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Maternal Commitments to the Nation

Maternalist Groups at Work in Quebec: 1945-1960

This paper explores the intersections between mothering, motherhood and feminism by looking at the maternal philosophies and activities of four Quebec women's organizations for the period 1945 to 1960. A content analysis of the archival documents of the Cercles d'économie domestique (CED), l'Union catholique des femmes rurales (UCFR), the Canadian Association of Consumers (CAC) and the Quebec sections (FFLPQ) of the National Federation of Liberal Women of Canada (NFLWC) was conducted. This research exposes the concerns of each group about the status of mothers in post-war society and what duties to family and nation should accompany it. Their calls for reform were framed by the language of democracy and the ideas of liberalism and citizenship in circulation at the time. A focus on the attempts of the CAC to extend mothers' citizenship rights through their consumer activism, the Liberal club women's desire to support working women and give mothering a special place in politics and the maternalist organizing around issues of leisure and recreation as well as the protection of the physical and moral landscape of Quebec by the CED and UCFR, reveals how associational women expected to claim citizenship rights by transposing their private, domestic roles to the public and push for more active participation in post-war reconstruction plans. In this way, the traditional distinctions between private and public were displaced by a new configuration designed to show the importance of the family and the unpaid work of mothering to the politics of nation building.

In 1949, the President of the National Federation of Liberal Women of Canada (NFLWC) wrote an article in the federation's monthly bulletin emphasizing women's longstanding national commitments through their caregiving duties to the major institutions of society: "No community is stronger than the leadership of its women. No nation, no project ever becomes

firmly established without their support. Women have worked for schools, churches, hospitals, homes, and now they want a larger share in the community housekeeping.”¹ These commitments depend on a maternalist notion that women’s mothering responsibilities in the private sphere give them significant place in the broader public community. The demand for women’s “larger share in the community housekeeping” also reflects concerns of the 1950s post-war society with the construction of a welfare state for Canadians. This expanding state would be based on liberal democratic principles of participatory government, citizens as individual holders of rights and freedoms and (limited) public provisions to strengthen the private realm. The above quote represents women’s interests in making demands on the state for improved social security provisions. These demands reveal a growing sense of entitlement cultivated during the war years. Women expected to claim their citizenship rights by transposing their private, domestic roles to the public and push for more active participation in post-war reconstruction plans. In this way, the traditional distinctions between private and public were displaced by a new configuration designed to highlight the importance of the family and women’s unpaid work to the politics of nation building. Thus, the NFLWC believed the work of mothering was a source of power for women and a way to advance gendered citizenship rights.

This paper explores the intersections between mothering, motherhood and women’s activism by looking at the maternal philosophies and activities of four Quebec women’s groups for the period 1945 to 1960. A content analysis of their archival documents reveals concerns about the status of women in post-war society; what duties to family and nation should accompany it; and extending women’s rights in the areas of education, paid employment, social security and civil law.

Like their Canadian counterparts, the groups believed that a democratic, interventionist-state, predicated on liberal values, would be the best mechanism for granting social equality to women but with a twist. They joined ruling male political and intellectual elites to call for the development of a welfare state that would be controlled by a Quebec nation. These four groups can be defined as maternalist because their politics relied on a uniquely feminine value system as a platform to press for social programs, the expansion of women’s domestic duties to the public world and the promotion of their mothering responsibilities to the nation. Their calls for reform were framed by the language of democracy and the ideas of liberalism and human rights in circulation at the time.

The four groups are the Canadian Association of Consumers, Quebec branches, (CAC), the Quebec sections (FFLPQ) of the National Federation of Liberal Women of Canada (NFLWC), the Domestic Economy Clubs [*Cercles d’économie domestique* (CED)], and the Union of Catholic Rural Women [*Union catholique des femmes rurales*, (UCFR)]. The last two were confessional, church run associations and grouped large numbers of working class, French-speaking women from rural parts of the province. The CAC and

FFLPQ belonged to Canadian federations with moderate membership in Quebec composed primarily of urban, middle class, anglophone and francophone women.

