From Left to Right

Maternalism and Women's Political Activism in Postwar Canada

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From Left to Right

Introduction

Postwar Canada was a society on the verge of great change. At the end of the Second World War, many suggested that a new nation – built on peace, prosperity, and unity – would come to pass. New and different visions of what Canada could look like under ideal conditions emerged. Since "Central Canada" – a euphemism for the business and political interests of the Toronto–Ottawa–Montreal axis – still largely ruled Canada,[1] voices of dissent and discord came from the periphery. In Alberta and British Columbia, the two western-most regions, new visions came from both the left and the right of the political spectrum. These ostensibly different political viewpoints had some aspects in common. As part of a speech to an Alberta Social Credit Party convention, prominent provincial member of the Legislative Assembly Cornelia Wood argued that the objective for Social Credit, and for other movements of protest, was "to usher in the New World Order."[2]

Wood's notion of inaugurating the "New World Order" was an integral part of the ideologies that left- and right-wing western Canadian women held during the period from 1945 to 1960. I chose these dates because they represent a distinct historical period, one that bridged the gap between the era of the Second World War and its aftermath and the very different era of the 1960s, which heralded the onset of the New Left and second-wave feminism. Women in the Communist Party of Canada (CPC), the Co-operative Commonwealth Federation (CCF), and the Social Credit Party (SCP or Socreds) all espoused some version of the New World Order. These parties asserted that they had the power to usher in a new

vision of life for Canada. All argued that the immediate post-Second World War period represented a time of danger as well as promise. During the late 1940s and 1950s, the world faced the possibility of moral and military disaster because of the onset of the Cold War – that is, the battle for world supremacy waged between the capitalist, Western bloc nations (led by the United States) and the Communist, Eastern bloc nations (led by the Soviet Union). The Cold War lasted from 1945 to 1991, with the latter year seeing the dissolution of the Soviet Union. At various junctures, notably the Korean War from 1950 to 1953, the world seemed perilously close to a "hot" war breaking out between the two hostile power blocs.[3] The period from 1945 to 1961 was also a time of promise, when it seemed that new, positive visions of the world might come to pass. With the defeat of fascism during the Second World War, and the economic prosperity that followed, individuals and groups of all political stripes (including the three parties discussed here) argued that a time of peace, development, and equality – in short, a new world order – had begun.

From Left to Right examines the different perspectives that left- and right-wing women's groups brought to bear on the idea of the New World Order. Each of these political parties had a somewhat different conception of what it would look like; however, all three visions reflected a maternalist perspective. Political women's views often cohered with those of the men in their parties and with others who held similar ideological viewpoints. Yet previous scholars and political activists have made too much of the perceived differences between ostensibly "left-" and "right-" wing political perspectives. In fact, gendered ideologies often led to a shared perspective among women from seemingly different political backgrounds. This being the case, I present three main arguments. First, I argue that a common maternalist ethic sometimes united left- and right-wing women in the *tactics* and *discourses* that they used, even if the ultimate political goals for which they fought were very different. Maternalism, for example, was a key part of women's political activism of both the right and the left during the postwar period. Second, I argue that the use of a maternalist ideology led to an *increase* in women's social and political activism in these three parties. When these women ceased to use maternalist arguments in their writing and activism, women's power declined in the CP, the CCF, and the SCP. Finally, women of the right and the left used maternalism to break down barriers between the "public" and the "private" – the "domestic sphere" of the home and family and the outside world of work and politics. Women of all political stripes saw the home and family as being a positive and empowering rather than a negative and constricting aspect

of life. Indeed, they wanted to unite the two spheres of home/family and work/politics in ways that would enhance both. Still, the ultimate goals for which these women fought were very different. Within their respective movements, political women used a common maternalist ethic to battle fiercely for different viewpoints. All critiqued modernity and capitalism, although in very different ways. As we shall see, where left-wing women of the CPC and the CCF fought for an increased welfare state, Socred women battled for a return to pre-capitalist and pre-industrial values.

