Canada has been actively promoting its conservative views in Alberta and gaining much popular support. One poll taken in 1990, suggested that if the Reform Party of Canada were to run in the next provincial election, it was possible that the Tories would not win even a single seat (Danylchuk, The Edmonton Journal, 20 December 1990).

Alberta experienced a booming economy between 1974 and 1983. The average year-to-year increase in the Gross Domestic Product of Alberta was 20%

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[7]During the 1983 and 1984 Progressive Conservative and Liberal leadership conventions Janine Brodie found that support for the extension of women's rights was significantly lower among the PC and Liberal delegates than among the general population (Trimble, 1990:77).

[8]Historian Susan Jackel describes this period in the following way:

> Liberal reformism blended with women's demonstrable social and economic indispensability and competence to sustain a belief among prairie women and men that relations between the sexes, deteriorating elsewhere, could be rescued and restored, a model for others to emulate. A string of much-publicized achievements over three decades, from women's uncontested admission to higher education to political and legal reforms - dower laws, prohibition, family and social welfare legislation, the Person Case - became part of the popular armoury of regional progressiveness (1987:1).

(Alberta Government, 1988:5). However, since this period, Alberta has experienced an economic downturn and, consequently, a decline in provincial revenues. In the face of the growing deficit, the government has implemented measures to cut spending. For instance, in 1987 the Tories removed birth control counselling from the Alberta Health Care Plan.

In addition to this pressure from the Right and the recession, the political opportunity structure has not been favorable for feminist lobbyists. The Alberta Progressive Conservative Party (PC) has been in power since 1971. Until 1986, the PC Party had always been voted in with an overwhelming majority. For instance, in 1982 it won 75 of the 79 seats. Given such dominance, where a party is virtually immune to electoral defeat, Stevenson argues that even "minimal concessions [are] unnecessary, and the politics of unequality" reign (1986:208).

The dominance of the PC Party has been explained in terms of the political culture[9] of Alberta, which is said to rest on two pillars (Dacks, 1986:187). The first pillar is the alienation Albertans have felt toward national political institutions. The second pillar is "the inclination of Albertans to relate to provincial politics in terms of the interest they have believed they share in a single dominant commodity, rather than in terms of social class or some other form of consciousness" (ibid). Thus, according to Dacks, these two orientations have reinforced one another to produce the Alberta consensus.

In contrast to Dacks, Stevenson (1986) finds such explanations based on cultural distinctiveness questionable, given that "migrants from other provinces or other countries account for almost half of the population" (p.206). Likewise,

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[9] Political culture is defined as "the pattern of fundamental ideas, of basic beliefs and values, by which a group of people interpret politics and decide how they will behave when faced with political choices" (Dacks, 1986:186).

"explanations based on class homogeneity have even more obviously been overtaken by events" (ibid). Moreover, Stevenson casts doubt on Dack's explanation by highlighting the fact that other provinces, such as British Columbia, which experienced "endemic levels of federal-provincial conflict" did not experience one-party dominance like Alberta (1986:206).

Whatever the explanation for this Tory stronghold, the dominance of this party hindered the feminist movement. Many of ASWAC's demands were not compatible with the dominant ideology and platform of the PC Party. One major difficulty was that ASWAC and other groups began from a position that women are unequal, whereas the government posited that gender equality already existed (see chapter 2).

In the 1986 election, somewhat unexpectedly, the apparent "historical political consensus" was broken. The New Democrats[10] increased their two seats to sixteen, and in 1989 they held onto sixteen. In 1982 the Liberals did not gain a single seat but, in 1986 they won four. In 1989, the Liberals then increased their representation to eight.[11] Currently, the PC's have 59 seats of the 83. Their share of the popular vote has shown the following decline: 62.28% in 1982, 51.40% in 1986 and 44.29% in 1989 (Brennan, 1989).

This decline in the Tories' popularity proved favorable for feminist lobbyists. After more than ten years of lobbying, three days before the announcement of the 1986 election, the Alberta government announced the establishment of the Alberta Advisory Council on Women's Issues (AACWI). In

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[10] The Alberta New Democrats originally were the Alberta New Democratic Party (NDP). However, this party now carries the name of the Alberta New Democrats (ND). Thus, throughout this thesis both forms of abbreviations occur.

[11] In 1982 the Liberals nominated 29 candidates for 79 seats. Twenty-eight lost their deposits and the party received 1.81% of the popular vote (Lightbody, 1986).

the same year the government also implemented the Maintenance Enforcement Program for which feminists had lobbied. Then, in 1989 the PC government produced the Alberta Plan for Action for Women, a nine page document outlining the government's forward-looking strategies for women.

However, in the late 1980s, focus on women's equality risked being overshadowed by the government's family agenda. In 1989 the government established the Premier's Council in Support of Alberta Families and enacted a statutory holiday, "Family Day," beginning in 1990. In February of 1990, the government also sponsored a conference on the family. These measures in themselves are not anti-feminist, but the vision of certain Ministers of the Legislature (MLAs) have caused concern amongst some feminists. For instance, MLA Stockwell Day, who currently heads the family council, perceives the traditional stay-at-home mother as the most desirable arrangement for the family.

I began this chapter by posing a general question: what factors served to inhibit the adoption of feminist policy claims by the government? In pursuing this question, three important elements emerged. First, in order to understand why certain policies were not incorporated by the Alberta government, it is not sufficient to look at the women's movement in isolation. Rather, an examination of the women's movement within its social, political and economic context is required. Second, one must also consider why the government incorporated the feminist claims that it did. Why for instance, did it set up the AACWI and the Maintenance Enforcement Program in 1986? Why did it put in place the Widow's Pension Program in 1983? Third, if we were to ignore the rise in cultural feminism this would present a distorted account of the local movement. (It appears that the local

feminist movement's solidarity is based more on cultural and informal networks than on a set of lobbying groups vying for resources).

Taking into consideration these three points, as well as the necessity of defining a project that can be researched in the scope of a Master's thesis, I have narrowed my focus to two issues. In chapter two I investigate the lobby for the AACWI. This lobby, which lasted more than ten years, provides a good example for determining what factors served to block or enhance the incorporation of a feminist demand by the government. Moreover, the lobby is an ideal topic for investigation because the official discourse on the Council illuminates how the government ideologically expressed gender equality issues. The study of this discourse is important because, as stated above, the political environment, which includes ideology, influences whether a policy demand will be adopted.

Ideally, when studying a lobby for the implementation of a policy several factors should be included. For example, Trimble cites four aspects of policy that influence the acceptance or rejection of policy goals:

> the breadth of the policy;
> the degree of change being sought;
> the degree of visibility and degree of controversy associated with the policy;
> and whether the policy seeks gender role equity or role change (1990:80).

Although I have not undertaken an in-depth examination of these aspects, I do not see this as a serious problem because the Council was not a radical demand; eight of the other provinces had established councils prior to Alberta.

In order to understand all the conditions of how policy demands become incorporated into legislation, we would need to examine the internal processes of the government and related factors. The influence of the Priorities Committee, the

Cabinet Committees, the Cabinet members, party convention resolutions, input from senior department officials, consultants and advisory boards ideally would need to be considered. In order to undertake a manageable thesis topic, I have chosen to exclude this from my study, which will, consequently only provide a partial account.

In chapter three, I explore the difficulties that the feminist movement in general, and ASWAC in particular, experienced in the 1980s. I have chosen to focus on ASWAC for three principle reasons. First, it is one of the oldest feminist organizations in Alberta. It began in 1975 and it still exists today. Second, it is the provincial organization which, at one time, included lobbying the provincial government amongst its primary goals. Third, by examining ASWAC, whose focus shifted from lobbying to public education, this will permit me to explore, albeit in a limited manner, the rise in cultural feminism.

The findings of my study suggest that if feminist positions came to be integrated into the government's policies, this was both as a result of feminist agitation and because, with some adaptation and deflection of aim, these feminist demands dovetailed with other objectives of the PC Party. Second, the findings also show a trend toward cultural feminism. That is, women are looking toward themselves and not the government as a principle motor of social change. In the remainder of chapter one, I will outline a theoretical framework, as well as, the aims and methodology of this study.

1.2 Theoretical Framework

> You can't count what you can't see, but you are required to 'see' or take note of what you can't count[12]

It is not easy to define the women's movement since it has a "shifting, amoeba-like character" and "it is, and has always been, politically, ideologically, and strategically diverse" (Adamson, Briskin and McPhail, 1988:7). Likewise, "much of the broad support for women's liberation has had no organizational identification at all" (ibid).[13] Feminism is not a unitary discourse nor practice, but it has as a common denominator a commitment to women coupled with an analysis that sexual inequality exists and must be eradicated. For this thesis I use the following definition: "Feminism is an emancipatory project. It aims to examine women's oppression, expose the dynamics of male domination and female subordination, and, guided by that analysis, fight for women's liberation" (Maroney,1987:1). In a broader sense, feminism, because it attempts to make connections between all forms of oppression, is also a movement that strives for the elimination of all forms of domination.

Normally sociological research begins with a literature review of existing theory and methodology. The major problem that I encountered was the paucity of literature on the contemporary women's movement in Alberta. For example, the only entry under Feminism-Alberta in the Rutherford Library is a work entitled, Do

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[12]Jill McCalla Vickers (1989)."Feminist Approached to Women in Politics" in Beyond The Vote, Linda Kealey and Joan Sangster (eds.), Toronto: University of Toronto Press.

[13] Like Adamson et al, Kulyk observed that in Alberta much of the important feminist work on women's issues has been done outside of any formal organizational structure (1984:4).

Liberated Women Drive Their Husbands to Drink?[14] A review of University of Alberta theses and dissertations shows that research inspired by feminism has tended to focus on issues (women in the labour force, for example), and not on the contemporary women's movement itself. There are two exceptions, both of which are MA theses: Vera Radio's "Community development, social movement and feminism" (1974) and Pamela Madsen's "Women's Liberation: Response to Subordinate Status "(1972). There were two other studies that provided some useful background information: Joan Wensel's MA thesis (1977), "The Alberta Women's Bureau: a community development approach," and an Honors paper by Ellen Long (1986), entitled "Traditionalist Women's Groups in the 1980s: A Case Study of the Alberta Federation of Women United for Families." The only sources that I could find on feminist organizing in Alberta in the 1980s, was an article by Christine Kulyk, "Alberta's Women: Organizing on Issues" and Julie Anne LeGras' (1984) Pushing the Limits. This latter work proved to be a valuable source because LeGras sketched out the difficulties that the women's movement was experiencing in Alberta and she recorded the different directions that feminists were exploring.

Looking beyond Alberta, I found that studies of feminist movements typically used theories of relative deprivation or resource mobilization. Relative deprivation theory postulates that a necessary precondition for collective action is that people perceive a gap between what they have and what they feel they should have in terms of comparing themselves with a reference group. The major weakness of relative deprivation theory is that it cannot account for the

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[14] W. Andrew Harrel (1985), Do Liberated Women Drive Their Husbands to Drink? The Impact of Masculine Orientation, Status Inconsistency, and Family Life Satisfaction on Male Liquor Consumption, Population Research Laboratory, University of Alberta.

normalization of feminist politics as part of the official discourse of the state (Maroney, 1988a). The topic I chose to investigate necessitates a theoretical framework that can explain why and under what conditions a specific feminist demand becomes politically salient. Thus, it requires a theory that takes into account the political and ideological terrain upon which women are struggling.

The second approach, resource mobilization, takes relative deprivation as a given and looks at a movement's ability to exploit a resource base. It posits that individuals and organizations act rationally to maximize scarce resources. One example of resource mobilization is Tilly 's (1978) framework which includes what are considered to be the main determinants of a group's mobilization: its organization, its interests and possible interactions with other contenders/alliances and the current opportunity/threat of those interactions and the group's subjection to repression. This model is useful in identifying important factors and their possible interactions which affect some forms of mobilization and successes or failures.

However, as Maroney (1988a) and Foss and Larkin (1986) argue, it remains to be proven that social movements proceed in a cost/benefit accounting fashion. Likewise, this approach cannot adequately theorize the diverse practices of the feminist movement in Alberta nor account for its character which is based more on cultural and informal networks than on formal organizations vying for resources (see chapter 3). Another weakness that Maroney has identified is that Tilly's model "emphasizes form over content which minimizes the role of ideological and cultural factors, a particular problem in relation to feminist struggles that sought ideological and cultural change" (1988a:9).

Given the phenomenon of women working outside of formalized politics in Alberta, I wanted to find a framework which could analyze the lobby for the

Council however, without necessarily rendering invisible those feminists who chose to work toward social change outside of formal political institutions. Gelb 's (1989) study on feminist movements within their respective political and cultural settings was useful.

Gelb's provides a framework which examines the feminist movements in Britain, United States and Sweden within their respective social, economic and political environment. She postulates that external factors help shape the character and success of a social movement. The environmental factors include such variables as political structures, the state of the economy and cultural traits (values and attitudes). The aspects of political structures that Gelb examines is ideology and the political opportunity structure - - the significance of parties, pressure groups, the bureaucracy, the nature of state power and the role of the judiciary (1989:15). Gelb argues that:

> Cultural differences, then, interact with political institutions and ideology to produce a climate in which opportunities for change are structured (p. 25).

Moreover, in her account of these interactions, Gelb contends that while external factors shape feminist movements, these movements, in turn, interact with the political opportunity structure within the overall environment which influences the success of feminist claims. Her major hypothesis then is:

> That such differences, in the respective "political opportunity structures" (that is, institutions, alignments, and ideology) have patterned the development, goals, and values of feminist activists in each nation. In turn, [...] movement structure and systematic differences have affected and constrained opportunities for movement impact within each nation (p.2).

Gelb's study suggests that the differences in culture and political institutions in the United States and Britain account for systematic differences in the character of the feminist movements in each of these countries. For example, according to Gelb, the British women's movement is predominantly composed of small, isolated and intellectually lively radical groups and is characterized by what she terms as "cultural" feminism. Gelb describes this current as "less political than it is personal" in that "it seeks to change life-styles and modes of behavior" (p.33). Gelb contends that Britain's radical feminism[15] is in part a product of this country's closed and conflictual system (p.177) as well as its "tradition of class-based ideology, socialism, and a strong organized left" (p. 18-19). In Britain, power is centralized, participation is limited and access to political institutions is closed. Thus, Gelb implies that this inaccessibility to power combined with the lack of any strong lobbying presence has resulted in feminists having little impact on public policy.

In contrast, the predominate mode of activism in the U.S. movement is lobbying (p.183). The decentralization of power, the greater access to channels of influence, and the relative lack of impact of left-wing ideology in the United States have led to a mass-based liberal/equal rights feminism (p.177). Consequently, the U.S. movement has a greater influence on public policy.

Certain elements of Gelb's research are problematic. For instance, Naomi Black finds Gelb's accounts of the women's movements unsatisfactory in that she "barely mention[s] the mainstream women's groups in Britain and Sweden, although they are the ones which have a continuing, long established involvement

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[15] Gelb does not necessarily use "radical" and "cultural" as synonymous terms. For example, she states that "[cultural feminism] may be animated by either socialist or radical feminism" (1989:23).

in the policy process" (1991:159). Likewise, in Gelb's discussion of the U.S. movement she does not include cultural feminism - - the presence of which Ryan (1986) documents in her study on the American women's movement. However, as Black points out, "This failing is not surprising, because available sources still depend on little more than personal memoirs" (1991:159).

The other difficulty with Gelb's model is that not all the variables are mutually exclusive and her "interactions" are not always clearly defined. That is, the actual interaction of variables are described empirically (in her case studies) but not conceptually. Consequently, some conceptual confusion results.

Despite these weaknesses, this model allows for forms of activism which do not engage formal political structures. On the other hand, by focusing on what Gelb deems as the predominant form in each country, the question remains can her framework be used to study and assess a range of forms that co-exist in the same country, example both cultural and liberal/ reformist feminism in the United States.

Overall, the positive aspect of this model is that it provides a way of thinking about women's activism without artificially compressing living, breathing social entities such as feminist movements into frameworks that map out their realities in an almost militaristic, strategic style.

In my research, I want to understand why, after ten years of lobbying, did the Alberta government finally accept to establish the AACWI. Therefore, for the purposes of this study, I have retained specific elements from Gelb's model that I see as crucial to understanding the lobby for this feminist claim.

I have chosen to examine the following elements of the political opportunity structure: pressure groups, significance of parties, ideology and the nature of state power. In the context of my study, the lobby groups are ASWAC

and the Provincial Committee for a Council on Women's Affairs. The significance of parties consists of examining the main political parties (Social Credit and the Tories in the 1970s, the New Democrats and the Tories in the 1980s). The composition of the parties in the Legislature, that is the number of seats each party holds, is a key element of the significance of parties. To a lesser degree, I also look at the women MLAs within the Legislature. Ideology, generally speaking, refers to how the Alberta government expressed gender equality issues in the face of a growing women's movement and the demographic changes in women's lives (increased female labour force participation rate and rising divorce rates, for example).

The final variable, the nature of state power, is somewhat more complex. First, Gelb does not explicitly define the state, nor does she provide a definition of state power. Rather, she qualifies the nature of state power through certain structural features: the degree of corporatism/political centralization and pluralism.[16] For example, under pluralism the character of state authority is dispersed whereas under corporatism it is centralized. Likewise, under pluralism the character of state access is open, but closed within corporatism. Gelb termed these features, corporatism and pluralism, as crucial variables. However, this conceptualization of state power is not analytically useful to my study given that I am looking at a provincial government being lobbied by two feminist organizations.

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[16] Gelb uses Schmitter's definition which "characterizes corporatism as interest representation in which constituent units are organized into a limited number of singular, noncompetitive hierarchically ordered and functionally differentiated categories, recognized or licensed by the state and granted a deliberate representational monopoly within their respective categories. Pluralism, in contrast, characterizes a society in which multiple, voluntary, competitive self determined groups have access to state power (1984 in Gelb, 1989:6-7).

Thus the question remained, how should I define the nature of state power, or more specifically, in the context of my study, the power of the Alberta government, as an important state institution. Because my research is an empirical investigation, my purpose here is not to attempt a theory of state power. Rather, I'm merely searching for a conceptual tool to guide me in my exploration of how the government responded to the lobby for the AACWI.

Alicia Schreader (1990) in "State Funded Women's Movement: A Case of Two Political Agendas" and Heather Jon Maroney (1988, 1988b) in her dissertation on the women's movement in Québec both use a reformulation of Gramsci's concept of hegemony. Without describing the details of each of these studies, I will extract from their works, the ideas on hegemony and feminist struggles that are useful for my purposes.