What is worth examining are the gendered dimension of liberalism, citizenship rights and activist mothering in post-war Quebec society. In particular, is how the four groups used their maternalist identities to carve a public space for motherhood by applying the ideas and language of democracy and liberalism while they simultaneously made demands for recognition of their gendered citizenship rights. I draw on the work of Carole Pateman (1988) to explore the theoretical imperatives of the dimensions of gender and citizenship. According to her, liberal notions of citizenship, individualism and of public and private construct women as mothers and regulate them to the private realm. While men are configured as public individuals with rights by virtue of their participation in the labor force, women are not seen as being part of this realm and so their citizenship status stems from being men's dependents. Thus, as mothers or future ones, women are simultaneously included and excluded from the citizenry of liberal democratic societies.

In the 1950s Canadian liberal democratic political culture, the expanding welfare state emphasized public entitlements with limited provisions to meet private needs. Women were granted certain services as needy mothers but public entitlements were few since they were viewed as non-deserving of public rights and freedoms. Historically, the women's movement fought for the extension of full citizenship rights to women. In the 1950s women's groups waged these same struggles.

The three themes I discuss are the attempts of the CAC to extend mothers' citizenship rights through their consumer activism; the FFLPQ's desires to support working women and give mothering a special place in politics; and the maternalist organizing around the protection of motherhood and the nation by the CED and UCFR.

Context: Mothers' status in post second world war Quebec society

Between 1945 and 1960, Quebec underwent a period of nationalist reawakening as the result of renewed urbanization, the rise of mass consumption, American influences on culture and lifestyles and modernization of its economy and accompanying social and institutional transformations.² Federal reconstruction plans and a newly created welfare system also sparked nationalist sentiments about Quebec's aspirations to manage its own institutions, especially immigration, as well as social and health programs. In addition, the increasing numbers of university-trained specialists was the direct result of the 1950s institutional growth in French Canadian society.

Ideologically, these societal changes produced a reappraisal of traditional nationalist thinking. Expressing old nationalist sentiments, Quebec's conservative elite and clerics faced opposition by an emerging French middle-class

that believed this ideology to be out of step with a modern society. Various groups made up this new social class, including contemporary intellectual thinkers and social critics, health, psychological and educational experts, trade union activists, women's associations and university students. They were all outspoken about the conservative political regime that had a stranglehold on the province's economic and social development.³ They wanted to see a number of social changes happen with themselves taking a more active role in shaping the nation and its future.

These ideological and political reforms accompanied a shift in gender relations as the birth rate continued its decline, more and more women completed university education and an increasing number of wives and mothers worked outside the home in the rapidly expanding tertiary sector of the modern industrial economy.

During this time, Quebec women participated in different types of political activities.⁴ But this period would hardly be characterized as a responsive political and social climate for the advancement of women's rights. So they had to design distinct ways of mobilizing, often times outside men's traditional power bases. Women's means of doing politics comprised professional, lobby, grassroots or community-based associations, networks of advice and self-help and interests beyond equality rights to include legislation centered on women's duties and responsibilities in the private sphere.⁵ While many associations fought for women's rights to higher education, equality in the labor force and marriage and more representation in politics,⁶ others made consumer issues their concern⁷ and some used their maternal positions to influence civic affairs.

There were many voices of activism including sentimental and progressive maternalism. Maternalists rely on a specific ideology of motherhood and press for state services to expand women's domestic duties to the public sphere. According to Molly Ladd-Taylor (1993), sentimental maternalists wish to transpose women's private tasks to the public realm predicated on a unique feminine value system and progressive maternalists use the principles of social justice and democracy to justify women's public services to the nation (110). Although none of the groups laid claim to these titles they are useful concepts to interrogate their political identities and activities. I call the CED and the UCFR sentimental maternalists and designate CAC and FFLPQ as progressive maternalists.

Mrs. Canadian Consumer and community housekeeping: The CAC and FFLPQ

Established in 1947, the CAC was a permanent consumer group headed by women and "was born out of their experience gained during the war"; it recognized "[women's] consciousness of their effectiveness when united, their desire to be well-informed, their desire to continue to be of service to their country and their desire to have a medium through which to express their opinions to Government, industry and other groups."⁸ Using the slogan "there

is strength in unity,” the association accomplished its consumer protection goals by investing mothers and housewives with the responsibilities of safeguarding the family and post-war society. The Quebec branches of the CAC recognized the fact that women’s domestic roles made them “primary purchasing agents” for the family unit. In an increasingly complex consumer society, the association sought to enhance the buying power of women by making them informed consumers. Appealing to all housewives, the group promoted a consumer-oriented education “to inform both the consumer and the interests that sell to us, as to the needs, rights and problems of both of us. It is a voice for the most basic economic citizen of Canada—the purchasing-housewife.”⁹ The association also aimed to strengthen women’s role as consumers because; “...they have a keen sense of human values and human welfare which, coupled with adequate information, should make their united voices of value in the practical workings of democracy. It should ensure better homemaking as well.”¹⁰