I join with other authors in suggesting that there was considerable political activism among different groups of women during the 1940s and 1950s.[4] Indeed, the CP, CCF, and SCP could scarcely have survived without women's efforts. Yet previous scholars, whose focus, to be fair, lay elsewhere, have failed to notice that gender and ideas about motherhood functioned to unify women from different political parties.[5]

Feminist historians conclude that women's activism did not disappear during the period from 1920 to 1960, the period between the two feminist "waves." In particular, the 1950s, sometimes portrayed in popular culture as a time of conservatism and retreat for women, was a period of challenge and change in gender roles.[6] Recent historians of the women's movement eschew the use of the wave metaphor.[7] It is more helpful to think of feminist politics from the nineteenth century to the present time as a continuing process of activism rather than as a series of starts and stops. A number of scholars argue that, during the 1940s and 1950s, a vibrant "left feminism" developed in labour and left-wing movements in North America. Many groups and individuals who were part of this labour feminism continued their battles into the 1960s and 1970s.[8] I concur with these arguments and suggest that a vibrant tradition of protest and activism also existed among right-wing women in Canada and the United Sates during the 1940s and 1950s, as well as in later decades, even if the stated goal of right-wing women's activity was to return to a more conservative period. I define "feminism" as a movement that fights for the equality of *all* groups of women. Moreover, I see feminism as an ideology that, if properly applied, must acknowledge the existence of a patriarchal system and a belief that this system disadvantages all groups of women, even if some groups – working-class and ethnic minority women in particular – face harsher consequences because of their class, racial, and/or ethnic status.[9] By this definition, the women I discuss were not feminists, even if their actions helped to pave the way for the rise of second-wave feminism.

I see *From Left to Right* as part of a growing literature, primarily in the area of American historiography, that discusses right-wing women as

active agents of history and discusses the complexity of their views and activism.[10] It also provides one of the only looks at right-wing women in the Canadian context, particularly in the postwar period.[11] While they *rhetorically* opposed the expansion of women's roles, right-wing women's activity outside the home during the 1940s and 1950s *implicitly* suggested that women deserved a larger role than that of being mothers and wives. All of these women – of the left and of the right – used the conservative-sounding language of maternalism, which emphasizes motherhood and family, as part of a strategy to reconceptualize the home and family as a place of radicalism (or at least, in the case of SCP women, of activism) and not of retreat. All fought to reshape public society in the image of the home, thereby breaking down barriers between the public and private spheres.

Postwar political women used a maternalist viewpoint to argue for an increased female role, and their maternalism had specific elements. First, maternalist thinkers from the 1940s and 1950s suggested that there existed a uniquely female value system, based on care and nurturance. Second, they suggested that women, as mothers, shared a collective responsibility to protect the world's children and families in the face of various threats, most notably economic scarcity, the prospect of nuclear war, and capitalist modernity. All three groups of women were, to some degree, critical of aspects of postwar modernity:[12] increased urbanization, the increasing numbers of women working outside the home, and the perceived decline of Christianity and rural values. Finally, right- and left-wing women asserted that their work, experience, and socialization as mothers made them uniquely able to lead certain kinds of reform and political campaigns.[13]

Women of the right and left perceived gender in a specific manner. Women in the CPC, CCF, and SCP had very particular ideas surrounding what roles were appropriate for women and what roles were appropriate for men. Many women *were* mothers and wives during the 1940s and 1950s. With this in mind, political women of the right and of the left used maternalism in two ways. First, they used maternalism strategically (see Prentice's idea of "strategic essentialism") – that is, they took a narrow definition of a woman's role and applied it to a specific context in order to draw more women into political movements and to extract concessions from the dominant system.[14] Political women used maternalist arguments to draw other women – many of whom were otherwise uninterested in political ideologies – into their respective movements. Second, and more significantly, many CPC, CCF, and SCP women perceived the home and family differently from second-wave feminists.

Political women from the 1940s and 1950s did not see the home and family as a site of retreat or female submission. Indeed, women of the right and of the left supported maternalist politics in the belief that it affirmed family life in the face of modernity and capitalism. These women did not necessarily see either conservative or leftist economic policies as superior one to the other; rather, many, perhaps most, joined political movements as part of an effort to maintain family lives – materially and spiritually – by transforming an unjust society into a new order. Women in all three political parties endorsed the gendered division of labour – the idea that men should work to support families by making money in the public sphere while women should safeguard the domestic sphere – but right- and left-wing women did not see the latter sphere as inferior to the former.[15] In fact, they attempted to use the home as a site of activism and as part of an effort to increase women's power in the public sphere.[16]

As historian Temma Kaplan argues, women's activism – of the left and of the right – is connected to a "female consciousness" – that is, the notion that women organize to defend the family and to fight against anything that they feel will interfere with their ability to preserve life and family as they know it.[17] Therefore, political women sought to break down barriers between the workplace and the home, the public and the private spheres. Similarly, some prominent women in these parties introduced policy initiatives that pushed women's equality forward; this was particularly the case for SCP women since their party held power in Alberta and British Columbia during substantial portions of this period. This, in turn, helped to lay the groundwork for the huge increase in women's activism during the 1960s and 1970s.