What is hegemony? Maroney states that it

> refers to the processes of generating the "'spontaneous' consent" of the governed to the rule of a particular social group (class) through the development and promotion of ideologies that act as a social cement. Both through the construction of a set of political alliances (bloc) and the promotion of hegemonic ideologies, the state (narrowly defined as government, administration and judiciary) is able to organize around itself a wider set of social forces, incorporating them into its own project (1988b:26).

Hegemony is not something static and it must be continously renegotiated. Schreader, in a clear and concise manner outlines the processes in the following manner:

> [...] the state's attempt to organize social consensus on any given issue is not a process to which all people passively submit. Many will organize to struggle against the state, and their struggles can potentially transform some features of the state and how it operates. Class struggles and women's struggles have historically shaped and been shaped by the state. Thus, the state does not simply, *do things*

> *to* the women's movement but rather, in the course of interaction both sides have been molded and transformed (1990:186).

Hegemony must also be constantly renegotiated because there are a multitude of social groups and interests in conflict with one another. Moreover, they too are not static. The final element that I wish to underline is the following:

> Because hegemony is not statically given but must be continually reproduced through ideological integration, one way for the integral state to respond to the emergence of a feminist movement is to attempt to appropriate both the issues and the moral authority of the feminist movement as its own, in part by putting its just self forward as adequately representing "what women want". However, its capacities to do so are limited by its own non-unitary character, the particular ideologies of the parties represented in the legislature, electoralist exigencies and its need to balance class contradictions, all concretely manifested in struggles by different interest groups over both policy formation and implementation (1988a:414).

This way of thinking about state power in terms of processes and interactions is more useful to my particular project than Gelb's notion of the nature of state power which is expressed in terms of structural features.

1.3 Aim of the Study

This study has two goals. The first objective is to provide a sociological account of an instance of feminist politics in Alberta. In doing so, I aim to contribute to the literature on feminist movements. The second objective is to document women's activism. I believe it is essential to record feminist activities so that women will have some written history to consult, guide and inspire them. Thus, this work is done in the spirit of informing feminist action. The passage below aptly summarizes the aims of my study:

> The relationship between our economic and political context and how our lives are difficult as women is an essential and exciting

> inquiry. Alberta is a particular context which has shaped in the past and continues to shape how we organize, what we organize around, and our failures and successes. Knowledge of how we as Alberta women organize, even what issues have been addressed, rests with individuals or active groups, in people's journals or in groups' documentation that sit in basements or attics. There are few forums for this kind of information. We feel that tapping this knowledge is essential to informed, vital and continued organizing in the 1980's (ASWAC, Women Organize Alberta Conference, 1981).

1.4 Methods of Research and Empirical Sources

The research strategy adopted here is a modified version of the methods employed by Heather Jon Maroney in her study of the Québec women's movement (1988a). Her work was inspired by Denzin's discussion of the "triangulation" among methods; that is, the use of more than one research method and data source (Maroney, 1988a:20). It is argued that the combining of research methods and data sources allows the investigation to draw on the special strengths of each and to run internal checks on data and interpretation.

The empirical data used in this thesis are primarily drawn from two separate sources, documentary research and interviews. To a lesser extent, direct observation has also been a source of data. I discuss each source below beginning with the least formal.

1.4.1 Observation

Long before I ever contemplated undertaking such a study as this one, I observed and participated in the Edmonton women's movement. Throughout this research, I have conducted informal interviews with several feminists. The knowledge generated from these processes, although needing to be confirmed, cannot simply be disqualified.

1.4.2 Interviews

In addition to the conversational interviews described above, semi-structured ones were conducted with selected key informants. These were organized in two stages. First, as I finished the documentary research of each organization, I spoke with at least one woman from that group. I contacted women who were involved in ASWAC and in the Provincial Committee for a Council on Women's Affairs, the two major organizations who lobbied for the Council. The individual women were chosen based on two criteria. I sought out women who were key organizers in the 1980s within these two groups and who had long term experience working in the local feminist movement. The exception to this latter criteria was one ASWAC Provinicial Coordinator who had only recently come in to feminism. I also interviewed one civil servant who has been involved in women's issues for the past several years. As well, I interviewed women from the New Democrats Women's Caucus. Because of the pro-feminist policies advanced by this party, I felt it would be useful for my general understanding of the political field, to be informed about how the Women's Caucus viewed the overall picture of gender politics in Alberta. Second, given signs of the ND networking with women's groups in 1986, I wanted to see if contact had been maintained (see chapter 3).I contacted two members of the ND Women's Caucus and they selected the other four women from this group to participate in my study.

I conducted eight individual interviews and one group interview with six members of the ND Women's Caucus. Each interview lasted between 75 minutes to two hours. In scheduling the interviews, I phoned each woman, briefly identified

myself and my project, and then asked for an appointment. At the interview I explained my project again and asked if the informant wanted to ask me anything about the study at this time. I also asked each woman if she would allow the interview to be tape-recorded. I stated that the interview would be kept anonymous and confidential. In order to maintain anonymity, I listed all informants in an appendix by an assigned letter (A, B, C,...) identified only by their organization. The only exception was the interview with the New Democrats Women's Critic, Marie Laing. In this study she has been identified.

In beginning this research, I foresaw one possible problem with maintaining anonymity. Some of the women were chosen through the snowballing technique. This means that the identity of one interviewee may be known by another. In order to avoid this problem, each time I requested a further contact I attempted to obtain at least three names.

1.4.3 Documentary Study

The most important evidential source for this study is documentary. As Maroney underscores, "historically, organizations' ideology and policy are condensed and preserved in documents" (1988:28). I read the documents, briefs and minutes from the Provincial Committee for a Council on Women's Affairs. In examining ASWAC, I selectively read its newsletter from 1980 to 1989, its briefs, two student papers on the history of ASWAC and I read through the files available in its Edmonton office. The Alberta Women's News Magazine and Webspinner, a feminist newspaper, were also read to obtain information about the local women's movement.

In studying the lobby for the Council in particular, and gender equality issues in general, I read the sections of the Alberta Hansard which pertained directly to the Council or women. As well, in order to examine how the government expressed gender political issues, I also read material from the Alberta Women's Secretariat, the Alberta Advisory Council on Women's Issues and various government pamphlets and brochures.

In order to situate gender politics as part of a wider political field, I read The Edmonton Journal for its presentation of gender issues, as well as for its reports/commentaries on the Alberta government and other social issues. In addition, ND election platforms, the ND Women's Caucus newsletters and various other ND documents were consulted. Finally, AFWUF newsletters, The Alberta Report and the Other Alberta Report, which represent particular ideological tendencies, were read.

In sum, I have incorporated three sources of data and methods which permit internal verification as well as providing different kinds of knowledge. Observation has given me basic cultural access necessary to understanding the milieu to be analyzed. Documentary analysis provides access to an historical record, unaffected by the changing perceptions of the participants. Interviews make available background and other information that is excluded from written records.

Chapter 2. The Lobby for the Establishment of an Alberta Advisory Council on the Status of Women

2.1 Introduction

In 1967, after growing demands from the women's movement, the federal government enacted the Royal Commission on the Status of Women in Canada.[17] Based on ten months of public hearings, the commissioners documented inequalities women faced and made 167 recommendations which were to "ensure for women equal opportunities with men in all aspects of Canadian society" (1970:387). In their foresight the commissioners recognized that in a rapidly changing society new issues arise which require action.[18] Moreover, the commissioners realized that there was a "need to keep a continuing watch" in order that women's rights and freedoms be respected (1970:387). Thus, in anticipation of future needs, the Commission recommended the establishment of a federal Status of Women Council which would analyze and advise on issues on an ongoing basis. It also recommended that each province and territory set up a similar body. In 1986, sixteen years after this recommendation had been made, the provincial government created the Alberta Advisory Council on Women's Issues (AACWI). At that time British Columbia was the only other province without a council.

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17 For an account of the lobbying efforts see Naomi Black (1988) "The Canadian Women's Movement: the Second Wave" in Changing Patterns: Women in Canada ,Toronto: McClelland and Stewart.

18 For example, violence against women was not mentioned in this report despite the fact that family was one of the Commission's areas of research.

The government's reluctance to establish a council cannot be attributed to citizen apathy, for Alberta women lobbied for one for more than ten years.[19] In the seventies the most extensive lobby was organized by the Alberta Status of Women Action Committee (ASWAC), a group which formed in 1975 to lobby for the improvement of the social and economic position of Alberta women. In 1976 ASWAC presented the government with a brief entitled Joint Initiatives: A Goal for Women and Government in Alberta. This report contained several proposals; one of which recommended the establishment of a council. ASWAC continued to uphold this recommendation until 1979. It was around this time that the problems associated with the federal Council and some of the provincial Councils, such as their lack of autonomy and insufficient funding, were made known.[20] Consequently, some ASWAC members agreed that they should concentrate on direct lobbying or finding alternative strategies.

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19 For example, in 1973 and 1976 Women of Unifarm submitted briefs to the PC Cabinet which recommended the formation of a status of women advisory council See Julie Anne LeGras (January 15-16, 1982), "Council on Women's Affairs Background Paper" prepared for ASWAC Board Meeting.

20 Ibid, p.40. One example of the difficulties with the federal government was Lloyd Axworthy's interference in the Council's plan to consult women on amendments to the Constitution in 1981. For more information about problems with the federal Council see Sue Findlay,"Canadian Advisory Council on the Status of Women: Contradictions and Conflicts" in Resources for Feminist Research, 17(3):90-91. This article includes a newspaper article written by Lois Sweet in 1987 which outlined an example of political interference concerning the research of the Council. For example, authors of a free-trade report said that their conclusions were changed to reflect not their original anti free-trade stance, but the conclusion of free-trade supporters from the Council. As well Findlay provides more current examples of the difficulties with the federal Council. For instance, the federal Council was criticized for its report Immigrant Women in Canada: A Policy Perspective which was released in 1988. It was written without consulting any immigrant women's groups. Many immigrant women stated that the report distorted the lives of the women it purported to speak for.

In 1981 the lobby was taken up by a group of Calgary women who formed the Steering Committee for an Alberta Advisory Council on the Status of Women. In 1983 it developed into a provincial coalition under the name of the Provincial Committee for an Alberta Council on Women's Affairs (the Committee).

The government's position vis-à-vis a Council shifted between 1976 and 1986. In 1976 the Tories totally rejected the need for a council but in 1983 they stated that it would be examined as one option. Finally, three days before the 1986 election was called, Premier Getty introduced a bill for the establishment of a council.

In addition to demonstrating this shift, the examination of the debates on the Council within the official arena of the legislature illuminates the ideological underpinnings of the PC government's presentation of gender equality issues. In preparing the ground work for this research, I selectively read the Alberta Hansard of the seventies to examine how the government viewed women in society.[21] I wanted to see if there was a noticeable shift in its presentation of the situation of women then as compared to its discourse in the 1980s. The first thing I discovered was that during the 1970s very little discussion on gender equality issues or even women for that matter took place. In contrast, there was much more said throughout the 1980s. Appendix 1 shows that the number of entries under the subject heading "women" in the Alberta Hansard subject index for the 1970s[22] ranges from 8 to 22 per year while the range for the 1980s is between 20 and 157.

I assumed that the increase in discussion on women in the 1980s compared to the 1970s was due to several factors. First, there was a growth in the number of

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21 I read the passages that were indexed under the subject heading "women."

22 I began with 1972, the year that the PC Party formed the government.

women's groups in the province. With their increased activities, they gained more media attention. Moreover, the briefs that they submitted to the government required responses, especially since the NDP brought them up for discussion in the Assembly. Second, women's issues were gaining more attention both nationally and internationally. The lobby for the inclusion of Section 28, the sexual equality clause in the Charter of Rights and the televised debate on women's issues between the federal leaders in the 1984 election campaign helped to promote and legitimize feminist concerns. The 1985 United Nations Nairobi Conference also served to promote women's issues locally, because as a participant Alberta was required to devise an action plan:

> The idea of translating the Alberta Government's efforts for women into a coordinated Plan for Action is rooted in a United Nations document. This World Plan of Action for the Implementation of the Objectives of International Women's Year asked member countries to prepare national plans conforming with its goals.[23]

A third reason why there was more discussion in the 1980s was that the government recognized that it was required to deal with the demographic changes in women's lives, such as the rising divorce rate and their increased participation in the labour force. Given the changing climate I assumed that in order to maintain hegemony the government was required to incorporate some feminist interests into its own program. This has occurred to a certain extent; however, the shift has not been smooth and it is far from complete.

In this chapter I examine the lobby for the Advisory Council in the 1980s by pursuing two interrelated levels of investigation: the political field and ideology.

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23 Alberta Women's Secretariat (April 1990), "Update! Alberta Plan for Action for Women" (brochure).

First, I attempt to understand how the political field mediated the change in the government's position on the Council. That is, I explore the influence of the federal government, the composition of the parties in the Legislature, the women MLAs in the legislature briefly, and the actions of the lobby groups. Second, analyzing the legislative debates on the Council, I examine how the government presents itself and its ideas on gender equality in the face of growing demands from the women's movement. I will begin by providing some general background on the PC party and gender politics in the 1970s.

2.2 The PC Party and Gender Politics in the 1970s: an Overview

On the tenth of September 1971, after thirty-six years of Social Credit rule, the Alberta Progressive Conservative Party was sworn in as the new government. Within less than six years, the Progressive Conservatives grew from a leaderless party with no seats in the legislature into one winning 49 of 75 of the seats under the leadership of Peter Lougheed. According to one feminist, the PC victory raised hope since the Tories were seen as a new and wonderful change from the Socreds (Int D). Of course, this image of a vital and forward looking party was the Tories' key election strategy.

PC party strategists had identified the greatest weaknesses of the Social Credit Party to be its "age, its image of worn-shoe comfort, its lack of excitement and imagination and its old members" (Wood, 1985:70). Thus, the Progressive Conservatives built their campaign around the central theme "Alberta deserves a fresh start and the Lougheed Team can provide it" (Wood, 1985:73).

Aware of its declining popularity and its ageing and tired image, some Socreds had worked to change the party's image to project a fresh new look for the

seventies (Wood, 1985:70). It appears that the plan for cultivating this new look included updating its record on women. In 1966 for example, to commemorate the fiftieth anniversary of the provincial enfranchisement of Alberta women, the government created the Women's Cultural and Information Bureau which was to examine the employment, legal, cultural and social problems facing women. However, up until this time, the government had itself maintained a policy against hiring spouses of government employees, under the title "employment of married women within the Government Service" (Finkel, 1989:166). Moreover, given the Bureau's limited mandate, this agency was seen more as a tool for propaganda than a substantive mechanism for improving the status of women (ibid).

In the year following the establishment of the Bureau, six Tories were elected. With defections and by-elections the number of PC members in the legislature increased to ten by 1970. In May of 1971, four months before another provincial election, the Socred government appointed the Citizen's Advisory Board on the Status of Women by an Order-in-Council. The Board's mandate was to study the recommendations of the Royal Commission on the Status of Women and ascertain where Alberta stood vis-à-vis the 49 recommendations which fell under provincial jurisdiction (Alberta was the first province to appoint a board to study the RCSWC's report). However, before the Board made its report the election was held and the Progressive Conservative Party formed the new government. Under Premier Lougheed the Board produced "The Interim Report on the Status of Women in Alberta 1972" which proved to be not interim but in fact its last report.

As the Official Opposition the Social Credit members brought attention to women's demands by questioning the government on its intention of implementing

the Royal Commission's recommendations.[24] Yet this line of questioning was motivated more by pragmatic political strategy than any clear understanding or commitment to gender equality. For example, evidence of this appears in the words of one member who rose in the house to ask the following:

> Mr. Speaker does the hon. minister not feel that in dealing with women's rights, that a hard, aggressive personality like the hon. Minister of Agriculture would get better results than a woman? (Alberta Hansard, 18 May 1972:53-11).

Grant Notley was the only New Democrat elected in the 1971 election. Throughout his political career until his death in 1984, he was known for championing women's rights (Int. E). However, as a lone member in the legislature his ability to fight for women's rights was severely limited.

In the beginning the Tory government enacted legislation that gave Alberta feminists reason to believe that it was committed to social change. In 1972 it introduced the Alberta Bill of Rights which was the first formal declaration of basic individual rights in the province's history. It read:

> It is hereby recognized and declared that in Alberta there exist without discrimination by reason of race, national origin, colour, religion, or sex, the following human rights and fundamental freedoms....[25]

This Bill marked the first time that women's entitlement to enjoy these rights was specifically enshrined in law. The Tories offered further protection by passing the Individual Rights Protection Act in 1973. Then in 1974 it created the Alberta

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24 See the following for examples from the Alberta Hansard: 18 May 1972: 53-11; 23 February 1973:7-235; 8 May 1973:55-2959; 10 May 1973:57-3077; 16 October,1973:62-3337 and 8 March 1974:21.

25 Alberta Bill of Rights (1972), in Statutes of Alberta, Edmonton: Queen's Printer for Alberta, 1987, p.139.

Human Rights Commission to administer this Act. Despite these beginnings, Michael Palamarek, who researched the early years of the PC Party actions on legislation affecting women, concludes:

> The first few years of PC government in Alberta were characterized by a rapid response to women's changing place in Alberta society. The passing of the Alberta Bill of Rights, the formation of the Human Rights Commission, and the work of the Citizen's Advisory Board on the Royal Commission's Report displayed a concern for gender disparities in the province. However, it appears the question of women's status quickly fell by the wayside, as significant legislative changes affecting such issues as maternity leave, division of matrimonial property, and government structures articulating women's concern were not enacted for a number of years after their initial proposal. (1989:102-103).

As stated previously, some feminists were quite hopeful because the Tories were initially perceived as a wonderful change from the Socreds: joint initiatives were seen to be possible by some women (Int. D). However, one feminist activist suggests that the government was not in the least interested in women's issues:

> Alberta in those days was just as arrogant as it is now. They would say but we are way ahead of every other province, which wasn't true, as Joint Initiatives points out quite clearly. But it had been true at one time. They remembered this without updating itself. So we basically got laughed at in those days. The momentum was kept up but it didn't go anywhere.[26]

In the 1970s the Matrimonial Property Act was seen as one significant gain that ASWAC had accomplished.

2.3 An Overview of ASWAC's Lobby for an Alberta Advisory Council on the Status of Women: 1976-1980

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26 Interview conducted by Sheila Dunphy with three Edmonton feminist activists on February 19, 1990 for Women's Studies 401, University of Alberta.