The CAC empowered its members with the knowledge that mothers were vital partners alongside male capitalist and government leaders in Canada’s economy. The association encouraged all members to participate in actions to improve consumer standards and to enforce fairness throughout the economy. Such actions as petitions, boycotts, conducting consumer studies, and demands for representation on government commissions and legislation achieved this objective with marketplace and government officials. The group’s emphasis on fact finding and dissemination of information provided a powerful tool for market reform and state legislation in the form of consumer protection. The CAC believed it was giving women a bigger role in the economy through their domestic responsibilities:

the Canadian Association of Consumers is the biggest thing that women in Canada have ever tried to do. Its success lies in the hands of the women’s organizations. If you can interest a majority of your members in investing a small .50 a year in the national, economic house we are trying to build for the consumer of Canada, you will be helping women take a long step forward towards equal economic representation in the affairs of their country-and I will personally be most grateful to you.¹¹

By linking the traditional role of housewife and the public status of consumer, housewives and mothers were given the responsibility to maintain the standards of living at home and take care of the country’s welfare through their consumerism. “[T]oday, with the CAC’s intervention, 13,000 Canadian housewives have become workers in a nation, not just a kitchen.”¹² Association members realized; “the modern family is smaller, more mothers now work outside the home,” the real work of women was as empowered (although unpaid) consumers for family and their communities.¹³

The CAC believed a women's duty was to maintain stability in turbulent times through their public consumer roles. According to the association, since women did 85 percent of the retail spending in Canada the job of consumer was a "serious and full-time position." In an attempt to show the importance of this position to Canadians, it was variously referred to as; "consumer-housewife, managers of the nation's housekeeping dollars, pilots of our economy or purchasing-agents-in-chief-of-Canada."¹⁴ As managers, pilots and purchasing agents, housewives had to adhere to a specific set of duties and responsibilities. These included wise decision-making when purchasing goods:

How we buy? What we buy? And the services we more and more demand to make us buy ... decides, more than anything else in Canada where it will pay Canada's man-power best to work ... and what it will pay Canada most to produce. (emphasis in original)¹⁵

"Mrs. Canadian Consumer" was also responsible for becoming informed about the business of supply and demand; "...our choices reflect the last word in the uncertain sales and production cycle and our 'freedom of choice' comes with the price of all our freedoms and assumes a certain amount of responsibility."¹⁶ At a time when few women chose to be directly involved in politics through elected office, their voices would be more effectively heard by government officials through associational participation. Besides, the role of consumer started at home for each and every mother; "(r)esponsibility for the economic health of the nation is placed fairly and squarely on the shoulders of the women of Canada who too often regard themselves as 'only housewives,' and fail to see that as Canada's 'purchasing agents-in-chief' they wield unsuspected power in shaping the buying habits of the country."¹⁷

Membership in the CAC brought power which emanated from empowered mothering. Transported to the public realm housewives would be able to shape the future of the nation. The job of "purchasing agents-in-chief" was, according to the CAC, bestowed upon women through :

rights to the same legislative consideration of our buyers' interest as has been given in the past to legislative consideration of Canada's selling interests. We will be justified in claiming these rights however only if we make every effort to be sure serving them will ... in the long run also serve the general interests of all Canada. (emphasis in original)¹⁸

A common theme found throughout the discourses of the CAC was the idea of national progress to promote women's participation in the public realm of society. Women's rights were compatible with those of the democratic nation because they would be using these rights to serve the nation through their consumer duties. In this way, the duties of "Mrs. Canadian Consumer" became "...the most important forward step in the business of being full,

participating Citizens in the management of our own affairs, that women have taken since they won the vote.”(emphasis in original)¹⁹