Ironically, where these women, especially those of the right, attempted to valorize the home and family, the result was that, in the 1960s and 1970s, more and more women became involved in activities outside the home. The idea of "family" was a key part of women's politics. Many of these women wanted to reinforce their particular conception of the family in opposition to the deprivations of the public world of capitalism. Family was also important in a more literal sense: political women of both the right and the left often came from families with long histories in conservative or leftist politics. These political women wanted to use the idea of family – particularly the maternalist idea that women's maternal and familial roles justified their political activism outside the home – as well as their actual, existing families as resources for attempting to change the Canada of the 1940s and 1950s into a new world order. Therefore, women of both the left and the right used maternalism as a discourse (i.e., they

valorized motherhood and child-rearing in their speeches and public pronouncements and made this language a key part of their announcements and platforms) and as a mechanism to attract new recruits and volunteers. The left used maternalism to argue for stronger state support for families in the form of better housing and education for children, while the right argued that capitalist modernity was destroying the traditional nuclear family. Both right- and left-wing women believed that the provincial government should attempt to return women to the home so that they could help to reconstitute the mythical patriarchal family.

My focus is the CPC and the CCF (the "left" parties) in British Columbia and the Social Credit Party (the "right" party) in Alberta. For many years, region was a key issue in Canadian history, one of Canada's "limited identities." Particularly over the last fifteen years, however, Canadian studies scholars have downplayed region as a causal explanation. Western historian Gerald Friesen convincingly argues that it is no longer useful to think of "the West" as being a coherent, monolithic region unto itself. He argues that the West does not exist as a unified whole and that it is better to think of it as being four separate provinces with different economies and identities.[18]

Friesen's argument is borne out in this book. While the CPC and CCF branches in British Columbia were larger and, in some ways, more successful than were their counterparts in other provinces, their similarities with other provincial branches outnumber their differences. Broadly speaking, CPC and CCF supporters across Canada shared the same views on most issues: the role of women in the party, war and violence, class, and youth delinquency, to give only a few examples. The same situation prevailed with the Socred Credit Party of Alberta and the Social Credit Party of British Columbia: from the 1950s onward the two provincial parties shared a similar perspective. Socred governments in both provinces introduced many of the same economic policies. Indeed, on certain issues, many Socred women held views that were similar to those of women in the CPC and the CCF.

Yet the political context in the two provinces differed, and this had implications for SCP women's ideological focus. Alberta was effectively a one-party province from 1935 to 1971, with the Socreds dominating political and economic life. In British Columbia, however, a two-party system emerged, with the CCF/NDP and SCP vying for power. BC Socreds had to moderate their policies in order to appease voters who did not subscribe to "rightist" views. W.A.C. Bennett's nationalization of BC Hydro in 1961, a key campaign plank for the NDP, represents an example of

this strategy of "moderation." British Columbia's tradition of relatively powerful labour and left movements provided a base of support for the CPC and the CCF/NDP that did not exist in Alberta.[19]

Women's views, rather than being the product of their experience of an entire region, were the product of their experience of their hometowns and adopted communities in Alberta and British Columbia. In other words, their ideologies emanated from their communities of origin and those in which they lived, worked, and engaged in political activism. "Place" consists of three basic elements: (1) the setting in which social relations exist, (2) the geographical area in which social and economic relations occur, and (3) the "sense of place" that creates the political and social atmosphere of a particular community.[20] These elements are closely connected to the different political economies that are "embedded" in different locales.[21] For example, women and men who lived in resource-based communities such as Nelson, Trail, or the Cowichan-Ladysmith section of British Columbia (areas where mining, logging, or fishing were prominent) tended to be supporters of the CPC and the CCF. In contrast, rural and farming towns such as Lethbridge and Medicine Hat in Alberta or the Okanagan and Fraser Valley areas of British Columbia – all rural areas with traditions of religious conservatism – developed a different political economy. The provincial branches of the SCP received strong support from local residents of these areas.