In the spring of 1976 ASWAC held four regional workshops to discuss "strategies aimed at the full integration and participation of Alberta women in the economic, political, cultural and social processes of their province."[27] Then in the following October ASWAC submitted Joint Initiatives: A Goal for Women and Government in Alberta which proposed structures whose objective was to facilitate this integration. The brief recommended:

> a Cabinet Committee on Equal Opportunity and the appointment of a minister responsible for the status of women;
>
> a Secretariat to the Cabinet Committee on Equal Opportunity, the members of which would be drawn from existing senior positions in relevant departments and agencies;
>
> a Women's Secretariat, which would absorb the existing Women's Bureau, initiate decentralization of Government outreach to women, and co-ordinate the auditing of policies and programs affecting women in all departments;
>
> and the appointment of a citizen Council on the Status of Women to allow for meaningful citizen input at at time when sensitivity to women's experience and existing inequities is urgently needed (ASWAC, 1976:49-58).

ASWAC argued for these proposals in the following manner. Its presentation began from the standpoint that women in Alberta had not yet achieved the status and basic rights to which they were entitled. According to ASWAC, the problem was that women and men neither share equally in the costs and benefits of the "social cooperation between men and women," nor do they in the responsibilities and rewards associated with the major institutions such as the family, the educational system and the economy (ibid, p.1). Thus, ASWAC's first argument was framed in terms of this problem and the need to expand the range of

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27 This statement was taken from the preface of Joint Initiatives.

available choices for both men and women. It maintained that "many of the barriers to choice can be removed by legislation, providing the legislation is enforceable" (ibid, p.2). Furthermore, it claimed that government had some responsibility because issues such as child care, maternity leave and part-time work were social issues and not solely women's concerns. Consequently, ASWAC contended that "the route to change is one of joint initiatives between the individual on the one hand and the government on the other" (ibid, p.3).

The above statements indicate that this document was premised on a liberal/reformist feminist analysis. For instance, it did not provide a critique of society but argued for the social and economic "integration" of women by calling for the expansion of personal choices and opportunities by removing barriers through legislation. However, ASWAC did not view legislation as the only solution because it also saw enduring cultural attitudes as barriers: "The problem, therefore, becomes one of trying to alter a whole set of attitudes, deeply imbedded in the cultural traditions of our society" (ibid, p.3). Couched in liberal terms, this statement implies that socialization is the problem. In fact there is no information in the document that explicitly addresses structural barriers.

It is not unusual that a brief destined for the government be written in this language. As Maroney indicates, "feminists develop gender political strategies that appeal to the state to regulate gender relations in the name of justice and equality, liberal democracy's governing norms" (1988a: 414). Nevertheless, the ideological content of this document demonstrates ASWAC's liberal beginnings and its focus/strategy of working within the realm of political institutions. I have specifically outlined the brief's ideological underpinnings here because it serves as

a useful point of reference to compare to ASWAC's growing radicalism in the 1980s (chapter 3).

Before examining the government's response to this brief, I will describe the second argument used to support these recommendations. ASWAC demonstrated that Alberta had been lagging behind when it came to implementing the 49 recommendations of the Royal Commission that were under provincial jurisdiction. Then it surveyed all the existing federal and provincial structures which were established for examining women's status. From this survey ASWAC concluded the following:

> ...unlike virtually every other province, which has developed either one all-encompassing structure or several co-ordinated structures dealing with the status of women, Alberta has only one, tiny bureaucratic structure concerned exclusively with women, namely the Alberta Women's Bureau (1976:39-40).
>
> The Bureau's original mandate was:
> to collect and compile information, opinions and other material on matters of particular concern to women, including information, opinions and material on the cultural, social, legal, public and other rights, responsibilities, interests and privileges of women in Alberta; to make such information, opinions and other material available to women, women's organizations and others;
> to provide such other services and perform such other functions as may be designated by the Minister.[28]

One major problem associated with this agency was its lack of effective channels of power and communication within the bureaucracy. It was neither classified as a departmental service nor as a program, but remained an isolated entity which "floated" to the female cabinet minister to whom it was assigned. ASWAC argued that the Bureau could have little impact within the government or

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28 The Alberta Women's Bureau Act, Government of Alberta, quoted from Wensel (1977).

with women of Alberta because of its low profile, lack of funds and insufficient staff (1976:41). In fact ASWAC pointed out that the word "Bureau" was a euphemistic term because its staff consisted only of one director and one support staff.

ASWAC's conclusions are supported by the findings of Wensel's MA thesis (1977) which examined the Bureau's effectiveness for social change. Wensel's study identified the same shortcomings. However, it also showed that even though the Bureau had a limited mandate under the Socreds, it became even more ineffectual under the Conservatives.

Wensel demonstrated that the Bureau's narrow interpretation of its duties or mandate was reflected in several changes which took place after the Progressive Conservatives came in power in 1972. For example, one of the results of Wensel's evaluation indicates that the internal duties of the Bureau were assigned a priority that was not intended when it was formed in 1966. One of Wensel's respondents summed up the situation by saying, "the Bureau was to serve the women of the province and not carry out the housekeeping duties for the Minister"(p.18).

Despite ASWAC's thorough research, its report was not well received by the government. The official response to Joint Initiatives came from the Deputy Premier and Minister of Transportation, Dr. Hugh Horner. He wrote:

> We have equality in Alberta. If it was any other way, I, as an elected representative of all of the people of my constituency, could stand before you and agree there is or was need for the Government to create a Ministerial portfolio and a bureaucracy designed especially for a group without rights. To create a Ministership responsible for the Status of Women would be an act of discrimination and an act of discrimination not against men, but against women. Such a Ministership would suggest that women are incapable of looking after themselves and would suggest that they need special protection. My understanding of the aspirations of the women in Alberta is one which indicates to me that they do not want "special

> status" but equality! Further I believe that women can take care of themselves and that they do an excellent job in getting their views across to all segments of society, including Government (1976: 3).

Despite the careful documentation of existing inequalities provided by groups such as ASWAC and the Edmonton Social Planning Council, the Deputy Premier contended that sexual equality was alive and well in Alberta. Moreover, he argued that the proposed Cabinet Committee on Equal Opportunity was unnecessary because there were already six cabinet committees in existence which were performing such functions. Indeed, it must have required some stretch of the imagination, on the part of the Deputy Premier, to include the Energy Conservation and the Maximum Utilization of Energy Resources Committee as some how being preoccupied with women's rights (Horner, 1976:4).[29] Furthermore, if the committee members believed (as Horner did) that equality was not an issue, there was probably little discussion of the impact of government policies on women.

ASWAC's brief did not go unnoticed by the opposition members who brought attention to it in the Legislature. Despite the opposition's efforts, the government's position remained the same: there was no need for a council at this time (Alberta Hansard, 1 November 1976:1768). Following this refusal, opposition members adopted a different approach. They asked if the government planned to expand the Women's Bureau (Alberta Hansard, 17 October 1977:1490). The answer was an unequivocal "no."

The lack of receptivity on the part of the PC government was evident throughout the lobby. On occasion, the government members had even refused to

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[29] The other committees that were mentioned as having some bearing on women's rights were: Priorities, Finance and Co-ordination - Priorities of Government Now and for the Future; Rural Development; Metropolitan Affairs; Economic Planning and Resource Development and the Committee on Social Planning.

meet with ASWAC. For example, in the Assembly in response to a question asking when the Conservatives would meet with ASWAC, Peter Lougheed replied that the government had stated its position on the brief and since ASWAC did not find the answer satisfactory he added that "It's our view that any further discussions aimed at altering our position from an organizational point of view would not be productive" (Alberta Hansard, 1 November 1976:1768).

Up until 1980 ASWAC's annual assembly was always held in Edmonton so that MLAs could either attend a cocktail party or lunch. However, in 1980 the meeting was held in Red Deer. The members agreed that the MLA lunch was deflecting focus away from their own needs.[30]

ASWAC upheld the recommendations contained in Joint Initiatives until 1979 (Drennan, 1981). It dropped these from their lobby in 1980, a time when the problems with the federal and provincial councils were being made known. In light of these problems, Dorothy Richardson, one of the authors of Joint Initiatives, advised ASWAC to concentrate on direct lobbying.

In 1982 ASWAC reevaluated Joint Initiatives and concluded the following:

> The brief appears to address primarily the question of equal opportunity. While that may have been the focus of women's activities six years ago, or while it may have been seen as the appropriate way of getting government's attention, it now seems limited in scope. There is no evidence of any mechanism being capable of addressing major issues such as social services, pornography and violence against women. The term "status of women" appears to have been used in a fairly restrictive sense.[31]

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30 ASWAC Newsletter, December 1982.

31 Julie Anne LeGras,(January 15-16, 1982), "Council on Women's Affairs: Background Paper", prepared for the ASWAC Board Meeting, p.36.

Consequently, ASWAC's willingness to cooperate was, in a matter of time, replaced by estrangement.

2.4 The Lobby for an Advisory Council on the Status of Women in the 1980s

2.4.1 The Political Climate and the Provincial Committee for an Alberta Council on Women's Affairs

On November 30th of 1981, the Calgary YWCA Social Issues Committee held a meeting to discuss the need for a provincial body responsible for monitoring the impact of proposed government policies and programs on women. As a result the Steering Committee for an Alberta Advisory Council on the Status of Women was formed. By 1983 this group had developed into the Provincial Committee for an Alberta Council on Women's Affairs, a coalition of sixty women's groups from across the province. [32] It was composed of an executive committee and five subcommittees representing the Edmonton, Calgary, Fort McMurray, Grand Prairie and Lethbridge regions.

In 1981 the Committee members judged that their lobby was well-timed because the Alberta Tories had recently ratified the 1980 United Nations Declaration

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32 The size of the coalition varies according to the year and source. The accounts vary from 30 to 60 women's groups representing 50 000 to 60 000 women. One of the major strategies of the Committee was to build a power base in order to gain broad support; therefore, it is logical that this group expanded beyond Calgary. However, there were other reasons for the expansion. First, the Committee had difficulty in procuring funding because they were not considered a provincial organization(Int. A). Second, the original group in Calgary was apparently disintegrating (April 15, 1983 YWCA of Calgary Executive Meeting; Int. A).

for the Elimination of Sex Discrimination, thereby committing themselves not only to the principles of this document but also to acting on them.[33] Moreover, the recent national lobby for the inclusion of the sexual equality clause in the Charter of Rights publicized women's concerns and it also demonstrated that women were a political force. Yet despite these developments the Committee did not obtain the support of the PC government until 1985.

What were some of the factors working against the lobby? According to a Secretariat of State Women's Program project assessment report that the Committee filed after receiving funds in 1982, one obstacle was "the indifference towards the establishment of such a Council on the part of members of the Alberta government."[34] The report also cited two more difficulties: time constraints on the part of volunteer workers and financial restraints, particularly due to high postal, zeroxing and travel costs.

Another factor which did not work in the Committee's favour was the representation in the legislature. In the 1982 election the Tories took 75 of the 79 seats. Given this dominance even minimal concessions were politically unnecessary (Stevenson, 1986:208) particularly to feminist groups which were and remain disadvantaged in the politics of unequal representation. In light of this Tory victory and given that there is little evidence to suggest that the government saw the women's movement as either a political force or threat at that time, the PC government did not need to incorporate any demand for a council.

In 1982 six women, all Conservatives, were members of the Alberta Legislature: Myrna Fyfe, Catherine Chichak, Sheila Embury, Mary LeMessurier,

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33 Dorothy Groves, (7 May, 1983), "Proposed Alberta Council on Women's Affairs: a Journey", p.5, unpublished paper.

34 This information was found in the Committees' files.

Shirley Cripps and Connie Osterman. This was the largest representation of women in the history of the legislature. However, these MLAs were not strong and active advocates for the Council. In fact in a Chatelaine interview all six denied that they were feminists and all denied ever experiencing sexual harassment or discrimination (Zwarun, 1982:190). LeMessurier, for example, demonstrated her viewpoint on gender equality when she stated that she always had all her housework done before arriving at the legislature at 7:30 am, and that her husband did not help because she "couldn't expect to put [her] responsibilities on him" (ibid:188).

In the midst of an economic downturn in Alberta, in part due to a decline in the world demand for energy, especially in oil, the government's attention focused firmly on the economy. The government's emphasis was not on providing more services or expanding the bureaucracy, but rather on encouraging individual and community solutions. This position is made clear by Lougheed's following speech, which underlined the need for sound fiscal management:

> I see too, in terms of the mood of Albertans, the beginning of the reduction of expectations of what governments can do. The volunteers in the communities can do so much for themselves, and that is the Albertan way (Alberta Hansard, October 1983:1361).

This was, then, the climate in which the Committee was operating: indifference on the part of politicians, a small opposition in the Legislature, and an economic downturn with mounting rhetoric of volunteerism as the Alberta way.

On the other hand there were some elements working in the Committee's favor: the local media, for example. In a speech at the University of Calgary in 1979, J.P. O'Callaghan, the publisher of The Edmonton Journal stated that a crusading newspaper can be an effective guardian of democracy (Caldwell, 1981:16). After the 1979 election in which a Tory majority was elected, The

Edmonton Journal increased its legislative staff: O'Callaghan explained that it had "assumed by default the right ... to examine all the actions of government and to comment, either favorably or otherwise, upon them" (quoted in Caldwell, 1981:16). The Edmonton Journal provided good coverage of the lobby for the Council (Int. A). That the Alberta Tories were receiving bad publicity was confirmed by a statement made by MLA Alger. He claimed that, "Much has been said by the members of the press that this Assembly does little and cares less for women's issues in Alberta. Personally I think that's hogwash"(Alberta Hansard, 17 April 1984: 532). Indeed the pressure the politicians felt to support the Council echoes through a statement made by Conservative MLA Kowalski. He claimed that if he did not vote for it that it would be like "voting against motherhood" (Alberta Hansard, 1984:531).

The other circumstances that aided the Committee's lobby was a change in leadership from retiring Lougheed to Getty, the growing dissatisfaction with the PC Party and the 1986 election. Getty was not seen to be a strong leader by the public. This perception was encouraged by Getty's numerous and highly publicized gaffes. For instance Getty predicted that the Chernobyl nuclear reactor disaster would help Alberta's energy industry with an increased demand for oil and natural gas. Then after the US bombing of Libya he suggested that terrorism in Europe would benefit tourism in Alberta because people would think twice before flying overseas. In Vegreville, commenting on unemployment, Getty said his four sons were all able to get jobs and "they did it by working hard"(LeGras, 1986). Overall, according to some political commentary, the decline in the Tory majority in the 1986 election was caused by a lower turn out of Tory voters. In 1982 the voter turn out was 66%

compared to 47.25% in 1986 (Brennan, 1989:8). Having outlined the political climate, I now turn to examine the lobby of the Committee.

The documentary research of the Committee attests to the endless work that the coalition undertook between 1981 and 1986. Aware of the unsuccessful lobbying efforts in the 1970s, the Committee decided to examine ASWAC's methods so as to not repeat, what one member termed, the same mistakes.[35] According to some coalition members ASWAC's lobby failed because it was too confrontational and because it was viewed as a radical and primarily lesbian organization that did not attempt to obtain broad support from all women's groups (Int. A).

In the early stages of lobbying the Committee members consciously sought to be nonconfrontational. In a spirit of cooperation they contacted the Members of the Legislative Assembly (MLAs) of the PC Calgary caucus in order to gain support for the Council.[36] It was through their contact with some of the Conservative MLAs that the Committee members were informed about how they were perceived by some of these politicians and their colleagues.[37] According to Tory MLA Musgreave, the government was receptive to the group, yet he also cautioned the Committee to be careful not to alienate the MLAs. At that time he also warned that the Committee, was perceived as radical and that the word "feminist" raised hackles, especially from Lougheed. Moreover, the Committee members were told that advisory councils were perceived to be liberal concepts and therefore, they

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35 Minutes, 5 March 1982.

36 Although there were some preliminary discussions with MLAs, the Committee also invited them to a formal meeting on June 18th, 1982. Of the twenty-one who were invited seven attended (Groves, 1983:5).

37 Minutes, 4 May, 1982.

must show respect for traditional values in order to be taken seriously by Conservative politicians.

Lucie Pépin, then President of the Canadian Advisory Council on the Status of Women, also provided similar advice. She stated that an advisory council is perceived as an attack on government and thus she recommended that the Committee pay attention to the style of council that the government viewed as acceptable.[38]

The women of the Committee heeded some of this advice. For example, the coalition was initially called the Steering Committee for an Alberta Advisory Council on the Status of Women but changed its name to the Provincial Committee for an Alberta Council on Women's Affairs in order to conform to the government's style of language because the words "advisory" and "status" were seen as too confrontational. Likewise, the Committee responded to Musgreave's advice that traditional values must be respected by incorporating them into the proposal sent to the government. In justifying the need for a council, the Committee refers to the societal stresses that are eroding the traditional family:

> If we are to protect the value society places on the family unit, then we must address the issues of the broader dimensions of women's roles to guard against the erosion of wife and mother, which traditionally has carried responsibility for family cohesiveness. Women do not wish, nor do they intend, to abdicate these roles; however, society must accept responsibility for recognition of individuals' limitations and for ensuring equality in availability/accessibility to societal resources (1982: 17).

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38 This information was contained in a summary of a meeting between Pépin and a Committee member which was recorded in the May 4th, 1982 Minutes.

Yet the primary concern of the founding members of this coalition was "to ensure that government policies and programs create a climate of equal opportunity in the labour force for women."[39] Finally, in order to avoid alienating the MLAs, the Committee agreed that there was a need to rapidly inform the government about any decisions taken by the Coalition rather than to run the risk of leaked information that could be possibly misinterpreted.[40]

The committee had three primary strategies. The first strategy was to research the structures and mandates of other Councils, both in Canada and internationally in order to assess their weaknesses and strengths. This research subcommittee identified the following potential dangers that can reside in institutions which are established to represent women's interests:

> 1) they are used as government proof of substantive commitment thus requiring little or no further action, funds, etc...;
> 2) they become the exclusive legislative bridge between the government and women and thereby pre-empt the initiatives of women's organizations and other grass-roots groups;
> 3) they have an inadequate mandate and a lack of executive powers, and therefore, limited import, thus they must not be the only means for integrating women;
> 4) they lack skilled staff.[41]

On the other hand, the subcommittee found that the benefits of such councils are: research, data collection and publishing; promotion of legislation to advance equality; and the participation of women in political decision making and policy positions.[42]

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39 Taken from "A Sample Letter to Join our Coalition," dated July 21, 1982.

40 Minutes 4 May, 1982.

41 Report to the Steering Committee on the Concept of An Advisory Council on the Status of Women in Alberta, (no date), p.3.

42 ibid.