The CAC believed the basis for women’s citizenship status was their mothering practices and as “citizen consumers.” The group’s focus on mothers’ special duties to the nation through their unique experiences in the family illuminates the progressive maternalist ideology of the group. The association sought to give credibility to women in the public world through the traditional role of housewife. “Mrs. Canadian Consumer” may have paralleled the dominant gender ideologies of post-war, capitalist society, but it made motherhood compatible with national progress and the extension of citizenship to women. The CAC transformed the traditional family arrangements because the consumer duties of housewife was an avenue for the group to insert women into the body politic. “Economic citizenship”²⁰ was a gender-specific status rooted in women’s traditional caregiving roles. It became the basis through which the CAC sought to grant full citizenship status to women. The group’s quest for a gendered concept of citizenship and its appeals to uphold traditional duties reflect maternalist efforts to include mothers in the political and social realms of society.

The FFLPQ also wanted mothers to accept their role as citizens in the political processes of the country because women have “the intelligent interest in everything concerning us, so that by general knowledge of the world about us we can be finer citizens of Canada and thus be greater Liberals.”²¹ Mariana Jodoin, President of the Quebec Liberal Association, believed women’s participation in representative government and liberal democracy stemmed from their duties to nation; “The serious woman, the woman interested in social and political affairs remains the great educator. Let us then, unite our efforts, ... The woman, I know will be appreciated for her devotion, her sincerity and her intuition, all qualities which make her an essential part of the country’s administration.”²² Politics, she argued, needed their unique role as educator and commitment to social affairs as a counterpoint to men’s political views. Jodoin’s beliefs were typical of contemporary bourgeois gender ideologies of western democracies.²³ While middle-class activists like her were willing to support liberal claims of individual rights for women, they should be exercised through their domestic roles.

Mothers’ secondary status in the formal economy and their role in politics commanded the attention of the FFLPQ. The demands for equality of opportunity in terms of choices, working conditions and income security, the eradication of discriminatory attitudes and practices and women’s participation in state bureaucracies were the means by which the FFLPQ worked to support economic rights for married women who worked for pay. Influenced by the liberal principles of human rationality, individual responsibility and a conviction that “the progress of society depended on its members’ freedom to develop their fullest potentials,”²⁴ the group applied these tenets to the issues facing:

the large and growing number of self-supporting women who are to a very great extent independent in politics. These women are generally 30 years old or over, widows-or others who expect to remain self supporting-many of them with dependents.... These women have considerable influence and are deeply concerned about the welfare of the individuals in their various groups. They are giving serious study to the question of the status of women in both politics and employment....²⁵

Recognizing that many women, "some with dependents" or "self-supporting," had the greatest voice in the formal economy the national director was hoping to inspire liberal membership as the avenue to fight for gender equality. Everyone, especially married women with children, should have equal opportunity to participate in paid work. Encouraged by member participation, these early calls led the federation and its provincial counterparts to seek state assurances of equality rights legislation for the advancement of women's full potential as working citizens.

The subject of married women's discrimination in the labour force was an equally important subject of concern for the federation. In 1948 members protested the changes to the income tax structure which discouraged married women from working for pay. Appealing to the state to "reconsider legislation designed to reduce income tax rates on married women workers," the federation denounced the government amendments for their discriminatory nature and for "[having] an adverse effect on the employment situation [of working wives and] the supply of female labour."²⁶ The NFLWC based their formal demands on a belief in the group's ability to effect change through liberal party politics and influence the state to equalize opportunities between the sexes.

The federation also believed that women's political responsibilities should be shared through appropriate representation. They made repeated resolutions urging federal and provincial governments to appoint them to boards, committees and commissions. Its efforts resulted in women's representation in various bodies responsible to the Minister of Labour including the Unemployment Insurance Commission's Advisory Committees and the Advisory Committee on Vocation and Technical Education.²⁷ The NFLWC wanted mothers to make a difference by inserting themselves into state practices and structures, therefore the federation worked with representatives to establish a network of liberal women throughout the federal and provincial government bureaucracies.

Combined with their demands for social rights for employed women, the work reveals the NFLWC's attempts to institutionalize their quests for equality of opportunity. These early calls reveal the desire to build a democratic state with a set of social policies and programmes sensitive to the needs of married female workers.