Even within particular areas of these provinces, there were political and economic differences. In northern British Columbia, for instance, some ridings voted CCF and had strong traditions of communist labour militancy, while other working-class areas responded to W.A.C. Bennett's populist appeal. This was also true in Alberta. Working-class areas of Edmonton, and, in some instances, Calgary would vote CCF or Liberal, but in most areas of rural and suburban Alberta, the SCP had little to no competition for votes from the 1940s until the late 1960s. In short, looking at the specific places or communities in which these women lived and worked helps to explain their views.[22] This is not to say that views have not changed over time in these different areas, but it does suggest that place and location matter a great deal when it comes to explaining the particular political choices that these women made.[23]

While the bulk of this book focuses on the 1945–60 period,[24] it is necessary to say a few words about the earlier origins of these three political parties. Founded in 1921, in Guelph, Ontario, the Communist Party of Canada, heavily influenced by its ties to the Soviet Union, argued that only a socialist revolution, propagated by the working class, could solve

the problems of capitalist society. Many Canadian leftists had been members of organizations like the Socialist Party of Canada and the Independent Labour Party. The Russian Revolution of 1917 convinced many of these radicals to form communist parties, following the model established by the Communist Party of the Soviet Union. Members of communist parties all over the world asserted that following the Soviet model was the only way to create a socialist society.

During the 1920s, Canadian communists adapted to the viewpoint of the Communist International (Comintern) in Moscow, the governing body of all national communist parties until 1943.[25] However, after 1935, with the onset of the Popular Front,[26] the CPC largely moved away from working towards revolution and instead concentrated on implementing piecemeal reforms. Even during the 1920s, the CP, although it asserted that only a revolution would truly change society, focused on achieving such government reforms as legal protection for unions and a national system of unemployment insurance. Most of the illegal activities in which the CPC engaged, even during the 1920s, were non-violent (e.g., the CPC often helped evicted tenants and assisted in organizing strikes). This fairly moderate approach continued into the 1930s and into subsequent decades. In keeping with this desire to appear "mainstream," many CPC members expressed an increasingly conservative view of women and gender. CPC men and women embraced the nuclear, heterosexual family, decrying capitalism because it failed to provide the means to support this ideal.

The 1950s and the rise of Cold War anti-communism saw the defeat of communism as a major political force in Canada and worldwide. In 1956, Soviet tanks crushed a potential revolution in Hungary; many communists in Canada and around the world quit their parties and became disillusioned about the prospect of radical change. After this point, the Communist Party of Canada played no meaningful role in the country's political life at the federal and provincial levels or even, for the most part, in activist circles.[27]

For its part, as an ostensible social democratic party, the CCF argued that capitalist nations could gradually be changed into welfare statist societies.[28] As previously seen, the CP, in practice, was little different: it endorsed a stronger welfare state and eschewed non-legal, non-electoral strategies. The CCF emerged from a variety of different, sometimes contradictory, political groups and positions. Scholars and partisans describe the CCF's ideology as consisting of farmer, labour, and urban socialist elements. In the 1920s and 1930s, the poverty that many western farmers

faced pushed them towards the CCF's position, which emphasized farming cooperatives, rural electrification, and increased state funding for rural areas.[29]

The labour movement, and its political supporters in Parliament, also represented a major part of the CCF's base. Activists in the Independent Labour Party, which had provincial branches across Canada, were early members of the CCF. Independent Labour Party members fought to effect a socialist society using legal electoral means. This "legalist" approach to social change remained constant throughout the history of the CCF-NDP. Labour activists collaborated with radical farm organizations in western Canada. When the CCF was established, initially at the Calgary Conference of 1932 and then, more permanently, at the Regina Conference of 1933, a number of prominent members of the United Farmers of Alberta and the United Farmers of Canada, Saskatchewan Section, joined the new party.[30]

Many provincial wings of the Independent Labour Party joined the CCF at that time. Indeed, the early BC CCF was effectively a fusion of several smaller labour and socialist parties into one non-communist, left-wing group. The failure of the BC branch of the Canadian Labour Party resulted in the more or less permanent exclusion of communists from mainstream labour and left movements in British Columbia.[31] Urban intellectuals from the universities, as well as religiously minded reformers, also joined the CCF. These members became increasingly important during the party's ideological changes over the years.[32]

With the onset of the Cold War in Europe, the CCF committed to the Western military alliance and to Cold War anti-communism. In 1949, the CCF voted to support the founding of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO). NATO was intended to be an instrument of anti-communism: it united Western nations under American hegemony against the perceived threat of Soviet expansionism.[33] More radical CCF members challenged this view; they criticized Western, especially American, imperialism and supported anti-war causes. These radicals formed the Socialist Fellowship in 1951 to oppose the CCF hierarchy; however, the conservative faction won out. The year 1956 saw the publication of the Winnipeg Declaration, signalling an even more mainstream direction for the party. In 1961, with its electoral future in doubt, the CCF implemented a formal tie with organized labour and became the openly moderate New Party, later called the New Democratic Party (NDP).[34]