In light of these potential advantages and disadvantages of councils, the Committee's proposal included the following stipulations. First, the Council should be enacted by an act of the legislature and not by an Order-in-Council. In this way, the Council would be more secure because it could not be disbanded by a change in minister or government. Second, the Council should have a strong research mandate, and be able to publish its research without requiring ministerial consent. This would help to secure the Council's autonomy from government. Third, Council members must be familiar with women's issues and represent various regions, ages, ethnic groups and so on in order to reflect a cross section of Alberta women. The selection of members should be done by the Lieutenant Governor in Council from nominations submitted by Alberta women.

The Committee also required that the council have a paid chair and a permanent support staff (Int. A). This latter point was important given the government's emphasis on volunteerism. MLA Embury actually suggested expanding the Women's Bureau by using women's groups to do the work of this agency explaining that "...the concept would be acceptable regarding the philosophy of this government, where we believe that there are people out in the community, a lot of volunteer organizations, that are doing a great job and can carry on and do the job very well" (Alberta Hansard, 14 April 1983:556).[43]

Once the proposal was near completion, the second strategy was to build a power base and the third was to lobby the government. Thus, letters were sent to diverse community groups asking for support, in principle, for the proposal for a Council. In order to reach groups and individuals unknown to the Committee, the members wrote press releases. They also used the Alberta Women's Bureau

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[43] Her scheme did involve what she termed "some financial assistance."

newsletter to communicate with women and groups in Alberta. In Edmonton the Committee used the already established women's groups to build the coalition. The letter writing campaign also included sending letters to all MLAs as means of both gaining and assessing the support. This latter form of lobbying occurred at least three times. As visibility of the coalition grew, the media provided good coverage (Int. A). Some members were also interviewed on the radio; one chair was interviewed on "Face the Newsman," a provincial current affairs TV program, and another participated in the Access TV NetWork "About Women" series.

In order to support the Committee's lobby the chairs of the federal and provincial advisory councils held their annual meeting in Edmonton in October of 1983. The same month Premier Lougheed established a permanent portfolio for a minister responsible for the status of women for a term of three years. Prior to this, beginning in 1977, responsibility for status of women issues was rotated every six months.

In February of 1984, the government replaced the Women' Bureau with the Alberta Women's Secretariat. Beginning April 1st, this new agency had a mandate for research and analyzing policy. It was to play a role in interdepartmental co-ordination by chairing and co-ordinating a number of interdepartmental committees that dealt with specific issues of interest to women.

According to respondent A, Lougheed created the Secretariat because the proponents of the Council were becoming too vocal, and, consequently, the government was receiving too much bad publicity in the local newspapers. She believed that the government saw the Secretariat as a means to appease the women, and that therefore, the Committee would disband. But the women continued to lobby for the Council because they saw the Secretariat as being designed primarily

for the civil service and believed that it would not necessarily serve women. As respondent A argued, it was by no means a substitute for the more autonomous council that was being sought.

It must be noted that in 1982 the provincial ministers responsible for the status of women held their first annual meeting. At that time, Alberta did not have such a portfolio and Ministry, nor did it have a body that could provide a policy focus for the annual meeting. This may have proved embarrassing to the government, but in any case in order to perform its duties adequately in these joint federal provincial committees, a body such as the Secretariat was required. For example, in 1986 the Secretariat was playing a role with respect to federal/provincial/territorial intergovernmental working groups which were established as a result of annual meetings of the ministers responsible for the status of women in the country (Alberta Hansard, 3 September 1986:1424).

Another action came in March of 1984. Lougheed established the Cabinet Committee on Equality of Opportunity and an interdepartmental committee on women's issues. However, these committees were not active. It was discovered that they had been together for over nine months without once holding a formal meeting (Int. B; Alberta Hansard, 8 November 1984:1436-1437). Likewise, Notley pointed out that despite the Secretariat's absorption of the Women's Bureau's tasks and its expanded role and mandate, it was only given a total of $29, 000 over and above the previous budget of the Bureau (Alberta Hansard, 18 October 1984:1210).

In regard to the Council, the government used a variety of stalling tactics. The original group in Calgary had difficulty in obtaining funds from the government. They were told it was because they were not a provincial group (Int. A). Once the provincial Committee was in place, the Tories stalled by saying that

time was needed to examine whether the already existing methods of communication could be improved before agreeing to move in the direction of a council (Alberta Hansard, 25 March 1983:299; 12 May 1983:955). As well given the fact that certain groups such as AFWUF did not support the idea of the Council, Johnston argued that women's groups should have a consensus before approaching the government (Int. A). Once the Council became an option to be considered Johnston said that he required twelve months to examine the issue and make a recommendation to caucus (Alberta Hansard, 25 October 1983:1542). But after the year had passed, nothing was brought forward. When questioned about the Council by the NDP, the answer was that the issue was being studied. Johnston proclaimed that before making a "perilous mistake about formation of a Status of Women Council we want to be very clear as to the merits, the pros and the cons" (ibid, 8 November, 1984:1334). In 1985 there was no mention of the government's intention to establish a Council in the Speech from the Throne (ibid, 14 March 1985).

In the face of the government's stalling, the Committee's tactics became more confrontational. This may be a reflection of the realization that reason was not going to make the government budge combined with the fact that by the mid-1980s the Edmonton contingent had taken over the primary work. Women in Calgary appeared to be more readily members of the PC Party and had personal contacts with some of the MLAs: in Edmonton this was not the case, and thus perhaps, this is why they were more open to augmenting the political pressure (Int. A). In stepping up the tactics the Committee used telephone campaigns in which women would call an MLA at his or her constituency office several times a day, and then call his or her spouse at home to stimulate conversation at the dinner table (Int. A).

In March of 1985 the coalition used a new strategy. Two members took out PC memberships for a day in order to attend the PC Convention. During the afternoon session Premier Lougheed stood before the assembly to respond to questions. The Committee members' tactic was to embarrass the government and to get Lougheed to twice publicly commit to the Council. One of the women described the afternoon as the Peter Lougheed love-in (Int. B). She recalls that immediately after asking her questions she felt the entire room turn on her: she was booed and hissed. Essentially her questions were asking for government accountability. She asked the following: How often has the Cabinet Committee met? What has it accomplished to date? Has it looked at issues of women and poverty and elderly women? Does it accept the need for citizen input such as an advisory council? It was here that Lougheed stated publicly for the first time that a council would be set up.

On April 7th, 1986 Donald Getty, now the leader of the PC Party, tabled Bill 7 which announced the establishment of the Alberta Advisory Council on Women's Issues. Three days later, Getty announced that an election would be held on May 8th. As a result of an election being called, Bill 7 died on the order paper. According to the Committee, Bill 7 was an inadequate piece of legislation because it gave no research mandate, it was not an act of the legislature and given its structure, it was, in effect an extended arm of the Women's Secretariat. After the election Dennis Anderson was appointed the minister responsible for the status of women, now called the minister responsible for women 's issues.

In the meantime, the Committee continued its lobby by writing all the MLAs It advanced the view that Bill 7 was inadequate and provided the results of a supporting study done by a Committee of the Alberta Bar Association on the

Women's Secretariat. After consultation with women's groups, Dennis Anderson introduced Bill 19, The Alberta Advisory Council on Women's Issues Act and Bill 20, Women's Secretariat Act on August 1st, 1986, almost three months after the election. Bill 20 states that the Secretariat:

> - may identify, analyze and make recommendations about Government policy, programs and legislation that affect women;
> - may maintain co-ordination and liaisons with Government departments to ensure that women's concerns are reflected in legislation and policy and program development;
> - may conduct research and collect data on women's issues;
> - may promote public and Government awareness of issues of concern to women;
> - and shall undertake any activities that the Minister considers appropriate.
>
> The mandate of the Council was as follows:
>
> The purpose of the Advisory Council is to advise and report to the Alberta Government through the Minister on matters relating to the opportunity for full and equal participation of Alberta women in the life of the Province by:
> - identifying specific matters and issues relating to women that may be addressed by the Government;
> - making recommendations to the Government with respect to any matters and issues relating to women;
> - consulting with and providing information to the public;
> - and carrying out any other activities that the Minister considers appropriate.

The legislation was ameliorated because the Council was now an act of the Legislature and it was no longer under the control of the Secretariat. Nevertheless, it still had no research mandate.

In 1986 ten women were elected to the Alberta legislature. Six were Tories, three were New Democrats and one was Liberal. Nine of these women were interviewed by the Newsmagazine by Alberta Women (July-August 1986:24-31). It was reported that Marie Laing and Pam Barrett campaigned on women's issues. Christie Mjolsness' platform was run on children's issues (she was an ASWAC

member). Janet Koper and Connie Osterman stated that family, not women, is their priority. Shirley Cripps, when asked about women's issues said that "I feel more like a people person rather than an either sex person" (p.27). However, she added that there exist some specific areas of concern for women such as pensions and wills. Nancy Betkowski stated that she centres on family issues and revealed that women's issues are an "area that I haven't been directly associated with" (p.30). Dianne Mirosh believes that free enterprise is important for Alberta. Although she does not say she is a feminist, she recognizes some of the obstacles women have endured. For instance she mentions that women going into business for themselves couldn't get loans without their husbands' signatures. Elaine McCoy has what she calls a non-gender-related philosophy. She states that "Being a female in law school is a non-issue today. I hope ten years from now being a female in politics will also be a non-issue"(p.29).[44] Thus feminist representation (among the female politicians) had increased from the 1982 election.

With the election also came 16 NDP MLAs. Notably among them was Marie Laing, a feminist activist in Edmonton. She worked closely with members of the Committee when Bills 19 and 20 came up for debate in the legislature (Int. B). Prior to this the NDP helped maintain some attention on the council by introducing motions for a Council on the Status of Women: Martin's 1985 Bill 272 and Barrett' Bill 208 introduced in 1986. The NDP continued to highlight policies affecting women by holding a conference entitled: "New Democrats: Priorizing The Agenda for Women" in November 1986. Liberal MLAs Bettie Hewes and Grant Mitchell

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[44] MLA McCoy has since changed her views. In a speech given at the University of Alberta, on March 14, 1991, she stated that she no longer sees gender as a "non-issue".

also attempted to strengthen the bills during the debates in the Assembly. In the end both bills passed without being amended.

2.4.2 The Legislative Debates on the Council

The examination of the debates in the official arena of the legislature reveals not only the shift in the government's position on the Council but it also reveals how the PC government defined and expressed gender political issues posed by the growing women's movement. Here I am specifically interested in how the government explained the source of women's subordination. I am also interested in its articulation of the triangulated relationship of women/work/family. This relationship is significant for in the late eighties the Tories presented themselves as the defenders of family as well as the champion of women's rights.

Before turning to the analysis of the debates I wish to recall Maroney's theoretical position. She explains the relationship between the feminist movement and the state in the following manner:

> Because hegemony is not statically given but must be continually reproduced through ideological integration, one way for the integral state to respond to the emergence of a feminist movement is to attempt to appropriate both the issues and the moral authority of the feminist movement as its own, in part by putting its just self forward as adequately representing "what women want". However, its capacities to do so are limited by its own non-unitary character, the particular ideologies of the parties represented in the legislature, electoralist exigencies and its need to balance class contradictions, all concretely manifested in struggles by different interest groups over both policy formation and implementation (Maroney, 1988a: 414).

Musgreave, a sixty-one year old backbencher from Calgary, was the first government member to support the Council. On April 14, 1983, as promised to the Committee, Musgreave proposed a private member's bill which urged the

government to consider establishing a task force composed of representative citizens concerned with the role of women in Alberta (Alberta Hansard, 1983:550). In contrast to Dr. H. ment made in 1976, Musgreave argued that discrimination against exist in Alberta. For example, he claimed that women were still denied jobs or promotion solely because they were female.

In this province, to have an MLA stand up in the legislature and focus attention on women was, in the word of journalist Suzanne Zwarun, "revolutionary." Perhaps this was the first time in history that eight pages of the Alberta Hansard had been devoted to women. Yet what was even more surprising was how far Musgreave went. For example, he made it known that he was pro-choice. The MLA also cautioned his colleagues about paying too much attention to AFWUF stating that its goals and membership were intertwined with those of Campaign Life and so "while they are vociferous, they do not represent the majority opinion of women in Alberta" (Alberta Hansard, 1983:551). Finally, Musgreave emphasized the need to recognize the diversity of families. He provided examples of how some families were excluded from government programs, such as obtaining a mortgage through the Alberta Housing Corporation, because they did not conform to the traditional nuclear family.

The time allotted for debate on Musgreave's motion expired before a vote was taken. The following year, Musgreave rose once again in the Legislature to propose the following motion:

> Be it resolved that the Assembly urge the government to consider establishing an Alberta Advisory Council on the Status of Women to advise the government on matters relating to women and to bring before the public and government matters of interest and concern to women (Alberta Hansard, 17 April 1984:523).

In his speeches Musgreave did not present the government as if it were a leader on women's rights: rather his words indicated quite the opposite. For instance, at one point he addressed his female colleagues "who say any women can do what she wants" and reminded them of past discrimination and the current more subtle forms of discrimination that exist today (Alberta Hansard, 17 April 1984: 524). Musgreave also told his colleagues to "put your political hats on and listen carefully" (ibid:523). Furthermore, in trying to persuade his party, he stated that many Conservative provincial governments have a council. Finally, noting that he had consulted with women's groups before tabling this motion, he asked that when his colleagues consider the proposal that they "reflect on the value of the idea, not whose idea it was originally" (Alberta Hansard, 17 April 1984: 524).

In contrast to Musgreave, his colleagues did present the government as a leader in women's equality. A central theme that the Tories played up was that Alberta has a proud history on women's rights and the current government was continuing in the same vein. For example, Mr. Szwender claims, "in the past Alberta has been a front-runner in these rights, and the present Alberta government is doing a lot in the current needs of women in our society" (Alberta Hansard, 17 April 1984: 524).

Numerous examples of this "proud" history were cited. Alberta was the third province to grant women the vote: Manitoba, Saskatchewan and Alberta extended voting rights to women in 1916. It was the first province to have a woman elected to the legislature. Roberta Adams and Louise McKinney were elected in the 1917 election. Alberta was the second province to have a female cabinet minister, Irene Parlby was minister without portfolio in 1921. Alberta was also the first province to appoint a female judge and permit women to sit on municipal councils.

Perhaps the proudest achievement was that of the Famous Five - - Emily Murphy, Nellie McClung, Irene Parlby, Louise McKinney and Henrietta Muir Edwards. On October 18, 1929 the Privy Council of England, which was at that time Canada's highest court of appeal, ruled that women were persons. According to a British common-law ruling of 1876 women were considered persons in matters of payments and penalties but not persons in matters of rights and privileges. It was five Alberta women who initiated and fought for this landmark legal victory.

In the Legislature, the MLAs also provided evidence of the government's current actions. To show that the Tories were providing for the needs of Alberta women the MLAs pointed to the following as proof: they had established the Secretariat, the Cabinet Committee on Equal Opportunity and the interdepartmental committee on women's issues (Alberta Hansard, 17 April 1984: 525); they had brought forth the Widow's Pension Act and they had discussed spousal battering in the legislature (ibid, p.532). Even before these initiatives were in place, Embury argued that women's issues already had wide representation and that women had access to the decision making process through their elected officials, government departments and through exercising their vote (ibid, 14 April 1983:555). She claimed that each department dealt with women's issues as they related to the particular department. Now having examined how the government presented itself, I turn to examine how the members viewed women's inequality.

Throughout the legislative discussion and debate concerning the Council no explicit definition of (sexual) equality was provided. In general, the members viewed equality as something women ought to have. For example, Nelson stated that "women deserve the same rights as any other individual" (Alberta Hansard, 1 November 1984:1333). The dominant perspective was that women were equal but

they faced special problems (ibid, 3 September 1986:1423). These problems were the institutionalized discrimination they encountered in the areas of employment and promotion, wages, education, personal finances (credit, loans and pensions), athletics and government.[45] Secondly, MLA Johnston, Minister Responsible for Women's Issues, admitted that "perhaps equality in essence isn't being recognized in many of the institution and systems in which we operate on a day-to-day basis" (ibid,1 November 1984:1334). According to one Conservative MLA these special problems were not seen to be entirely due to discrimination but "[t]here are problems that are particular to the biological, physiological and emotional differences between men and women" (ibid, 4 September 1986: 1461).

In general the Tories viewed the source of women's subordination as a problem of socialization that could be ameliorated through education (ibid,17 April 1984:526). According to MLA Paproski it was sexism and myths such as "women work for pin money" which prevented women from having equal opportunity in the work force (ibid, 17 April 1984:533). Mr. Lee summed it up in the following words:

> What we need more than anything is to change the heads and the hearts of all people. I believe it is our beliefs that are getting in our way. It is our beliefs about the roles we should play in society that get in our way. The only thing that stops us from getting what we want is us and our beliefs and our stereotypes in society" (ibid,17 April 1984:534).

In addition to education, the second solution was to provide greater opportunities for women, especially in the labour force (Alberta Hansard, 17 April

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45 For examples see the following in the Alberta Hansard: 14 April 1983:550-554, 528;17 November 1983:1690; 17 April 1984:533.

1984:532).[46] Thus equality was framed in terms of the absence of discrimination where equal opportunities would be possible.

There are three points that need to be made about this discourse. First, the narrow concept of gender-based inequality, narrowly defined as inherited and inadvertent discrimination, ignored the globally structured character of female subordination. Of course this is not of any surprise for a Tory government.

Second, this discourse was different from the dominant Tory ideology of the seventies which presumed that discrimination did not exist and that employment opportunities were available but women simply made other choices. For example, in the seventies the Tories explained the fact that women were underrepresented in managerial positions in the civil service by advancing the interpretation that not enough women applied for these jobs because they were making other choices (Horner, 1976:9). In contrast in the eighties, for the most part, the Tories official discourse demonstrated a views of inequality as based on something more than just natural differences between men and women. That is they incorporated liberal feminist discourse.

Despite all this talk about the need to change attitudes the Conservative depictions of women were often disparaging. For example, Szwender argued that education was the solution to the inequality between men and women. With increased levels of education he claimed that "women become less flighty and capricious, become more analytical and logical, assert their right to sexual equality, and enter traditionally male occupational fields" (Alberta Hansard 17 April

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[46] For example Johnston states"..I think we should do more in terms of offering better job opportunities to women within our own organizations, within certain managerial classifications in particular" (Alberta Hansard 12 May 1983:955).

1984:526). On the other hand, he added that with increasing education, men become more tender. One more example of the Tories' disparaging remarks is one made by Alger. While proclaiming his support for the Council he quipped: "One of my handicaps is slow horses, and the other one is fast women. I've had a difficult time with both. However, I want you to know I'm on the women's side, before I get carried into this any deeper" (ibid, p.532).