Throughout the 1950s the federation and its provincial groups became increasingly public in their requests for state intervention in married women's lives in the hopes of enhancing opportunities and providing resources in the formal economy. However, members of the federation had trouble with the concept of younger mothers with small children working away from home for pay. The NFLWC believed that women were mothers first and workers second. They accepted that only when forced by circumstances should a woman work outside the home (e.g., divorce or widowhood). Despite the fact that more and more married mothers with children were working in the postwar economy, the NFLWC persisted in advocating that women should only enter the workplace before and after their domestic duties were complete or when the male breadwinner was absent.

While the group supported the liberal feminist claim that all females had a right to economic opportunity and security, their middle-class, bourgeois views accepted the dominant gender ideology that the real job of women should be mothers and housewives. Committed to the ideal of the traditional nuclear family with a stay-at-home wife and breadwinner father, the Liberal federation did however find a way to reconcile women's dual labors. It appealed to the ideals of national progress to uphold their public "job" of providing for the welfare of the nation. The job of "community housekeeper," which the NFLWC saw as the logical extension of women's concern for home and family life, was a legitimate avenue for them to enter public life and meet the challenge of helping to build a capitalist economy and welfare state. Sounding much like the CAC, "community housekeeper," was a way to transcend outdated family roles, but still preserve proper motherhood and the duty to be involved in politics. The best way to do so was through the associational activities of the NFLWC:

...every liberal woman [shall] help in the building up of our forces, so that, if and when the time comes, we can march shoulder to shoulder with Liberal men in the fight against those who would destroy the Liberal pattern of life.²⁸

Thus, women and men were to participate equally in the liberal political processes. They believed these positions should be established on the basis of the gender differences between the sexes. Believing that women's difference was a powerful asset, mothers were told to:

be politically active in the field you can touch. You cannot build a better world unless you begin. If you have a young family; begin by looking after your home, your husband and bringing up your children to be Christian citizens and by keeping yourself well informed. When your children are older you can serve on school boards, you can serve on committees with men, you can try your hand in municipal politics.

If you do not get elected try again. You will learn to give and take. Above all, remember you will have to work twice as hard as a man, without comment, and never, never forget that you must work as a woman.²⁹

Like the CAC, the group believed women could contribute to the health of the nation by caring for family members and afterwards participation in associational life would prepare them to enter official politics. Underlying the campaign to pressure the state for social rights was the federation's conviction that the job of "community housekeeper" was a status granted to women as citizens of Canada. This citizenship status became the basis for the extension of gendered social and civil rights as well as the reason for their involvement in politics:

Madame, if you like the family allowance cheque you are getting, if you think more should be done to protect this country, if you think your husband shouldn't have the right to control your personal property which is not your current home, then Madame, you aren't only interested in politics, you're in politics.³⁰

The author of these words was trying to mobilize women to become more active in politics, which she envisioned as part of mothers' domestic duties and responsibilities to the nation. She called on women to "discover their rights" and claim citizen status by exerting them.

While members realized pragmatically, that many married women worked out of necessity, they believed full-time mothering suited most. Accepted by the federation however, were women who engaged in the work of community housekeeping where they were responsible for the needs of families and the nation. These responsibilities gave them an opportunity to establish a feminine place for themselves in politics, one that would complement men's position. These duties in the public world became the basis from which women could claim a set of social rights that were sensitive to their needs as caregivers. The status of "community housekeeper" then, guaranteed women equality through gender-specific rights and full citizenship.

The members never referred to their political orientation in their discourses, but it would appear that they expressed progressive maternalist views. They used these views to work out the contradictions between the liberal democratic tenets of individualism and motherhood as self-sacrifice. The result was to uphold mothering as a full time job. The federation wanted equality for working women based on the liberal principles of individual progress and economic freedom in terms of access to jobs and representation in politics for young women with no children or older housewives whose families had grown up. For women with caretaking responsibilities their "work" was justified through the public job of "community housekeeping" whereby, they were

encouraged to participate in associational and political life for family and national progress.

Empowering motherhood through the Catholic faith and French-Canadian nationalism: The CED and UCFR

Throughout the 1950s, the CED and UCFR's maternalist views combined with a traditional French-Canadian nationalism to produce a forum for their nation building project. Gender and culture were central to this endeavor. Among the many issues they felt important to sustaining the French-Canadian nation was the promotion of motherhood.