CCF supporters lauded "welfare state" nations such as Great Britain (under the Labour Party) and Sweden as examples that Canada should

follow. Many of the best known CCF women, notably Mildred Fahrni and Laura Jamieson,[35] had backgrounds in social work. In keeping with this, many social democratic women – and men for that matter – held technocratic viewpoints, a perspective that emphasizes the role of the efficient welfare state and the growth of bureaucracy as a means of reforming society.[36] They combined this perspective with anti-communism. Particularly after 1951, with the expulsion and marginalization of the left, the party endorsed a reformist ideology with regard to capitalism.[37] The CCF also expressed support for the nuclear family, albeit in a somewhat different manner than did the CP. CCF women and men suggested that, while it was acceptable for women to work under capitalism, a social democratic society would allow women to stay at home by providing a combination of higher wages for men, social insurance programs, and a more equitable taxation system.[38]

Like the CCF, the Social Credit Party emerged out of conditions that resulted from the Great Depression. Alberta in the 1930s was a poor province, dependent on agriculture, with the vast majority of its population living in rural areas. Unemployment and drought led to the failure of many farms and to thousands of people being on relief. In these circumstances, the people of Alberta were ready to listen to someone who would offer a solution to their economic problems. Such a person was William "Bible Bill" Aberhart, a Calgary high school principal and Presbyterian minister. According to his biographers, the suicide of one of his impoverished students convinced Aberhart that the root causes of the Depression needed to be addressed.[39]

Aberhart became a follower of the monetary theories of Scottish engineer Major Clifford Hugh (C.H.) Douglas. Douglas was responsible for the "A plus B theorem," the convoluted basis for Social Credit economic theory. Douglas argued that "the people," a vaguely defined term often meaning farmers and small business owners, did not have enough purchasing power. This, Douglas surmised, was the cause of economic problems in capitalist society, notably the Depression. If governments provided annual dividends to the people, then there would be more money going into the economy, which would solve the problems of the Depression. In his 1935 election campaign, which resulted in the Socreds coming to power in a landslide victory, Aberhart promised that, if elected, each month the SCP would provide all adult Albertans with a cheque for twenty-five dollars.[40]

During the years of Aberhart's leadership, many SCP supporters possessed left-leaning views. As Alvin Finkel notes, the Aberhart government

introduced Canada's first male minimum wage laws, compulsory membership in the Alberta Teachers Association, and legislation restricting various trades to licensed individuals. The proposed twenty-five-dollar dividend, Aberhart's "funny money," was never implemented. In 1937, Canada's Supreme Court declared that the proposed legislation to create the Social Credit dividend lay outside the boundaries of provincial responsibility. The failure to implement the dividend, coupled with the subsequent failure of other SCP legislation, signalled a turn to the right for Aberhart, whose parliamentary caucus had always contained right-wing as well as left-wing members.

With Aberhart's death in 1943, and Ernest Manning's takeover as premier of Alberta, SCP ideology and practice changed even more dramatically. Manning, Aberhart's chief lieutenant and a close friend, was a conservative Christian. Manning's brand of capitalistic, pro-business Christianity differed from Aberhart's vision of the church as a supporter of farmers and workers. During his years as premier, from 1943 to 1969, Manning had no compunction about repudiating the earlier gains made by the labour movement and other progressives.[41]

The SCP in British Columbia turned to conservatism at an earlier stage than did its counterpart in Alberta. Its origins lay in the machinations of the party's first leader, the Kelowna hardware merchant William Andrew Cecil (W.A.C.) Bennett. After his defeat in a 1950 provincial Conservative Party leadership convention, Bennett began to express support for the ideals of Social Credit as practised in Alberta. He presented himself as a populist outsider, hostile to traditional, Victoria-based politicians who were out of touch with the concerns of farmers, workers, and small business owners. In March 1951, Bennett announced his intention to sit as an independent in the BC Legislature, although his true political leanings lay with the SCP.