The third point to be made concerning the Tories' discourse is that there was virtually no discussion of the power differentials between men and women within families. However, one Conservative MLA did address this issue, albeit in an inadequate way. Szwender began by quoting a passage from Trotsky's Problems of Life. This passage stated that it would be difficult to institute the industrial equality of men and women workers, but "to achieve the actual equality of men and women within the family is an infinitely more arduous problem" (Alberta Hansard, 17 April 1984: 526). Szwender then described Trotsky's solution. According to Szwender, Trotsky believed that it was only through socialistic economic forms that "we can free the family from the functions and cares that now oppress and disintegrate it" (example, washing would be done in a public laundry).

Szwender's citation of Trotsky was used to make the following point:

> I think the goals of the Soviet Russian revolution have largely been achieved in a capitalist society without that revolution. The industrial revolution has achieved much of that, where many menial domestic tasks previously performed are now easily afforded and accorded in our society by outside sources, leaving the women more time to spend outside the home (Alberta Hansard, 17 April 1984: 526).

Thus Szwender, while misconstruing Trotsky (who had ideological blind spots himself regarding gender relations), glossed over power differentials within the family in a distorted and classist manner.

Gogo was another MLA who discussed the family. Instead of supporting the Council he proposed a different direction. Essentially this direction was to exalt the stay-at-home mother who would in turn cure the evils of society (example, unemployment), and in the process save the government a large sum of money that it was currently spending on health and social services (example, day care and the care of the elderly). Gogo states "If we as members of this Assembly were sincere about the future of Alberta in terms of our young people, our men and our women, we would seriously consider putting emphasis on the family, the value of the mother who stays home to look after those children" (Alberta Hansard 1 November 1984:1328). Gogo added that the MLA from Whitemud had recently expressed similar views: this member was Don Getty, soon to be the next leader of the party.

2.5 Discussion

This examination of the lobby for the AACWI explored two interrelated levels: the political field and ideology. The first objective was to understand how the political field mediated the shift in the government's position on the Council. Then using the legislative debates on the Council, the second objective was to examine how the government, in the face of the changing climate, expressed its ideology on women. That is how did the government attempt to incorporate some feminist demands while at the same time serving its own interests?

The analysis of the legislative debates demonstrate that the government incorporated some liberal feminist discourse. For example, in contrast to the 1970s, the MLAs discussed gender inequality not in terms of natural differences but in terms of discrimination. As well, The PC members presented their party as

representing women's issues: the theme of Alberta's firsts in women's rights from the beginning of this century were highlighted throughout the legislative debates.

The government's response to the lobby for the Council and to the overall changing climate confirms Maroney's theoretical perspective. That is, one way for a government to respond to an emerging movement is to appropriate the issues or moral authority of the feminist movement by putting itself forward as representing what women want. However, the government did not advance any discussions of structural barriers, as did the women's groups. In other words, the government could only go so far in its discourse without contradicting its own platform. This is also explained by Maroney's perspective. The government is limited in its ability to represent feminist demands given its own non-unitary character and its need to balance numerous contradictions manifested in struggles by different interest groups.

In the 1970s the government did not implement any of the recommendations of Joint Initiatives. In the 1980s in the early stage of organizing the coalition, some Committee members stressed that this lack of success was due to ASWAC's confrontational tactics and its radical/lesbian membership which resulted in its failure to gain broad support from a number of diverse organizations. In contrast, the Committee attempted to create a broad base of support by using the already established women's groups, despite their diverse ideological perspectives. However, the Committee's conclusion failed to recognize two very important facts. First, like the Committee, ASWAC began in a spirit of cooperation, which grew difficult to maintain in the face of government indifference. Second, the Committee was operating in a different political environment.

In 1976, the government refused to even consider establishing a council. By 1983 the government modified its position by stating that it would examine a council as one possible option. In 1985, after much stalling,the government finally conceded after much public embarrassment brought forth by bad publicity in The Edmonton Journal, which presented the Tories as backward when it came to women's issues, and under the pressure from the Committee and the NDP.

Gelb (1989) claims that the political opportunity structure interacts with culture to produce a climate in which opportunities for change are structured. The variables from her framework that I examined were the nature of state power, ideology, the significance of parties and lobby groups. As well, I briefly examined two other factors that I saw as crucial variables: federal pressure and the media.

My findings show that the federal government exerted virtually no pressure on Alberta to establish a council. There was an indirect pressure on Alberta to appoint a minister responsible for the status of women and to create the Women's Secretariat, because these were required in order for Alberta to fulfill its responsibilities within the federal/provincial meetings and committees. Nevertheless, with the exception of holding the 1983 annual meeting of the Federal and Provincial Councils in Edmonton, I found no federal pressure to create a council. In the end, the Tories finally did establish one. The key difference was the women's persistent lobbying coupled with the growing dissatisfaction with the Alberta Tories nearing an election with a new leader.

These elements were also identified as the reasons for why Newfoundland set up its status of women council. On January 28th, 1985 the Newfoundland and Labrador Provincial Council on the Status of Women sent a letter to the Committee. It stated the following:

> Our advisory council was established: a) as a result of a political commitment from our Premier who was a leadership candidate when he made the commitment; b) as a result of the proliferation of organized women's groups working on improving the status of women. I don't think one would have been possible without the other.

Two other factors served to favor the establishment of the Council: the NDP and the media coverage. The NDP took on the task of representing feminist concerns in the Legislature. It kept the issue on the agenda by proposing bills for the establishment of a council. Consequently, women's rights were a focus in the 1986 election. The media also played an important role in regards to the lobby. Without this coverage the lobby would have been more difficult. The reporting of how many groups and women the Committee represented helped because, in reality, it was only a handful of women who continued to sustain the lobby.

The government's modification in their discourse on gender equality and the council did not happen within a short span of time. It took more than ten years of lobbying. In the final analysis it appears that the government had little choice but to respond in some way to the growing women's movement. In the 1970s, there were few groups, but in the 1980s there were many groups that had been formed. As well, overall, the PC party was operating in a different environment in the 1980s. In 1984, the three leaders of the federal parties participated in a televised debate on women's issues. This election debate served to legitimize feminist concerns. Around 1984, there was also talk about a possible gender gap in voting behaviour and this made some political strategists sit up and take notice. However, in the end, this gender gap did not materialize.

How could the Council fit into the government's agenda? The government could use it as proof of their commitment to women. Moreover, as Johnston once

remarked, there are great advantages to a council because "once the council starts having inputs into government policy, they then become spokesmen for the policy as well" (Alberta Hansard, 12 May 1983:955).

Was the Council a window of opportunity for Alberta women or merely window dressing? Was it created merely to deflect the concerns and anger of the women's movement away from the government? Was it simply an example of political expedience during an election? According to Linda Silver-Dranoff,[47] the source of the powerlessness of advisory councils was the failure of governments to implement Recommendation 166 of the Report of the Royal Commission on the Status of Women. This recommendation called for advisory bodies to have the power to establish programs and to implement policy decisions. However, in contrast, advisory councils were given advisory functions and governments have not always been receptive to their recommendations.

The initial AACWI was weakened not only by the lack of a research mandate but also by the appointment of members who, for the most part, were criticized for their lack of feminist perspective and experience. Without having advertised for the position of the chair, (Alberta Hansard, 9 April 1986:102) Premier Getty appointed Margaret Leahey. She had been a legislative reporter and was known to present the Alberta Tories in a positive light. Her appointment was controversial because she had no knowledge of frontline work nor of the issues. When asked if she was a feminist she responded: "I've never labelled myself a woman. I label myself as a person," (Smishek, The Edmonton Journal 8 April

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47 Linda Silver Dranoff, "Women Need Voice at the Top," Toronto Star, November 1, 1982.

1986). As well, at that time, there were also rumors that Peter Pocklington was being considered for a position as a Council member.

The hiring of Leahey was seen as a convenient attempt to create a complacent council. The Ontario Advisory Council also experienced the same problem when, after the resignation of Laura Sabia, the next three appointed chairs had no ties to the women's movement (Grant, 1988:88). In 1988 the Calgary YWCA wrote a scathing report on the Council, stating that its members were not well informed on women's issues, that it avoided criticizing the government, and that it did not exert any influence on government policy.

There were instances where the minister responsible for women's issues attempted to limit the focus of the AACWI. In 1987 the Minister of Culture and the women's issues portfolio, Dennis Anderson, stated that abortion was too emotional and non-productive an issue for the council to discuss. He added: "They're best advised to concentrate on issues where they can effect change" (Trethewey, The Edmonton Journal,7 February. 1987).

In addition to attempting to dissuade the AACWI from pursuing certain issues, the ministers did not consult it either. For example after the Supreme Court of Canada struck down the abortion law thereby asserting that Therapeutic Abortion Committees[48] were unconstitutional, Health Minister Marvin Moore revived a ten year old section of the hospital regulations which required that doctors have the patient consult with a second doctor before proceeding. Essentially women were required to obtain two letters from physicians recommending an abortion. The

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48 As pointed out by Bettie Hewes in the Legislature, two Alberta hospitals continued with the TACS's even after the ruling.

council had not been consulted about this measure (Alberta Hansard, 23 March 1988:75).[49]

The council also had severe budget constraints. In 1988 for example, Leahey stated that that the current budget was still $2 000 less than its original start up 1986 budget (McLeod, The Edmonton Journal,16 April 1988). She finally spoke out against the lack of funding saying, "Why is it that this government can find money to help out a ski operator in Nakiska and the money to print the free-trade book, but when it comes to meeting our needs as women, it is always so hard to find the necessary funds?"(The Edmonton Journal,10 November 1988).

Despite these difficult beginnings all the women, with the exception of one that I interviewed spoke favorably of the current Council and the chair Elva Mertick. The women saw the Council as being more competent and in part this was due to the fact that Elaine McCoy, the current minister responsible for women's issues had made better appointments. Moreover, the quality of the Council's research has improved under Mertick. For example, it recently published research on pay equity which is contrary to the government's position. The council seems to be somewhere in the middle between a window of opportunity and mere window dressing. It at least has the potential to serve women.

In contrast to the favorable opinion on the AACWI, all the women interviewed thought that the Secretariat was not accountable to women and neither did it serve them. Respondent A stated that the Committee continued to lobby for the Council because they wanted a body that would possess some autonomy. Her

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49 In response to a question as to whether the Minister Responsible for Women's Issues was consulted about this measure Moore responded: "Insofar as the decisions we've reached thus far in this government, they've been made in our cabinet and discussed in our caucus before being made public, and that will continue to be the case."

organization was not convinced that the Secretariat would serve women. It is difficult for women to know how they actually benefit from the Secretariat because it has no annual report and the public has no access to its research. As well, according to respondent C, the Secretariat does no primary research of its own, and thus relies on federal research and other sources as substitutes to explain and describe the situation of women in Alberta. Furthermore, despite one view that some of the women employed at the Secretariat sometimes produce fairly good results, in the eyes of many women it was seem as constituting a public relations firm for the Minister (Ints. A, B, C, D). The Secretariat has developed an Action Plan (to be discussed in Chapter 3), however, thus far there have only been two "updates" (point form summaries) which outline the initiatives of this plan.

Some women had feared that the Secretariat would be used as a buffer to circumvent direct contact with the ministers. There is some evidence that this has occurred. For example, in 1985 the Committee wrote Dick Johnston and asked to be informed of any conferences or summits which he would attend that year as Minister Responsible for the Status of Women. He replied: "While I can appreciate the Provincial Committee's desire to contribute to federal-provincial discussions on women's issues, it may be preferable to establish a regular communication exchange with the Women's Secretariat."[50]

Overall, the Council was formed because women continued to lobby for it, but it was not obtained until the government itself needed it as a political carrot for the 1986 election. In setting up the Council the government could use it as evidence that it was committed to women's rights. The analysis of the government's discourse show that the government presented itself as the champion of women's

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50 Letter from Dick Johnston to Committee 29 March 1985.

rights but this self presentation was fragmented by the remarks of Musgreave and other MLAs. The difficulties with the initial Council indicate that the government attempted to maintain it as a showpiece and little more. Nevertheless, the mere setting up of the Council demonstrated the acceptance of the legitimacy of feminist concerns.

The examination of the lobby for the Council illuminated another important issue. As ASWAC's evaluation of Joint Initiatives showed, this organization no longer concentrated on examining issues in terms of equal opportunities. In the next chapter I examine difficulties ASWAC encountered in the 1980s.

Chapter 3. Feminist Practice and ASWAC

This chapter is divided into four sections. The first part outlines my general observations on the Edmonton women's movement and lobbying between 1986 and 1989. In this section I focus primarily on ASWAC because it was a key organization in Alberta with one of its original goals being to change legislation. Moreover, as will be shown, the examination of ASWAC provides a means to explore, albeit in a limited manner, the rise in cultural feminism.

The second section of this chapter provides a profile of the feminist groups and projects in Edmonton during the 1980s. I have chosen to limit the description to the city of Edmonton for two reasons. First, I am most familiar with the feminist groups in this city. Second, the government as well as ASWAC's "head office" are located in Edmonton.

The third section describes some of the difficulties that feminist groups in general, and ASWAC in particular, experienced in the 1980s. The fourth section consists of some closing remarks.

3.1 Feminist Lobbying and the Alberta Government, 1986-1989

> When Margaret Atwood wrote of a future society in which women served the state as reproductive slaves, she felt compelled to place her tale in the U.S. Only in a Reaganesque America, she believed, could such a misogynist regime establish itself.
> Atwood felt that to set The Handmaid's Tale anywhere in Canada would tax the story's credibility beyond belief. Even fantasy must be grounded in a semblance of reality.
> Recent events in Alberta raise questions concerning Atwood's assumptions about Canadian social and political life.
> Premier Don Getty's facile dismissal of pay equity, Social Services Minister Connie Osterman's welfare policy, the government's vicious assault on women's abortion rights and its repeated refusal to address the crisis in provincial day-care facilities, threaten to make Atwood's nightmare a reality right here.
> There can no longer be any doubt as to this government's agenda for women.
> (Letter to the Editor, The Edmonton Journal, 10 September 1987)

In the mid-1980s, Alberta politicians seemed to be taking notice of feminist demands. On April 4, 1986, one Edmonton Journal editorial declared, "women's issues are finally getting the attention they deserve from the province." This was the year that the Alberta government established the AACWI. It was also the year that women's groups were invited to the "New Democrats Prioritizing the Agenda for Women Conference" for consultation on policy matters.

In July of 1989, women's issues were once again "getting attention" with the release of the Alberta Women's Secretariat's Alberta Plan for Action for Women: A Proud History, A Bright Future. This document is described as a forward-looking strategy in which the "government will undertake annual initiatives aimed at assisting women to participate fully and equally in all aspects of life in Alberta."[51] The Action Plan consists of six target areas: the family, the work place, education and training, health, community life and the public service. In 1990, Premier Getty proclaimed that this plan constituted a solid indication of his government's commitment to women. Moreover, he claimed that this commitment was also reflected in the spending for selected programs in support of Alberta women, totaling $131 million.[52] (According to respondent C, the government arrived at this sum by asking departments to provide a figure for their respective programs and services which could be considered to be of benefit to women).

Among the women I interviewed, none were aware of any feminist group that was monitoring this Action Plan.[53] Two organizations that I thought would be

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51 "Alberta Plan for Action for Women, 1989-90 Initiatives", Alberta Women's Secretariat pamphlet.

52 "Alberta Plan for Action for Women Update, 1990", Alberta Women's Secretariat brochure.

53 I conducted my formal interviews in the spring and summer of 1991: this time frame allowed for an adequate delay in order to assess if groups, had or were planning to respond in some way to this plan.

amongst the most likely to be scrutinizing this plan, were not: the ND Women's Caucus (Int. G) and ASWAC (Int. H, I). At present, the ND Women's Caucus is concentrating on recruiting women to run for the New Democrats and providing support for them (Int. J). Since 1987, ASWAC's major focus has been the Women Against Poverty Campaign (Int. H, I, K). ASWAC has also been working on redefining its role within the women's movement (Int. H).[54]

Why did the Action Plan produce little response? Marie Laing, the ND Women's Critic, suggested that there was little reaction to this plan because women did not take it very seriously. This suggestion was supported by comments made by two other women who said that some individuals had taken a look at the Action Plan, but that their assessment had led them to conclude that their energies could be better spent elsewhere.[55]

Given Getty's views on family, it is not difficult to understand why this plan provoked little interest. One year before it was released, the Premier announced the following in the Legislature:

> Our initiative is to strengthen the family, to provide reasons why the family is stronger, why mothers will stay in the house, in the family while not having care outside of the house. We will have care in the home: parent care, not institutional care. In our society, Mr. Speaker, too often we have as a result of government programs, the family being detracted from. The family has been under attack in North America (Alberta Hansard, 8 June 1988: 1577)

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[54] In the 1970s there were very few feminist groups, thus, ASWAC was required to respond to a multitude of issues and problems that emerged. The tasks it took on ranged from personal advocacy work, political campaigns, functioning as a referral and information service, aiding to establish groups and to mount services that were not already available, spokesperson for women when contacted by journalists (which they often were) and so on. Given that ASWAC could not cope with this volume of tasks and given that "ASWAC is no longer the only show in town," it has been striving to redefine its goals. It was mentioned that ASWAC was attempting to become a provincial umbrella organization (Int. H).

[55] Comments made by Pat Rasmussen, Director of the Women's Program and Resource Centre and Cathy Bray, Professor of Women's Studies, University of Athabasca.

Purporting to be working for women's equality on the one hand, and then promising "to provide reasons" to keep women in the "house" on the other, lent little credibility to the Action Plan.

Another reason why the Action Plan did not attract much attention, is that there exists a visible gap between the government's political commitment to promoting women's equality and the actual implementation of policies that would work toward this goal. For instance, the government has consistently refused to consider affirmative action programs and pay equity, calling them "reverse discrimination" and "hog wash." A second example which illustrates this gap, is the 1988 Alberta Women's Secretariat study on economic equity. It was heavily criticized by feminists, the New Democrats (Struzik, The Edmonton Journal, 19 January 1989) and the Liberals for its weak methodology and conclusions. For instance, Marie Laing viewed this study as an exercise which merely amounted to "the gathering of information that had already been widely known for over ten years; instead of producing concrete actions, the government was simply producing studies."

Studying issues rather than acting upon them, may be a characteristic of the Action Plan. For example, the Alberta Women's Secretariat announced that it would undertake two studies, one on pay equity and another on women's reproductive health. At the time of my interviews, aside from the announcement of these studies, the respondents had not heard any further information about them (I contacted the Secretariat for information about these studies - I was not able to obtain anything officially).