The belief that the French-Canadian family was vital for national survival was an important theme for the CED and the UCFR. In promoting the unity of the family, both organizations emphasized the gendered duties of women. Their basis was the division of labor in the home as well as the nation. Since their beginnings, the UCFR and the CED defined all francophone women as married, educators and housewives (*épouses, éducatrices et ménagères*). With this construct the groups attempted to situate the identity of French women differently in Quebec society from their English counterparts.

As a new round of industrialization and urbanization forever changed the social fabric of Quebec society, the CED and the UCFR believed the worst: French-Canadian women would leave their families for the lure of economic independence in the big city and become like Anglo women in Canada. As this threat became more and more of a reality, so they thought, the desire to protect the nation and its gender and cultural boundaries by linking women's familial duties to Quebec prosperity grew.

Members of the CED were working class as well as French, Catholic and village dwellers (*canadiennes-françaises, catholiques* and *femmes des villes*) and guided by the principles of work and charity (*Travail et Charité*). "[T]his association was founded especially for women living in small towns and to group women who want to better themselves morally and intellectually and preserve the Catholic faith in the family and community" (my translation).³¹ The UCFR was dedicated to the earth and family (*la terre et la famille*) and grouped only women from rural, farming regions of Quebec. "[Their] goal is to work for the religious, moral, social, economic and technical improvement of rural women, to develop the intellectual talents of rural families and to improve their material well-being." (my translation).³²

Whether rural or urban, both groups viewed the nature and duties of French-Canadian women in society through a maternalist ideology. They credited women with being morally superior to men, modest, spiritual, dedicated to serving others and, most important of all, responsible for safeguarding the emotional and physical well-being of families. The maternalism of the CED and the UCFR led them to expect all mothers to extend their familial and spiritual duties far beyond the home to protect the nation. They were fearful of

the dramatic changes that were happening to the social order, specifically, how these might threaten family stability. The groups believed women were necessary for developing good citizenship and promoting a healthy French-Canadian society in Quebec. For this purpose, both groups needed, and so constructed, gender and cultural identities that were coherent in their definition of women as different from men and built on the concept of a nation as a distinct entity and centered on a homogeneous French-Canadian culture.³³ The goal was to insert this female identity into the project of strengthening French-Canadian society and its nationalist ideology. Thus, the maternalist beliefs of the groups were the foundation for their engagement with traditional nationalist projects of sustaining the collectivity in Quebec.

The work of affirming the nation's strengths and French-Catholic character was decidedly women's. "[O]ur nation is grand because our women make it so, she (the nation) is strong because our mothers are the ones that rock the cradle and look after the land and because mothers instill in their children the virtues of faith, hope and charity." (my translation)³⁴ The nation is constituted through the maternal. She (the nation) is motherly, devoted, abundant and self-sacrificing. As symbolic markers women were responsible for maintaining the purity of the nation's boundaries by transmitting the culture's traditions to her children. When the traditional nationalist call came to build the French nation, organizational women were ready for the task. Rather than reject the maternal symbols of nationalism, the clubs embraced these gendered notions and worked to make Quebec a French-Catholic territory.

Armed with the conviction that mothers were responsible for the health of the family, as well as the nation, the CED and the UCFR used their maternalist views to preserve the status quo of a stable, gender-ordered, rural, Catholic and French nation. They were sentimental maternalists relying on the cultural construction of motherhood as modest, pure and self-sacrificing. For these two groups there was no public-private divide in women's lives. There was no contradiction between family and work because, in their view, mothers were not employed outside the home for pay. The mission of all women was to mother family, home and nation. This task required full time devotion. Motherhood then, became a source of empowerment and a way for women to use their maternal responsibilities and participate alongside the Catholic Church and French-Canadian nationalism in the preservation of the nation.

Conclusion

Maternalists at work in the 1950s were committed to making mothers direct participants in the post-war society's plans for the future of Canada. Their activism built on the convictions that women's mothering duties in the private realm gave them a unique and challenging role to play in extending the principles of liberal democracy to all corners of the nation. Guided by the tenets of individualism, citizen rights, participatory government or nationalist desires to contain the boundaries of the nation, they acted on their beliefs that women

were entitled to representation based on the construction of motherhood as nurturing and self-sacrificing. At a time when there was neither little political talk nor concern for the rights of women, the CAC, FFLPQ, CED and UCFR created a “larger share in community housekeeping” for mothers. Through their maternalist agendas, the groups empowered mothering with the ability to insert women into the citizenry by transposing their private, domestic duties to the public thereby subverting traditional distinctions between women’s and men’s worlds. Mothering was now important, not just to home and family, but to the politics of nation building. Mothering also became the avenue for making the welfare state democratic, the nation stronger and society more just. Through empowered motherhood, the groups carved out a significant place for women in the broader society and led to the advancement of their gendered citizenship rights. The legacy of our foremothers lives on in the work of outlaw mothers today.