The BC Social Credit League, an offshoot of a similar organization in Alberta, enthusiastically supported Bennett as an independent MLA. Although the league had existed since 1932, it was not until the early 1950s that its membership began to grow. Disgruntled Liberals and Conservatives joined the new party, which elected former Albertan Ernest Hansell, a fundamentalist Christian minister, as its leader. After the SCP won the 1952 provincial election in British Columbia, a vote of all sitting Socred MLAs elected W.A.C. Bennett as the leader of the party and, consequently, as the premier of the province. In June 1953, Bennett forced another election; the Socreds won a clear victory and Bennett remained the premier of British Columbia until 1972.[42]

SCP women favoured a return to what they termed "traditional" Christian values. They also emphasized the importance of the nuclear family. SCP women rejected the values of secularism, liberalism, the welfare state, and socialism. Much of the SCP view of life was, on the surface, "reactionary."[43] Socreds endorsed turning the clock back to an earlier, undefined period of history when the problems of modernity did not exist. They opposed unions and other organizations that limited what they saw as "individual freedom."

SCP ideology was contradictory. Many supporters liked to promote their views as being "scientific" and based on "rational" thought. SCP leaders endorsed capitalist economic development in the form of corporate mergers, road- and dam building, and the development of new forms of resources (most notably oil in Alberta). These are all aspects of a modern political economy, with its reliance on state-centred economic projects. As we see in later chapters, the SCP was divided between (1) "traditionalist" conservatives, who emphasized anti-modernism, individual rights, and evangelical Christianity and (2) economic, or "modernist," conservatives, who emphasized development, big business, and the growth of the provincial state.[44]

Analyzing women's activism in the Co-operative Commonwealth Federation, the Social Credit Party, and the Communist Party of Canada in the provinces of British Columbia and Alberta allows me to compare and contrast the experiences of left- and right-wing women in different political settings. The BC sections of the CPC and the CCF were among the most active, disciplined, and largest of their kind in Canada: only Ontario and Saskatchewan possessed CPC or CCF branches that were equivalent in size and influence.[45] Similarly, the SCP became a lasting presence only in British Columbia and Alberta. Alberta's left-wing parties fell into disarray owing to the SCP's ability to mobilize public opinion in conservative directions. After 1945, much of mainstream Albertan society opposed left-wing parties and leftist viewpoints.

For these reasons, I do not discuss the Alberta wings of the CPC and the CCF. Left parties played far smaller roles in Alberta politics than they did in BC politics. As Alvin Finkel, a historian of the SCP, notes, the 1950s saw the provincial Liberal Party emerge as the primary challenger to Social Credit in Alberta: in the 1955 provincial election, the Liberals won fifteen seats in the Legislature. During the course of the three provincial elections fought in Alberta from 1952 to 1959, the CCF lost the two seats that it had previously held, while, by 1959, its share of the popular vote had fallen to 8 percent. The CPC's slide was even more dramatic: during

the 1950s, the CPC received, on average, 0.5 percent of the popular vote in elections, and its membership and influence decreased markedly. In the same vein, after 1947, Alberta's oil wealth allowed Socred governments to massively fund infrastructure and welfare state programs, thereby undercutting the appeal of the province's left.[46] While voting patterns are not the *only* barometer of political consciousness, the fact that the number of votes for left-wing parties dropped so dramatically during a relatively short time span suggests that leftist options lost favour with many Albertans during the 1950s.[47] I found virtually no mention of women or gender in archival sources dealing with the Alberta CPC and CCF during the 1945–60 period.[48] The same holds true for archival sources dealing with the BC SCP.

A number of factors led to the formation of these three parties, religion being one. Where CPC members were anti-religious and CCF members were often social gospel Protestants or non-religious, many Socreds in both Alberta and British Columbia espoused support for evangelical Christianity, or "evangelicalism." Evangelicals adhere to a belief system that has four main pillars. First, they argue that active proselytizing is necessary to recruit new members to their faith. Second, they believe that the Bible should be taken literally: they see it is the word of God speaking directly to the faithful. Third, they emphasize a Christ-centred faith, arguing that Jesus Christ died on the cross in order to save humanity from its sins. This distinguishes evangelicals from more liberal Protestants and Roman Catholics, who often downplay the focus on humanity's innately evil nature. Finally, many evangelicals, particularly in the United States, classify themselves as "Born Again." These people state that they have a personal relationship with Jesus Christ and that this relationship is responsible for saving them from a sinful life. Evangelicalism is also associated with a kind of charismatic and physical religious experience.[49]