A final example which reflects this gap is the establishment of programs with limited impact. When questioned about pay equity in the Legislature, Elaine

McCoy, Minister Responsible for Women's Issues, has often responded that the government does not see pay equity as the best solution to women's economic inequality. MLA McCoy has insisted that "Stepping Stones," a program now included within the Action Plan, is a good vehicle for advancing women's economic equality. This program consists of women in non-traditional jobs, volunteering their time to speak to high school students about their profession or trade. While this program is interesting in that it provides role-models and information about career options to girls, as Marie Laing stated in her interview, it does nothing to correct the economic devaluation of jobs predominantly occupied by women, such as day care work. These examples underscore only some of the many ways in which the gap between the political commitment to women's equality and the implementation of measures to achieve this equality is maintained.

Another reason why the plan did not produce much fanfare among feminists is because its potential effectiveness was put into question given that "the government's economic policies penalize women every step of the way" (Int. I). The policies of privatization, downsizing, lay-offs, cut-backs, roll-backs, and zero percent increases have profoundly affected women (LeGras, 1984:5). For example, in 1987, birth control counselling, IUD insertions and sterilization procedures were de-insured from Alberta Health Care as a means to cut spending in difficult economic times. An editorial of The Newsmagazine by Alberta Women summarized the situation in the following way:

> It is indisputable that it will be women who will be hardest hit by this decision, and again, we are being asked to pay the price for a flagging economy while the government bails out the trust companies and oil corporations (July/August 1987:4).

Perhaps the most ironic action of the plan is a 1991-1992 initiative to provide housing in Edmonton for single women with chronic psychological and/or psychiatric problems. In 1987, Hilltop House, an Edmonton shelter for women with such problems, was closed down because the government no longer had the funds to keep it open. The renovated Hilltop House is now the office of the Premier's Council on Alberta Families.

Another reason why feminist groups were not focusing on the Action Plan was that they were attempting to set their own agendas. ASWAC was devoting considerable energy to the topic of the feminization of poverty.[56] Between June and September of 1989, ASWAC held twelve public hearings across the province.

In the 1980s the issue of poverty gained attention both nationally and locally. In 1986 oil prices plummeted and the [illegible]ion recovery that Alberta had anticipated did not materialize. According to James Campbell, Director of the Alberta Summer Institute for Petroleum Industry Development, graphing the province's gross provincial product in constant dollars would demonstrate how "sick our economy was and still is" (The Edmonton Journal, 3 February 1991). Campbell added that " [i]n medical terms the Alberta economy was flat-lining."

Alberta's prosperous image was overtaken by news footage showing how foodbanks' shelves were not being replenished fast enough to keep up with the growing demand. Newspaper articles reported on how social assistance recipients were finding it difficult to manage on the reduced benefits (for example, shelter allowances) and how the working poor could not make ends meet on their inadequate salaries. In 1987, Alberta had the lowest minimum wage in all of Canada (Edmonton Social Planning Council). It was in this year that ASWAC

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[56] See Women Against Poverty, A Report of the Alberta Status of Women Action Committee.

organized the Women Against Poverty (WAP) Campaign which was to serve as a framework for incorporating issues such as pay equity and child care (Int. I). There were six demands:

> 1. Double Alberta's minimum wage to $7.60/hour and extend it to include farm and domestic workers, and youth;
> 2. Raise welfare benefits to the poverty line;
> 3. Extend the Widow's Pension to single and divorced women;
> 4. Develop a publicly funded, universally accessible, quality child care program;
> 5. Reverse the health care cuts - provide safe, accessible abortion and contraceptive counselling;
> 6. Extend benefits to casual and part-time workers (ASWAC Newsletter, 1987, 9(7):7-8).

A mass lobby was considered but abandoned because of organizational difficulties (ibid).

Although some groups continue to put pressure on the Alberta government, there is evidence of a decline in feminist lobbying. Since the early 1980s, ASWAC's focus has shifted away from lobbying. For example, Baradoy describes ASWAC in 1982 in the following manner:

> They began to work as a collective [...]. A greater trust in the power and strength of women became obvious. With that trust the focus of the organization turned almost completely to working with and for women (1985:9).

In 1986, with the establishment of the AACWI, the Provincial Committee for a Coalition on Women's Affairs disbanded. In the same year there was an attempt to erect a formal coalition of Edmonton-based feminist groups, but it did not happen because there was not an adequate response (Int. D).

Having reached this point in my research, three questions surfaced vis-à-vis feminist groups in general, and ASWAC in particular. First, did ASWAC network

with the New Democrats? In other words, was ASWAC consolidated into a counter hegemonic bloc led by the New Democrats? This question emerged because in addition to the NDP's pro-feminist policies, like ASWAC, the official opposition has also been concerned with growing poverty. In the Legislative Assembly, the New Democrats have worked to demonstrate how Getty's rhetoric on the family neglects important issues that directly influence the well-being of families, such as inadequate housing, violence and poverty. Likewise, the ND Party often promotes the discussion of women's issues in the Legislative Assembly. One civil servant told me that the only reason the Secretariat even contemplated doing a pay equity study (one of the plan's initiatives), was because each year the New Democrats introduced a motion on pay equity (Int. C).

My research found that there was very little contact between ASWAC and the New Democrats. Given the current mandate of the ND Women's Caucus, it was not networking with women's groups (Int. J). Moreover, I also found a reluctance on the part of some ASWAC members to work with the NDP. According to some of the respondents, the ND Party, despite its progressive policies on gender equality issues, remained a bastion of patriarchy (Int. A, B, D, H, I). The New Democrats were seen as not always working with women but instead, using them for strategic ends. This attitude was reflected in a few personal anecdotes provided by some of the respondents. For example, after having invited women's groups to a NDP press conference on pay equity, the organizer was surprised when very few women actually attended. Turning to a feminist colleague for an explanation, she replied : "Don't you think women know when they are being used? The next time you plan an event contact women's groups prior to staging it and work with them" (Int. D).

Tupper has remarked that the NDP is known for highlighting the policy areas mismanaged by government, notably those specifically concerning women (1986:103). Whether or not this is merely out of political necessity, remains a point of debate. However, there are several examples where women's equality has been a central argument used versus the government. For example, the New Democrats criticized the PC government's (1984) White Paper: Proposals for an Industrial and Science Strategy for Albertans, 1985 to 1990, for entirely excluding women. In response, they countered with a report entitled A New Democratic Future: Proposals for an Economic Strategy, 1985-1990 whose very first section outlined women and the economy.

Prior to the 1989 election, the New Democrats polled a cluster of 26 ridings. The results of the poll showed that the New Democrats were seen as representing women's issues quite well. However, the poll also suggested that women's issues were not salient among the potential voters. According to several respondents, convincing the ND membership that women's issues are important has been a constant battle.

The second question that arose was, why did ASWAC find it difficult to organize a lobby? The third question I posed was why was there a shift away from lobbying? In examining the difficulties that ASWAC experienced in the 1980s, I found another explication as to why the ND Party and the Tories were not able to hegemonize a segment of feminists: some women's views of social change and their ideas of politics have made them shun formalized politics.

In keeping with my original research question, what factors served to enhance or constrain the policy goals of the women's movement, I will explore, from the perspective of the women I interviewed, the difficulties feminist groups

encountered in the 1980s. Most of these women belonged to more than one feminist organization and therefore, their viewpoints are a product of multiple experiences. However, for the most part, in this chapter I concentrate on the difficulties experienced by ASWAC. In doing so, I will discuss why some women are shunning formalized politics.

For this study, in general, I chose to interview feminists who had long term involvement in the local women's movement and who were key organizers in the last decade. Given this criteria, the views of younger feminists are not represented in this chapter. The women interviewed all range between the ages of thirty-seven to sixty, with the exception of three who were in their early thirties. Of the fourteen women, seven were married, four were single and three were divorced. None of the single women had children; two of the married women were childless. Of the eight remaining, each had between one and five children. All but two had a university degree. All were white and only one did not identify herself as middle-class.

The demographic profile of this sample does not necessarily represent the composition of the women who were involved in the local women's movement; however, it does reflect the leadership of the three major groups that I contacted: the Committee, ASWAC and the ND Women's Caucus.

Before turning to the discussion on the difficulties feminist groups encountered in the 1980s, I provide a description of the local feminist movement. This profile will serve to situate ASWAC within its broader milieu.

3.2 The Feminist Mosaic in Edmonton: a Description

Throughout the last decade feminism was the subject of several obituaries. According to Gwen Landolt of REAL Women, feminism has become so unpopular that politically attuned feminists are now borrowing ideas from her organization's platform in an attempt to save their movement (The Alberta Report, 22 September 1986). In November of 1982, at AFWUF's first annual conference, Phyllis Schlafly brought the "feminism is dead" message to Edmonton. Before an audience of about two hundred, Schlafly proclaimed that although feminism had been a dominant ideology of the 1970s, it went out of style in mid-1982 (Dedyna, The Edmonton Journal, 21 November 1982). However, when one looks at the local feminist movement, a very different picture emerges.

In the early 1970s, there was only a handful of feminist groups in Edmonton (see Appendix 4), but in the 1980s many groups were formed such as Edmonton Working Women, Celebration of Women in the Arts, Abortion by Choice, Women of Colour, Alberta Society of Women Against Violence, Edmonton Women's Collective, Every Woman's Place, Alliance Against Sexual Harassment, Edmonton Women's Health Collective, Changing Together Centre for Immigrant Women, the Women's Research Centre, the Women's Disarmament Campaign and so on (see Appendix 3). In addition to these organizations, support groups have emerged around specific issues, as have numerous small reading and theory groups.

The growth in the local grass-roots movement perhaps can best be described as a cultural revolution. According to Respondent D and H, in the 1970s women were hard pressed to find feminist activities in Edmonton; however, now there are so many things happening that it is impossible to attend everything. A primary goal

of some local feminists has been to create spaces for women and, in pursuing this objective, they have engaged in numerous projects.

In 1979, three women opened the first feminist bookstore in Edmonton, Common Woman Books. Until its closure in January of 1992, it regularly held feminist readings. For three seasons (1989-1991), Edmonton hosted InSight, a women's film festival. Between 1982 and 1985, Every Woman's Place, a drop-in centre for women and their children, was a place to meet, develop activities and share information. In the mid 1980s the Women's Building was founded. It was a building where several groups and feminist businesses rented space. Since 1980, Womonspace, a lesbian organization, has provided cultural activities and a referral and information service.[57] The Edmonton Women's Music Collective sponsors four women's dances a year that mark the summer and winter solstices and the spring and fall equinoxes. Some women, who grew weary of the degrading portrayals they saw in their work on pornography and the media, organized a successful photo and slide display entitled Positive Images of Women. There also have been countless conferences, festivals and concerts.

In addition to these projects, Edmonton feminists have been involved in the production of a women's newspaper, The Webspinner (1983-1984), two magazines, Branching Out (1970-1981) and The News Magazine by Alberta Women (1985-87) and three networking newsletters: The Movement (1988-1989), Crosswires (1989-) and Generic Women's Newsletter of the WPRC (1989-).

The WPRC has played a vital role in organizing and sponsoring feminist events since 1981. Although it is a program of the Faculty of Extension of the

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[57] I have included Womonspace although there has been some debate as to whether or not this organization's perspective can be qualified as feminist.

University of Alberta, the WPRC aims to "extend the services and resources of the university into the community and to encourage the university to broaden its commitment to serve the needs of women" (Rasmussen, 1991:3). The titles of the courses it offers, reveal that the WPRC provides many subjects that are not represented in mainstream academic institutions or in personal development centres. The WPRC has provided a diversity of courses that includes: Investment Planning for Women, Compulsive Eating and Body Image, Self-Esteem for Women, Women and Anger, Lesbian Sexuality, Sisters in Partnership and Feminist Practice: Working in Groups. (One woman, who worked for the WPRC in its early years, commented that the WPRC certainly has come a long way from the days when the Faculty of Extension once returned a course description with the word feminist circled in red and a big question mark beside it!)

In Edmonton, there has also been an increasing interest in women centred spirituality. This has been reflected in mainstream bookstores stocking a vast array of books dealing with this topic, including the works of StarHawk. The growing interest in this orientation is also revealed by the fact that the WPRC gave two courses in women's spirituality in 1990.

In addition to all these developments, there has been an increasing number of feminist psychologists in Edmonton, some of whom teach courses for the WPRC. As well, in 1991 the WPRC instituted the Counselling Women Certificate Program, an educational program which combines contemporary feminist theory with the practice of counselling.

Despite the decline in lobbying in the 1980s, some Edmonton feminists have continued to work toward influencing the political system. Many feminists worked for the election of Edmonton's first female mayor, Jan Reimer and for the

elections of other women in provincial politics, notably Marie Laing. In 1983 there was an all women campaign committee for the October municipal elections and, in 1980, there was the Women Organize Alberta summer school.

As well, ASWAC has organized or participated in numerous campaigns around issues such as the Matrimonial Property Act, pay equity, child care, reproductive rights, the Widow's Pension Act and Maintenance Enforcement. Likewise, single issue groups have organized around their respective causes: Abortion by Choice around reproductive rights, Edmonton Working Women around employment issues, and the Alberta Council of Women's Shelters around violence, for example.

Finally, several organizations are involved in service delivery: for example, the women's shelters, the Edmonton Sexual Assault Centre, Options for Women (employment skills and planning) and Edmonton Working Women (sexual harassment, unfair labour practices).

This description of the groups and activities of the local women's movement is not an exhaustive one. Moreover, some of the groups that I have mentioned no longer exist. Yet, it appears that as some groups fold, others emerge according to community needs.

What is the relationship between these groups? Pat Rasmussen (1991) describes the movement in the following manner:

> There is no singular "women's community" just as there is no one feminist perspective. In general, diversity and ad hoc connections probably best describe the nature of the relationships between women's organizations in Alberta. Formalized agreements are sometimes created for the duration of cosponsored activities or particular undertakings, but few on-going structural ties exist.

Having described the groups, the activities and shape of the local women's movement, I now turn to the examination of the difficulties ASWAC experienced in the 1980s. Some of these difficulties were internal to ASWAC, others were external.

In chapter two we saw that ASWAC's evaluation of Joint Initiatives, six years after it had been written, demonstrated that ASWAC no longer viewed the ideas of equal opportunity as being adequate. When I first set out on this research, I hypothesized that one of the reasons why ASWAC's emphasis shifted away from lobbying was that its dominant perspective changed from liberal/reformist to radical.

There exists several typologies of feminist perspectives. A common classification of feminist perspectives are the three categories of liberal, radical and socialist (Jagger, 1983). Jagger describes radical feminism's view of social change in the following manner:

> In the long run, radical feminism seeks to build a womanculture, a new society informed by the radical feminist values of wholeness, trust and nurturance, of sensuality, joy and wildness. In order to create such a society, radical feminists need to prepare themselves. They need a womanspace, a space free from male intrusion. In this space, women can nurture each other and themselves. They can begin to practice their own values and become clearer about them by doing so. They can develop the skills and the strengths forbidden to women under patriarchy. They can begin to lay the foundations on which the womanculture will be built (1983:270).

In examining the difficulties that arose within ASWAC, it was not ideological differences per se that created divisions. For example, there appears to have been a shared belief in the limits of liberal reforms and the importance of working to empower women. It appeared to be the differences in feminist practice that created dissension among certain members. Ryan's (1986) typology of feminist

practices which consists of expressive/interactive activism and political activism (discussed in chapter one) is useful for describing ASWAC's practices. This is not to say that these differences in ideological perspectives do not exist within ASWAC. However, in examining the internal divisions it experienced, the differences in expressive versus political activism were revealed to be of a greater source of contention. This is discussed within the following section.

3.3 Difficulties in the 1980s

The following interview questions generated some animated discussion: In your view, what were the major obstacles that the movement encountered in the 1980s? In your view, what were the major obstacles encountered by your organization in the 1980s? Below I outline the responses that were given most frequently.

3.3.1 The PC Government and its Focus on Strengthening Families

> Our house is a very very very fine house
> With two cats in the yard
> Life used to be so hard
> But now everything is easy
> because of you
> (Crosby, Stills and Nash)
>
> Home is where the heart is
> Home is so remote
> Home is just emotion
> sticking in my throat
> Let's go to your place
> (Lena Lovitch)

The PC provincial government was identified as a major obstacle for the women's movement (Int. A-J). In particular, several of the respondents were disturbed by the Tories' emphasis on "strengthening families" given the right wing views of several of the Conservative MLAs (Int. B, C, I, K). In 1988, Premier

Getty expressed his concern over the "disintegration of the family" and he vowed to take action to reverse this trend (Alberta Hansard, 9 June 1988: 1606). In his view, the family is the basic unit of society, and thus, the well-being of society depends upon the well-being of this unit. Accordingly, the root of social problems is the disintegration of the family. This idea has surfaced in the Legislature on many occasions. For example, in her maiden speech, Conservative MLA McClellan claimed to see

> ...a correlation between [the family's] dissolution and the cry for more in the way of social services. The underlying causes of many of our social problems can be traced to the disintegration of the family, and until greater unity is restored, social ills too abundant to tolerate will continue to plague us (Alberta Hansard, 11 April 1988:341).

Therefore, following this logic, in order to restore the (moral and economic) social order, the family must be resuscitated. This ideological perspective of the family is called familialism. Patriarchal definitions and ideals of how men, women, and children should behave are basic to familialism (Luxton, 1987:238). Thus, this ideology prescribes that the best way to live is in traditional nuclear families in which the adult members are married, heterosexual couples. Thus, according to this model, the more citizens stray from this ideal, the more social upheaval will occur.

Thus far, Premier Getty has promised to allot $100 million for the construction of tennis courts and skating rinks as a measure to promote family togetherness (Laghi, The Edmonton Journal, 7 October 1988). In 1989, he set up the Premier's Council in Support of Families, (heretofore referred to as the Family Council) and in 1990 Getty designated the third Monday in February as a statutory holiday known as "Alberta Family Day."

The major concern, expressed by one civil servant, was that given the composition of the members in the PC Caucus who favored this right wing view of families, the resources allotted to women's programs would be reduced:

> This Premier's Council will, I suspect, be something that's far more powerful. The involvement in the Action Plan is small compared to involvement in the development of the family policy grid which is tied into the work of the Premier's Council. That grid has every department involved whereas, the Action Plan has quite a few departments that opted out because they didn't think they did anything specific for women - like Economic Development and Trade (Int. C).

At one point, a rumor was circulated that the AACWI and the new Family Council would be combined (The Edmonton Journal,Editorial, 11 March 1989).

In the event that there was some truth to this rumor, some feminists lobbied McCoy to make known their disagreement with the possibility of this merger (Int. A, D). The councils were not combined. Nevertheless, the fear that the family agenda would take precedence over resources for women's programs, expressed by respondent C, may not be unfounded: in 1991 the Women's Career Centre was axed from the Department of Career Development and Employment.

The focus on family has also permeated a major funding source of women's groups. At a networking meeting of women's organizations in January of 1991,[58] a representative from the Secretary of State Women's Program informed the women that family is a project priority for the next five years. This criteria for project funding will exclude funding of other issues set by the women's groups themselves. This has already occurred with the Secretary of State's policy not to

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58 Minutes, Public Awareness Against Sexual Stereotyping Networking Meeting, 22 January 1991.

fund organizations whose primary focus is to promote a view on sexual orientation (Ross, 1988).

Another concern expressed was that the government, in regard to its agenda on family, was excluding feminists from its consultation process. For example, many church and community groups were invited to a planning session for the Lieutenant Governor's Conference on Alberta Families: ASWAC had not been contacted (Int. K). A member of ASWAC attended the following planning session after telephoning and inviting herself (Int. K). Many women's organizations were not invited to the conference nor did they receive information about the event. Groups such as Win House, an Edmonton women's shelter, and the Indo-Canadian Women's Association were excluded (Bremner, The Edmonton Journal, 21 February, 1990).

Violence has become a major issue for feminists in the 1980s. Problematic for feminists is Getty's vision of domestic violence, especially because women and children continue to be turned away from emergency shelters due to lack of space. In the Legislative Assembly, Getty stated that family violence is a "very small part of family problems" and asserted that:

> We are not going to zero in on that part. We will help, and we support initiatives in that area. But for me a family is a place where love is at work, not destruction and battery, and we are going to try and build in this province a greater strength of families (Alberta Hansard, 8 June 1988: 1577).

There has been some improvement in the government's treatment of family violence in recent years, in terms of increased funding for women's shelters in the

province.[59] The government has also attempted to promote public awareness of the problem through a public education campaign and through the distribution of literature from the Office for the Prevention of Family Violence. These measures demonstrate some progress. In addition, my reading of the Alberta Hansard, from 1987 to 1989, indicated that compared to previous years, (despite a few exceptions), there is a greater sensitivity to, and understanding of, the physical, emotional, and mental abuse of women. In 1985, for example, Conservative MLA Szwender expressed concern that the government would be expected to take on a larger burden of the funding of shelters. He stated the following:

> The government is asked to take action for the irresponsibility of certain individuals. We in this Legislature all believe in freedom of choice. One of those freedoms is who we want to love, who we choose to marry or live with. When those relationships fail, those individuals begin to rely heavily on the government to extricate them from the difficulties in which they find themselves and often those difficulties end up in family violence. ...Again does the government have a responsibility to rectify situations which individuals have put themselves in through their own choice? (Alberta Hansard, 28 May 1985:1214).

Despite that most government members have progressed beyond this view, some respondents argued that the difficulty remains that the Tories refuse to incorporate a feminist perspective on family violence (Int. B, D, H, K). This would demand measures that would go beyond "band-aid solutions."

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[59] The provincial government has been able to recover half of its costs to shelters through a federal program since the end of the 1986-87 budget year (Moysa, The Edmonton Journal, 22 January 1991).

3.3.2 Government Cutbacks

The government's cutbacks in social services affected feminist organizations like ASWAC. Organizing to counter these cuts proved time consuming as did the personal advocacy work conducted on behalf of the individuals who turned to ASWAC for help. Thus, in the difficult economic times, much of the feminist work focused on delivering services to women in need; therefore, less time was available for political advocacy (Int. I).

3.3.3 Anti-feminism

A major political development in the 1980s was the rise in neo-conservatism in several industrialized countries, notably the Thatcher administration in Britain and the Reagan administration in the United States. Canada experienced a shift to the political right with the election of the Progressive Conservatives in 1984. In the late 1980s the Alberta Tories were braced by Social Credit Premier Vander Zalm in British Columbia and by Conservative Premier Devine in Saskatchewan.

A unifying theme of neo-conservatism is the criticism of the excesses of liberalism (Eisenstein, 1984). Government programs to promote equality of opportunity are considered excessive. Thus, the New Right opposes such feminist demands as affirmative action and pay equity.

Nonetheless, the opposition to feminism is not simply a by-product of neo-conservative economic policies and philosophy on the role of the state. As Eisenstein underlines, "The New Right thinks that the welfare state is in some sense responsible for undermining the traditional patriarchal family by taking over

different family functions, notably the health, welfare, and education of individuals" (1984:40).

Like Eisenstein, Tusscher also views the changing status of women to be related to the political shift to the right. Tusscher asserts that "the changing position of women is of major significance in the establishment of a sufficient characterization of the New Right" (1986: 75). According to Tusscher, it was women's demands for abortion, their rejection of heterosexual marriage, their insistence to organize autonomously within the political realm and the women's movement that highlighted the depths of sexism in both the private and public realms that prompted a crisis in patriarchy. It was this crisis that promoted the birth of the Moral Majority.

In Alberta, the Reform Party of Canada is the party whose philosophy comes closest to the New Right's ideas on the welfare state. The Reform Party's Principles and Policies (1990), reads the following under its section entitled, "Alternatives to the Welfare State":

> We would actively encourage families, communities, non-governmental organizations, and the private sector to reassume [sic] their duties and responsibilities (p.20).

As for the Alberta Progressive Conservatives, they have typically represented their party's philosophy as one which embraces "conservative" economic policies and "progressive" social policies. The government's Caring and Responsibility: A Statement of Social Policy for Alberta (1988) indicates that the Tories are moving toward more "conservative" social policies. For example, this document states that:

> With changes in Alberta's economy, we are left with the legacy of these [high] expectations in a time of fiscal restraint. The economic factor, along with the need for better coordination of services, indicates that it is both timely and necessary to reassess the full range of services which government provides (p.6).

Beyond these political parties which help shape the overall political climate, ASWAC has been directly challenged by "the New Right, in the form of anti-choice proponents [who] had deliberately chosen the tactic of being present at the ASWAC conferences intending to throw spokes into the feminist wheel" (LeGras, 1984:84-85). According to AFWUF, at the 1981 ASWAC conference, some women were prevented from participating in a workshop because of their pro-life views (Long, 1986). Consequently, these women joined together and formed the first contemporary anti-feminist organization in Canada under the name of the Alberta Federation of Women United for Families. Its objectives are:

> To promote and defend legislation which protects the traditional family unit;
> To recognize and improve the value of women and their contributions in all areas of society;
> To sponsor seminars, conferences and study sessions whereby women may learn how they can contribute to society by upholding the Judeo-Christian ethic;
> To provide a vehicle, for women who defend the right to life of the unborn, to enable them to express concern for women's rights to all levels of government.[60]

In the early 1980s, AFWUF gained visibility by sponsoring the well-known American anti-feminist Phyllis Schlafly to speak in Edmonton. AFWUF also worked to gain support for MLA Chickak's private member's bill, The Alberta

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60 It is interesting to note that AFWUF has not been totally immune to feminism. This is illustrated by its second goal which reads "to recognize and improve the value of women and their contributions in all areas of society." In contrast, in its literature in the early 1980s, it emphasized the role of wife and mother. For example, one of its stated goals was "Education of women who feel unsure about their vital role as homemakers, parents and educators" (AFWUF, 1982 Conference Program).

Adoptions Foundation Act, tabled during the 1981 fall session. This bill proposed to make funds available to single pregnant women under the age of twenty-five, who were experiencing financial problems. The funding was conditional in that the child had to be given up for adoption (LeGras, 1984). In response to the ideas espoused by AFWUF, a coalition for the diversity of families, comprised of sixteen organizations was organized (Lenz, Gateway, 30 November 1982). ASWAC was a member of this coalition. In 1982, Chichak once again brought up her bill for discussion in the Legislature; shortly after, she lost the nomination in her riding. After Chickak's defeat, the coalition was not activated.

Whereas ASWAC has reduced its emphasis on lobbying the Alberta government, AFWUF's major focus has been to put pressure on the Tories. This emphasis is highlighted in its document entitled Good Citizens, Good Government Manual. This document is a "how to lobby" manual. As well, throughout various AFWUF newsletters, members are urged to lobby the government on numerous issues. Lists of politicians and their addresses are provided fairly regularly as are examples of how to write a letter to a MLA or MP. In addition to AFWUF's "feminism is dead" notion, this group has, somewhat contradictorily, also expressed the idea that its members must lobby because feminists are controlling the governments' agendas. For example, the 1989-1990 message from the AFWUF president, Bernadette Lougheed, reads:

> Individuals who belong to these [feminist and gay rights] groups, often put their own careers first, and so are in positions of power where they can influence change to their liking. What this means is that it is no longer possible to peacefully and quietly raise your family and be oblivious to the political climate of the nation.

AFWUF has submitted numerous briefs to the government making known their opposition to abortion, pay equity, homosexuality and so forth. They have also received money from the Alberta Women's Secretariat project funding, and the Secretariat of State Women's Program. In addition, they have written to some of the funding sources of ASWAC in an attempt to have its funding cut. There is some evidence that AFWUF has the support of some influential politicians (Long, 1985).

In concluding this section, I wish to underscore that AFWUF espouses a perspective that ignores the very real economic difficulties that women experience -- those which ASWAC have documented in its WAP report. For example, one article in AFWUF's September 1989 newsletter encourages women to attempt to stay at home by finding ways to supplement a single income. The author Charlene Schramm, suggests ways to earn extra money: taking in other children, distributing cosmetics, starting a catering service, typing term papers for students, cleaning other people's houses, selling vegetables and baked goods at the farmers' markets, and designing and knitting sweaters, are some of the examples she provides. Yet, in the end, she admits that if she were to work out the hourly wage of her "job" of gardening, she probably makes "about fifty cents per hour" (p.13).

3.3.4 Funding

In 1989-90, the Edmonton office of the Secretary of State Women's Program commissioned a study to examine the organizational development needs of women's groups: the results indicated that fund raising was the number one organizational concern. In Alberta, the government does not provide operational funding to women's groups. Some money is available through the Alberta Women's Secretariat for projects such as annual general meetings. Each year

AFWUF and ASWAC receive equal amounts (Int. C). The funding situation has worsened with the federal cuts to the Women's Program. In 1989 the budget was cut by 15% and another 15%, or $1.6 million dollars in 1990. One woman described the relationship between ASWAC and the government as a cycle of battery and poverty (Int. H).

3.3.5 Proliferation of Issues and Diversity

The proliferation of issues has also constituted a source of difficulty in the 1980s. With changing social, political and economic conditions, there arise new social realities and issues to address. One feminist described the experience of her group having to face such a problem, in the following manner: "too many issues expanded our arena, the old ones haven't been solved and both the old and the new keep changing" (Int. D).

As well, an increase in the volume and type of concerns that demanded the attention of women's groups sometimes accompanied periods of reorganization or a change in objectives:

> As ASWAC changed its focus to reach an increasing number of women a whole new set of concerns needed to be addressed. In a society where the vast majority of women live in poverty and where violence is a reality of many women's lives, the process of reaching out is not so straightforward as it seems. It involves dealing, in some way, with the immediate concerns of individual women. And these rarely fit neatly into a political campaign. [...] the feeling of constantly reacting to a number of different concerns can be very frustrating (Mitchell, 1986:7).

This proliferation of issues - in number and in type - constituted a challenge to feminist organizing, particularly in regard to cohesion and mobilization.

Women's energies have become dispersed among the multitude of issues. As one woman recounted:

> In the 1970s there was a single issue the Matrimonial Property Act that women could unite around, it is becoming increasingly difficult to find a single issue that many women can unite around.[61]

Related to the proliferation of issues, is the growing diversity or heterogeneity in the women's movement and the difficulties it too entails. While differences among feminists have always been present to some degree, both in terms of their practice and theory (differing perspectives, objectives, strategies, etc.) as well as in regard to their "politics of identity" (Adamson et al, 1988:249), the differences concerning "identity" have become increasingly important.

The increased recognition of "differences" and of the necessity to consider their significance and consequences for feminist practice/theory has come about not only because of an increase in the number of differences within the feminist movement, but also because this issue has become increasingly present in debates occurring within different organizations. Often these debates have been generated by critiques which underscore the "tension between power/privilege and oppression" existing among women (Adamson et al, 1988:107) and thus, introduced questions concerning the complexity of interactions between gender, class, race and sexual orientation. For example, black and native feminists who identify racism within the movement and lesbians who critique heterosexuality as an institution identify the tensions in the women's community. The shift in the way that feminists conceptualize the category of "women" (as well as the women's movement) as being non-homogeneous reflects in part this realization.

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61 ASWAC Newsletter, April 1982, 3(2).

3.3.6 Politics of Making Change

> Among ourselves, the big topic of the day seems to be that of whether we should continue to interact with "the system", and try to influence it directly by participating in the process set out for us; or whether to withdraw our energies, thus denying the system our validation of its harmful processes and using these energies, instead to empower other women (LeGras, 1984:135).

When ASWAC formed it had two primary objectives: to lobby the Alberta government for the improvement of social conditions affecting women, and to be a massive network of Alberta women (Baradoy, 1985:5). This latter goal was accomplished to a large extent, because by 1980 ASWAC's membership had risen to nearly eight hundred (Mitchell, 1986:6). In the early years, ASWAC maintained a strong emphasis on lobbying, but by the early 1980s its orientation became one of public education. Baradoy (1985) identified three developmental phases in this organization. She labeled the first stage as the "government relations phase" (1975-1979), the second as the "issues phase" (1979-1982) and the third as the "restructuring phase" (1982-1986).

From 1979 to 1982, as ASWAC began to take on more and more issues, it was required to have more committees and subcommittees. Consequently, according to Baradoy,

> it ended up being much more structured and bureaucratic [...] More than one of the women I interviewed expressed great frustration over this structure (1985:8).

This frustration led to internal debates and discussions about ASWAC's organizational structure; there was a lack of power sharing and democracy that

culminated in what Baradoy described as a "disastrous Annual General Meeting in 1982." She summarized the outcome as follows:

> Hours of endless and pointless discussion resulted in two-thirds of the assembly members leaving, fed-up, before any decisions had actually been made. It was felt that, stemming from the poor outcome of the meeting, the unspoken mandate to the new board was to unbureaucratize ASWAC (p.9).

(This meeting was discussed in my interviews with respondents A, D, and H).

The restructuring of ASWAC consisted of eliminating hierarchal structures. Therefore, the Robert's Rules of Order were discarded and executive positions were eliminated. ASWAC "began to work as a collective, that is, as a consensual all inclusive (e.g., including staff as equal and with a vote), non-hierarchal group" (Baradoy, 1985:9).

Throughout the years a variety of experimental forms were tried. At one point minutes were not recorded and the meetings began with a round-table where each woman, if she chose, shared her personal thoughts and feelings. There was no time limit placed on the women, so they could speak for as long as they wanted (Int. D).

This approach was criticized as reducing this organization to "personal group therapy sessions" (Baradoy, 1985:9). Respondent D argues that it was impossible to get any political work done, given this growing emphasis on cultural feminism. In 1984 the structure of ASWAC was officially changed. The controversy that this change brought was reflected in the fact that the 1984-1985 Board was dubbed "the Board that didn't do anything" (Int. H, D).

Baradoy provides the following reflection on the issue:

> It seems clear that through the phases of ASWAC's history there was a shift away from working with political power and towards working with woman power. But by some this may be viewed more as a struggle between two different approaches to achieving the organization's goals rather than a shift in focus (1985:9).

Indeed, Respondent I claimed that ASWAC's emphasis depends upon the composition of its staff and Board at any given time.

This tension in ASWAC illustrated the differences in feminist practice orientations that Ryan described. Those members who were interested in working with women through cultural feminist means were frustrated by the bureaucracy of ASWAC and the emphasis on lobbying. In contrast, members who viewed political action as the primary source of social change were irritated by what they saw as individuals becoming preoccupied with their own liberation and the abandonment of seeking broader social change for all women. In closing this section, I want to clarify the differences between cultural and radical feminism. These terms are often used synonymously or as subsets of one another. Willis distinguishes between them in the following way:

> The great majority of women who presently call themselves 'radical feminists' in fact subscribe to a politics more accurately labelled 'cultural feminist'. That is, they see the primary goal of feminism as freeing women from the imposition of so-called 'male values', and creating an alternative culture based on 'female values'. Cultural feminism is essentially a moral, countercultural movement aimed at redeeming its participants, while radical feminism began as a political movement to end male supremacy in all areas of social and economic life, and rejected the whole idea of opposing male and female natures and values as a sexist idea, a basic part of what we were fighting (1984:91 in Adamson, et al, 1989:66).

I will now move into my discussion on Burnout where I will include examples of who withdrew from the movement as a result of these personal and political tensions.

3.3.7 Burnout

> Older feminists are not tired of feminism and they are not tired of making change - - they're tired of the movement and its difficulties (Int. D).

It takes a high level of commitment to feminism to work within organizations like ASWAC. It is precisely because women are so highly committed that they ignore their own signs of stress and fatigue. Burnout has been a major problem.

Working within a feminist group can be a very invigorating experience. It can also be a very exhausting one. ASWAC has operated with inadequate funding and with volunteer labour. Moreover, because funding is usually based on a project-by-project basis, staff turnover is endless. Thus, the continuity of the organization is hard to maintain. Likewise, new staff, employed for a short-term period, are required to quickly integrate into the organization and "learn the ropes." Moreover, there is usually more work than is humanly possible to accomplish.

In addition to the poor working conditions, feminists' energies have been drained by the overall social context which often seems overwhelming. Burnout is reflected in the following letter of resignation:

> Part of it is a simple lack of faith that anything will ever change and the only way I can see to regain some hope, creativity and energy both for myself and the movement is to leave it for a while.[62]

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62 This letter was found in the ASWAC files.

3.4 Discussion

I began this chapter by identifying some general observations drawn from my research. First, the government's Alberta Plan for Action for Women: A Proud History, A Bright Future received little attention from women's groups. Neither ASWAC nor the ND Women's Caucus were monitoring the plan. Furthermore, of all the women I interviewed, both informally and formally, none was aware of any group that was "watchdogging" the plan.

The lack of attention given to this plan can be explained by a few factors. The interviews with members of ASWAC and the ND Women's Caucus indicated that these groups were concentrating on their own agendas. These interviews also revealed that the Action Plan had little credibility among women for three reasons:
1) the gap between the Tories' political commitment to sexual equality and the lack of policies implemented to achieve this goal;
2) Premier Getty's right-wing views on women and family;
3) and the Tories' economic policies that penalize women.