Support for evangelical versions of Protestantism was a key aspect of SCP ideology in both Alberta and British Columbia. Robert Burkinshaw writes that, during the period from 1952 to 1956, 22.5 percent of BC SCP members belonged to evangelical groups – notably, Baptists, Methodists, Presbyterian, Pentecostals, and Nazarenes. Another 72 percent were involved in mainline Protestant sects, as compared with 65 percent of BC CCF members. Burkinshaw further suggests that 71.5 percent of fundamentalist church ministers supported the SC, while none supported the CCF. Not surprisingly, more liberal churches, especially those affiliated with the social gospel, were inclined to support social democracy: only 7.6 percent of United Church ministers supported the SCP, while 61.5

percent stated that they voted CCF.[50] Mennonites in British Columbia's interior were also strong supporters of the SCP, particularly in the 1952 election that first brought the party to power.[51]

Fundamentalist Christians associated the CCF with theological liberalism, the social gospel, and socialism and communism. Burkinshaw contends that the evangelical proportion of the population in British Columbia stood at only 7 percent in 1952; however, in close elections, this group played a significant role in turning the province over to SCP governments.[52] Many of the leaders and public faces in the Socred movement, especially during the party's early formative years, were followers of these conservative Christian sects. This strong evangelical influence was a uniquely western Canadian phenomenon. Although SCP women did not commonly express this viewpoint, part of the SCP's ideological appeal lay in its stated support for western Canadian values in opposition to the perceived power of Ottawa and of the banks and financial interests in Toronto, Ottawa, and Montreal.[53] SCP support for evangelical Protestantism, and the relative strength of evangelicalism in the western provinces, became part of the West's opposition to the perceived secularization of central Canadian society in urban Ontario and Quebec. SCP leaders asserted that their Christian values were part of the libertarian, western Canadian, pro-capitalist heritage. However inaccurately, they portrayed themselves as the defenders of this heritage against the secular, liberal powers in Ottawa and Quebec.[54] These factors cast doubt on the notion that all of Canadian society was becoming increasingly secular during the post-Second World War years.[55] Clearly, there were pockets of support for conservative theology in parts of the country. Political parties and branches of Christianity developed in the West in opposition to their more mainline Liberal and Conservative, and Protestant and Roman Catholic, counterpart in the east.

My study of political women engages two theoretical approaches: (1) elitist/populist and (2) socialist feminist. "Populism" implies support for workers rights, decentralism in government, anti-war and anti-imperialist views, popular democracy, and, in the case of Socred populists, for individualism and evangelical Christianity. Socred populists fought to uphold the traditional, nuclear, heterosexual family against any perceived threat, including from big business and big government, from liberals and leftists, and from those who supported war and imperialism. Alvin Finkel argues that there is a difference between left- and right-wing variants of populism. Left populism sees large-scale capitalist organization of the economy as the major social problem and seeks to solve it by calling

for socialists/communists to take over the state. Conversely, right-wing populism only superficially critiques the economic system and sees small, conspiratorial groups (like bankers, Jews, and bureaucratic governments) as the problem. According to this perspective, if a small group of people could be removed from power, then the capitalist system would function effectively.[56]

In contrast, "elitism" refers to support for party leaders and bureaucratic tendencies, centralization of power (within political parties and within government itself), pro-war viewpoints, and, in the case of the SCP, for big business and monopoly capitalism (particularly in the oil, lumber, and mining industries). Finkel is correct in defining left- and right-wing populism in this manner. Populist women in the SCP saw big business and big government as uniting to destroy small business, traditional family values, Christianity, and rural areas. SCP women argued that the solution to societal problems would be found in a return to traditional, Christian values – lost in the transition to an industrial, consumerist economy – and in the small-scale ownership of land and materials. SCP women, like some American populist conservatives from the late 1960s and subsequent decades, condemned the "free market" and big business for destroying traditional morality through modern forms of media and their introduction of a more "permissive" society.[57] I contend that "traditionalist" SCP members like Cornelia Wood and Lydia Arsens – with their suspicion of, if not hostility towards, capitalist modernity and their support for anti-war politics – had some ideas in common with "left populist" CCF members such as Evelyn Smith. This is true, even though the SCP's ultimate goal was very different from that of the CCF.[58]

A large number of women in these parties were populists rather than elitists. In fact, attitudes towards women's roles in politics broke down around elitist/populist lines, with many women supporting populist viewpoints and increased roles for women in public life. In contrast, elitists in these parties, including many men in leadership positions, often opposed an increased role for women. This populist versus elitist framework does not apply to CPC women. CPC women like Becky Buhay, Annie Buller, and Mona Morgan embraced introducing more democracy, fairness, and workers' rights into society: indeed, CPC women fought alongside men, at the grassroots level, to organize unions, fight against war, and help the poor. While the CPC ostensibly followed the dictates of the Soviet Union on many issues, in practice, Moscow and the Comintern did not direct, or even support, CPC activities at the grassroots level.[59] Nonetheless, on the whole, the populist versus elitist framework

is useful for understanding political women's activism in the CCF and the SCP.