The second observation drawn from this research was that between 1986 and 1989, there was virtually no networking between the Alberta New Democrats and ASWAC. In 1986 many women's groups, including ASWAC, attended a New Democrat policy conference on women. However, since then, little contact has been maintained between ASWAC and the New Democrats. The lack of cooperation on common issues seems, in part, related to the negative view of party politics in general and of the New Democrats specifically. However, the lack of networking may also be a result of the New Democrats' view of ASWAC.

The third observation made was that there is a general decline in lobbying, specifically in ASWAC. A mass lobby had been planned for the WAP campaign

although it was abandoned due to organizational difficulties. This final observation led me to investigate the difficulties ASWAC had experienced in the 1980s. According to the women I interviewed the major obstacles were as follows:

- the Alberta government and specifically its particular (right-wing) emphasis on family;
- the cuts in social programs which created a greater burden on ASWAC both in terms of organizing against these cuts and assisting the individuals who were directly affected by them;
- antifeminism;
- funding;
- the proliferation in issues and growing diversity within the movement;
- burnout;
- and ASWAC members turning away from formalized politics which was seen as inhibiting political work.

The emergence of cultural feminism generates some interesting questions that merit exploration; however, they cannot be answered within the parameters of this research. In my thesis, 1983 was identified as a turning point in the local women's movement. This prompts questions such as: Why did cultural feminism surface around 1983? Were there factors specific to Alberta's milieu in the early 1980s that promoted this orientation?

In searching for answers to these questions, the first important step would be to outline what is specifically meant by cultural feminism. For the purpose of this thesis, cultural feminism was loosely defined in terms of practice and goals. In addition, when looking for factors specific to Alberta to explain the rise in cultural

feminism, the broader social context must be examined. For instance, cultural feminism has occurred simultaneously with the outgrowth of the human potential movement. That is, a movement which is centred on seeking alternatives, searching for meaning, connectedness and escape from the boredom and frustration with the status quo. Women have not only been attracted to the feminist movement to work toward social change: many have come seeking to transform their own lives. For example, in the 1980s several women who had never lobbied or been involved in political activities were drawn to the women's movement : they were seeking personal development.

As well, in seeking alternatives, women have been looking back to the past. The appearance of books such as Merlin Stone's (1978) When God was a Woman and Starhawk's (1979) A Spiral Dance: A Rebirth of the Ancient Religion of the Great Goddess, has encouraged further exploration of alternatives. Many of the goals of the women's movement could never be realized by the state or contained within a party platform. For instance, one aim of the feminist project is to reclaim women's hearts and minds from patriarchy (Spender, 1983; Finn, 1989; French; 1985).

The redefinition of power and politics has played a role in the evolution of cultural feminism. Feminist theory, literature and politics have served to sharpen our understanding of power and the multiple ways it manifests:

> the feminists rethinking of the nature of politics opened to view a multiplicity of political fields in everyday life, where women as individuals or in small groups could take effective action. This "de-centred" the state - removed it from centre stage- in the feminist conception of politics (Magnusson, 1990:535).

Elements of cultural feminism have always been present in feminist movements. Part of building a movement involves creating a women's culture. The profile of the local feminist movement shows that creating spaces for women, the Women's Building, Everywoman's Place, and Common Woman Books, for example, was a central activity of local feminists. In working in community with other women one can experience an immense sense of collective female power - - something like taking a women only wilderness trip. The format of women working in all female groups and the positive feelings of empowerment may have been one factor encouraging women to be receptive to cultural feminism.

Thus, in examining the rise in cultural feminism in Alberta in the early 1980s, the broad social context, as well as the internal developments of the women's movement, would need to be addressed. In one interview, respondent D stated that the increasing focus on violence was an important factor in the rise in cultural feminism. In the 1970s violence against women was not talked about - - it was not even discussed in ASWAC until around 1980. This, as well as the influence of the feminist activists on West Coast, may be two elements which could be examined in the exploration of cultural feminism in Alberta.

In conclusion, I will briefly discuss the Alberta government's vision vis-à-vis women. This chapter began with a letter to the editor of The Edmonton Journal which likened the policies of the Alberta government to those of the state in Atwood's novel, The Hand Maid's Tale. Some of the government's discourse may leave the impression that it is striving to return women to the home; however, there is another side to this story.

According to the government's Caring and Responsibility: A Statement of Social Policy For Alberta, already by 1982 "only 34% of husband-wife families in

Alberta had just the husband as the sole income recipient" (1988:7). Alberta has the highest female labour force participation rate and nearly 64% of married women were in the labour force in 1986 (Statistics Canada, 1989 quoted in PRL Survey Highlights, 1989). Currently 71% of married women in Alberta are employed (Beauchesne, The Edmonton Journal, 25 October 1991). The increase in women's participation in the labour force has contributed economically to the province through taxes. Moreover, a second income has permitted many families to stay out of poverty. The ASWAC report, Women Against Poverty indicated that "of two-spouse families surveyed in Canada in 1981, 61% would have fallen below the poverty line had the woman not worked outside the home" (p.7). It also reported that 46% of working women in Alberta are the sole support of their families. Thus, it is very much in the interest of the ruling party to have women in the labour force so that the welfare rolls do not swell. Moreover, women's participation in the labour force is beneficial to the economy. (In 1986 it was reported that in a news conference Premier Getty had responded to a question by exclaiming what is wrong with women in the labour force, don't you know they're a cheap source of labour!)

In chapter two we saw that in the 1970s and the mid 1980s when parties were in opposition or declining in popularity, they showed an interest in the demands of women's groups. However, in the 1989 election family issues eclipsed gender equality issues. Why this emphasis on family now? There are multiple reasons but I will only outline a few. The emphasis on family in part stems from the real concern with the strain that families are experiencing. Yet, the focus on family is also a political strategy. The Progressive Conservatives' popularity has been declining since the mid-1980s. One Angus Reid Group-Southam News poll suggests that if the Reform Party ran in the next provincial election, the Tories

might not win a single seat (Danylchuk, The Edmonton Journal, 20 December 1990). When the Reform Party was excluded from the possible parties to vote for, the ND Party received 36%, the Liberals 35% and the PC Party 28% of decided voters.

Support for the Conservatives lies with the southern rural population of Alberta, whereas in the city of Edmonton the PC Party holds only two of the possible seventeen seats. In presenting the Tories as the defender of the family, it appears that the government saw some possible political dividends with the voters in southern Alberta. In fact the 1989 election focused on family with Getty announcing "Our fight for families and against drugs has never been tried before in Alberta...I need the help of Albertans in this fight" (Duncan, The Edmonton Journal, 21 February 1989).

In addition, another reason for the emphasis on families is explained by McDaniel in the following passage:

> In situating the causes of "social unrest" with families rather than capitalism, government policies or spending priorities, the problems people notice are not only privatized, but defined as being of their doing, rather than the doing of governments, big business or massive historical changes (1989:8).

Does the government have some overall vision for women? The answer appears to be no. In an Edmonton Journal column entitled "Alberta Tories a confused lot" Mark Lisac, reporting on a PC policy conference, summed it up by stating that the Tories have no common vision (13 November 1990). Lisac quipped: "They no longer can say why they want to form the government, but they know they want to hold on to power."

Conclusion

In search of a framework for analyzing feminist movements within their respective political and social environment, I spent one month in a library reading literature on feminist movements. After reading several studies, I was disappointed because, in general, the works I had examined contained much description, but little analysis.

Yet now, with the completion of my research, I understand the importance of such thorough description. In attempting to analyze the feminist movement in Alberta, I encountered an obstacle which was that virtually nothing, beyond LeGras' (1984) Pushing the Limits, and Kulyk's (1984) article had been published on women organizing in this province. Therefore, out of necessity I embarked on an investigative hunt which literally led me to scavenge through boxes of old files, stored in women's attics and basements. The more I rummaged through these boxes, the more "data" I discovered, and consequently, the more my sense of urgency to retrieve and record what I had found increased. This sense of urgency was also augmented by the knowledge that at the WPRC, where shelf space is limited, the outdated contents of the ephemera binders were being discarded to make room for the new. These binders contained a wealth of information.

In the end, my sense of urgency to document as much as possible of the local women's movement was tempered by the fact that I had to formalize a manageable thesis. Moreover, I learned that the Northern Alberta Women's Archive Project was planning to collect the "data" of the women's movement.

Therefore, in narrowing my focus, I chose to record and analyze the lobby for the Alberta Advisory Council on Women's Issues and to examine the difficulties that feminist groups in general, and ASWAC in particular, experienced in the

1980s. In chapter two, I documented how the government's position on the Alberta Advisory Council on Women's Issues changed between 1976 and 1986. In 1976 the Tories totally rejected the need for a council but in 1983 they stated that it would be examined as one option. Finally, three days before the 1986 election was called, Premier Getty introduced a bill for the establishment of a council.

A shift in the government's discourse on gender equality was also apparent. The examination of the Alberta Hansard showed that gender equality issues were virtually not discussed in the 1970s. Moreover, in 1976, MLA Horner actually stated that equality already existed in Alberta despite careful documentation to the contrary. However, in the 1980s, the examination of the debates demonstrated that the government adopted a liberal feminist discourse. The government's response to the lobby for the Council and to the overall climate supports Maroney's theoretical perspective. That is, one way for a government to respond to an emerging feminist movement is to appropriate the issues or moral authority of the feminist movement by putting itself forward as representing what women want. In chapter three,we saw that women did not view the government as representing what women want. This is also explained by Maroney's perspective. The government is limited in its ability to represent feminist demands given its own non-unitary character and its need to balance numerous contradictions manifested in struggles by different interests groups.

Gelb's (1989) framework provides a useful way of thinking about women's movements within their respective social and political context. She argues that the political opportunity structure interacts with culture to produce a climate in which opportunities for change are structured. In studying the lobby for the AACWI, I examined the nature of state power, ideology, the significance of parties, and lobby

groups. As well, I also studied two other factors, federal pressure and the media. My findings show that the Alberta Advisory Council on Women's Issues was set up by the government because women continued to agitate for it and as well, the government needed it as a political carrot during the 1986 election. In the beginning the AACWI was hampered by its lack of a research mandate, an inexperienced chair and weak appointments. However, despite its rough beginnings, it appears to be in a better position currently, even publishing materials contrary to the government's positions.

In chapter three, I described the Edmonton feminist movement and noted some general observations. First, there was little response to the government's Action Plan. In part, this was because feminists were concentrating on their own agendas and because women did not have confidence in the government , given the gap between its stated commitment to gender equality and its actual policies. As well, I documented what appears to be a general decline in lobbying. Moreover, I discussed the growing trend within ASWAC of women who preferred to work with women and who eschew formal politics. According to some ASWAC members, this emphasis on cultural feminism has impeded political work. In contrast, I found that AFWUF is geared toward lobbying the government.

If feminists "evacuate" the political field, a possible consequence is that they leave this space to other political actors who don't necessarily share their interests. For example, feminists were excluded from the government's consultation process on family.

This consequence may occur to a certain degree if feminists do not engage in formal politics. However, I do not view expressive activism and political activism as necessarily mutually exclusive feminist practices. That is, I don't see

cultural feminism as being apolitical. Greenham Common is a good example to illustrate this point. Women sent ten chain letters each announcing an international all women protest against the instillation of U.S. Cruise Missiles at the Greenham Common Military Base in England. Thirty thousand women, some with children, showed up to protest the installation. This mass action brought much public attention to the deployment of Cruise missiles. As well, Leland underscores the impact this action had on women's political awareness. She stated that:

> [Greenham Common] also succeeded as a lesson in the power of action for those women who had never been on a political demonstration, never before had the courage to speak out. What we are discovering is a more meaningful sense of the political. Once we are moved to live, speak, and act according to our innermost convictions we have become political (1984:123).

As well, given the burnout and difficulties of organizing in the current political context, I believe that cultural feminism is needed to sustain the energy of the movement.

This thesis project has stimulated a number of related research questions that are worthy of further exploration. For example, what is the structure of the local women's movement in the early 1990s? What explains the rise of cultural feminism in the early 1980s? How does cultural feminism affect social change? How does cultural feminism influence formal politics? What is the role of the Alberta Advisory Council on Women's Issues in the 1990s? What is its relationship to the women's movement? Will the fact that Alberta is now sandwiched between two NDP governments in Saskatchewan and British Columbia, have an affect on the Alberta Tories? Moreover, to get a clearer picture of gender politics in Alberta it would be interesting to trace the development of several policy issues and see how they

compare to the lobby for the Advisory Council. These areas of empirical research are important so that women have a history to consult. As well, as suggested in chapter one in the discussion of Gelb's framework, it is also important to document the women's movements because the adequacy of empirical data have an impact on theory.

In the 1980s the women's movement in Canada had many accomplishments (Adamson, Briskin and McPhail, 1989; Wine and Ristock, 1991). However, as Maude Barlow reminded a University of Alberta audience in March, 1990 during Equality Week

> Young women graduating today are the first generation to reach maturity as full legal participants in the Canadian system. There is no generation before you able to say that.

As well, the decade of the eighties closed with a horrific incident of the murder of fourteen female engineering students gunned down by a man seeking out feminists at the École Polytechnique in Montréal. The aftermath of this massacre has shown us just how far we have not come. Yet, there are also some encouraging signs. As Charlene Spretnak says in The Politics of Women's Spirituality:

> I have come to know, to feel, oneness with all the millions of women who have lived, who live, and who will live. I contain those millions. Each of us does. Every moment. Such a power cannot be stopped.

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4 March 1991. Winning More Seats at the Table: The Challenge For Women in the 1990s, A speech given by the Honourable Elaine McCoy at the University of Alberta.

New Democratic Party
1985. A New Democratic Future: Proposals for an Economic Strategy, 1985-1990.

Population Research Laboratory
The PRL 1989 Alberta Survey: Changing Family Issues. *Survey Highlights No. 1.*

Reform Party of Canada
1990. Principles and Policies.

Schramm, Charlene
September 1989. You Can Make a Difference. *AFWUF Voice*, 8:13.

Appendix 1. The number of entries per year under subject heading "women" (and related topics) in the subject index of the Alberta Hansard

Year	Number of Entries
1972	8
1973	22
1974	8
1975	4
1976	13
1977	5
1978	9
1979	9
1980	*
1981, 1982	20
1983	41
1984	113
1985	41
1986	130
1987	130
1988	157
1989	78

*missing information

Appendix 2. Interviews with key informants

With the exception of MLA Marie Laing, in the following list individuals are identified by one affiliation. Most of these activists belonged to more than one organization in the 1980s; however, in order to protect their identity I only provide one affiliation.

Interview A: Provinicial Committee for A Council on Women's Affairs

Interview B: Provinicial Committee for A Council on Women's Affairs

Interview C: Civil Servant, Government of Alberta

Interview D: Alberta Status of Women Action Committee, Board member

Interview E: New Democrat, Women's Caucus*

Interview F: New Democrat, Women's Caucus

Interview G: New Democrat, Women's Caucus

Interview H: Alberta Status of Women Action Committee, Board Member and Office Manager

Interview I: Alberta Status of Women Action Committee, Provincial Coordinator

Interview J: New Democrat, Women's Caucus

Interview K: Alberta Status of Women Action Committee, Provincial Coordinator

Interview L: New Democrat, Women's Caucus

Interview M: New Democrat, Women's Caucus

Interview N: Marie Laing, New Democrat MLA

*A group interview was conducted with the six members of the New Democrats Women's Caucus.

Appendix 3. Women's organizations active in Edmonton, Alberta in the1980s

3.1 Primary feminist orientation

Abortion by Choice (ABC)
Academic Women's Association
Action Femmes, L'Association canadienne-française de l'Alberta
Alberta Council of Women's Shelters
Alberta New Democrats Women's Caucus,
Alberta Midwifery Task Force
Alberta Society of Women Against Violence (ASWAV)
Alberta Status of Women Action Committee (ASWAC)
Alberta Women's News Magazine
Alliance Against Sexual Harassment
Association for Safe Alternatives in Childbirth (ASAC)
Battered Women Support Group, YWCA
Bissell Women's Programme
Black Women's Association of Alberta
Canadian Congress of Learning Opportunities for Women (CCLOW), Alberta Chapter
Canadian Federation of University Women Edmonton Club
Celebration of Women in the Arts (CWA)
Changing Together, Centre for Immigrant Women
Common Woman Books
Ecumenical Women's Group
Edmonton International Women's Day Committee (IWD)
Edmonton Women's Health Collective
Edmonton Women's Music Collective
Edmonton Women's Network
Edmonton Women's Shelter Limited
Edmonton Working Women
Every Woman's Place
Hecate's Players
Hromada Women's Group
Insight Film Festival
Justisse Method for Fertility Management
Media Watch
Misener/Margetts Women's Research Centre
National Action Committee on the Status of Women (NAC) Alberta representative
National Household Careers Corporation (Household Workers Support Centre)
National Film Board of Canada, Women's Film Program
New Democrats Women's Caucus
North West Media Network
Options for Women
Other Voices
Positive Images: Women by Women
Provincial Committee for a Council on Women's Affairs
Social Political Action Committee (Every Woman's Place)
Sexual Assault Centre of Edmonton
University of Alberta Women's Centre
Voice of Women

Webspinner
Women in Scholarship Engineering, Science and Technology
Women's Collective
Women's Disarmament Campaign
Wen-Do (Women's Self-Defense)
Women's Free Spirit
Women of Colour
Women's Program and Resource Centre, Faculty of Extension, University of Alberta
Women's Spirituality Group
Womonspace

3.2 Other women's groups whose primary orientation is not identified as feminist

Alberta Farm Women's Network
Alberta Native Women's Association
Alberta Women's Institutes
Concerned Citizens on Prostitution and Pornography
Edmonton Business and Professional Women's Club
Edmonton Local Council of Women
Federation of Medical Women of Canada
Public Awareness of Sexual Stereotyping and Pornography (formerly Positive Action Against Pornography)
Women of Unifarm

Appendix 4. Feminist groups in Edmonton in the early 1970s

Branching Out
Dr. Morgentaler Defense Committee
Independent Women's Publishers
Indian Rights for Indian Women
New Democratic Party Women's Caucus
On Our Way
Options for Women
University Women's Club, Status of Women
Women's Program Centre, Faculty of Extension, University of Alberta

Source: Table 2: Typology of Feminist Groups in Edmonton, Vera Radio (1974) Community Development, social movement and feminism. MA thesis, University of Alberta (Can. theses, no. 21947).