With regard to my second theoretical approach – socialist feminism – one can say that certain general assumptions are central. For example, historical materialism – a vision of history that focuses on how economic structures influence human behaviour – is seen as a useful tool for understanding the world, even if other feminist theories, from radical feminism to poststructuralist feminism, contend this.[60] Socialist feminism argues that working-class men, while also exploited under capitalism, have more freedom than do women to work and live in the competitive world. Socialist feminist scholars seek to understand how class has defined women's experiences and how gender has defined women's and men's lives.

Socialist feminist scholarship emphasizes that women's experiences differ economically from men's. Capitalism has exploited working-class women brutally, using them as cheap labour and structuring their work so that it constitutes an onerous double day consisting of paid work outside the home and unpaid domestic work and child-rearing inside the home. In the elusive "last instance," historical materialism – in effect, class – and gender are seen as the overarching forces that shaped women's experiences in the western Canada of the 1940s and 1950s.

I chose the case studies presented in the following chapters because of their prominence in the discourse of left- and right-wing women and because they reveal much about the politics of these women's groups. In Chapter 1, I present a series of biographies of left-wing women. Through these biographies, I offer a study of left-wing women's views on collectivism, a key idea in communist and social democratic ideology. In Chapter 2, again using a series of biographies, I provide a discussion of SCP women and their individualistic views. I chose the women in the first two chapters because of their prominence in their respective movements and because of the extent to which their experiences are representative of women in the CPC, the CCF, and the SCP. These two chapters are mirror images of each other: they argue that there are some differences in the class, ethnic, religious, and rural/urban positions of the women under discussion and that these differences account for their choice of political party. Yet these women held common views on many issues (e.g., their belief in the importance of family connections united all three groups of women). In these two chapters, I outline the book's cast of characters, many of whom reappear in later sections, where their views serve to illuminate different aspects of their respective political ideologies.

In the remaining chapters I offer case studies that demonstrate the views of these women and their parties. In Chapter 3, I deal with CPC and CCF women in the peace and anti-war movements. Here, and throughout the book, I continue a critical dialogue with the idea of maternalism. In Chapter 4, I discuss SCP women and their perspectives on issues surrounding peace and nuclear disarmament. I show that many right- and left-wing women shared an anti-war perspective. It becomes clear that anti-war activism was less of a concern for leftist men than it was for leftist women, while SCP men largely endorsed war, particularly the Cold War against communism. For their part, conservative women supported a maternalist ideology, which they used to argue against sending their husbands and sons to fight and die in wars started by men.

In Chapter 5, I discuss women-only organizations in all three parties, most notably the women's auxiliaries of left-wing trade unions and the Social Credit Women's Auxiliary. Here I suggest that, in all three parties, women-only groups led to a stronger voice for women. In Chapter 6, I offer a discussion of the discourse of juvenile delinquency and its uses. Women in all three parties used the idea of juvenile delinquency to buttress their ideological views. Left-wing women saw delinquency as a moral problem but one with material roots: delinquency indicated that young people needed the benefits of a stronger welfare state – notably, improved housing, public recreation, and social programs – to give them hope. Conversely, Socred women saw delinquency as being solely an ethical issue with religious overtones: society had moved away from the traditional concerns of family and Christianity, and this, in turn, had led to increased youth crime. Only a return to the time-honoured values of church and the nuclear family could stem the tide of leftism and modernity. Still, all three groups of women saw delinquency as evidence that post-Second World War Canadian society was heading down the wrong moral path.

Although I focus on the geographical and political margins of Canada, *From Left to Right* reveals much about how the mainstream "centre" operates in terms of politics, place, and gender. This contributes to new directions and new views of Canadian women's history.[61] In studying Canadian women of the right and the left, we must seek to examine the complexity of their lives and to break down traditional political and societal categories, most notably the division between left- and right-wing political ideologies. I show that left and right had some things in common in post-Second World War Canada. The three groups of women under discussion all asserted that reinventing human society – and the

character of human beings – was possible. Maternalism is the common thread that united their different visions of the New World Order. Ironically, all three groups possessed what many might see as essentialist views of women and motherhood. Despite the fact that very few of the women discussed here endorsed an explicitly feminist viewpoint – a perspective that endorses equality for *all* groups of women – the increase in women's political activism during the 1940s and 1950s laid the basis for the second-wave feminism of the following decades.