¹National Archives of Canada (NAC), National Federation of Liberal Women of Canada (NFLWC), MG 28 IV 3, Vol.1078, “Never Underestimate the Power of Women,” *The Liberal Woman*, Ottawa: National Federation of Liberal Women of Canada, Vol. II, No.1, January 1949, p.2.

²For the history of this period see Dickinson and Young (1993).

³See for example Behiels (1985); Neatby (1997); Hébert (2002); Black and Brandt (1999) and Piché (1992).

⁴Scholars like Kimberly Springer (2002), argue that the wave model excludes women of color from the history of Western feminism, because of its focus on white activism only. Her view is that the construct of “wave” disregards the role race plays in the women’s movement. As well, the continuity work is not present. Many women, non-white and non-anglophone, participate in between and after each wave. As Springer suggests, including these differently situated women and their activities would make [the two waves] “much bigger swells.” Clearly, there is a need for a more useful concept to overcome the hegemonic view of the women’s movement and highlight how various women at different times contribute to the struggle for gender equality and rights. Rather than emphasizing origins and ends or the development of new elements, I look for the bridge work activists of the 1940s, ’50s and early ’60s do to sustain themselves in a non-responsive political and social climate.

⁵I ground this approach in the empirical work of several scholars who uncover previously unrecognized modes of women’s political activities and concentrate on the continuities of this behavior between waves. See for example, Strong-Boag (1986); Kealey and Sangster (1989).

⁶See my PH.D thesis, *Vers l’Avenir. Quebec Women’s Politics Between 1945 and 1967: Feminist, Maternalist and Nationalist Links* (Ph.D History), Montreal University, 2003.

⁷Women’s consumer activism has a long history among Canadian and Quebec

women. See Baillargeon (1991); Parr (1999); Fahrni (2000).

⁸NAC, Fonds l'Association canadienne des consommateurs (CAC), MG 28, I 200, Vol.3, "Suggested Points for Speakers to Make," (nd but early in the organization's founding). The CAC continued the work of the former Women's Regional Advisory Committees of the Consumer Branch of the Wartime Prices and Trade Board.

⁹Ibid, "President's Annual Report," English Branch of Quebec Provincial Canadian Association of Consumers, June 1, 1950, p.2.

¹⁰Ibid, Vol.40, "This is *your* organization. Its effectiveness depends on *you*," date unknown, p.5.

¹¹Ibid., Vol.27, Correspondence, Letter from CAC national vice-president and executive member for Quebec to women's organizations in Canada and Quebec, February 2, 1949.

¹²Ibid., Vol.27, "A mon avis," *Le Bulletin de l'ACC*, L'Association canadienne des consommateurs Bureau-Chef, No.59, juin, 1956, p.2.

¹³Ibid., Vol.3, "Report on Annual Meeting," No.17, June 1954.

¹⁴Ibid., Vol.3, "Economics in Skirts," Speech prepared in Montréal, March 3, 1952, p.1.

¹⁵Ibid., p.2.

¹⁶Ibid., Vol.27, "A mon avis," *Bulletin de l'ACC*, L'Association canadienne des consommateurs, no.50, août, 1955, p.2.

¹⁷Ibid., Summary of remarks made by national president of CAC before the Eastern Ontario Women's Institutes, October 29, 1953.

¹⁸Ibid., "Economics in Skirts," *op. cit.*, p.8.

¹⁹Ibid., p.3.

²⁰Ibid., Vol.3, In her speech "Economics in Skirts," the author refers to women as "economic citizens."

²¹NAC, Fonds FNFLC, Vol. 1078, "Pep Up Your Politics," *The Liberal Woman*, Ottawa: The National Federation of Liberal Women of Canada, Vol.1, No.7, October 1948, p.2.

²²Ibid, Vol.1078, "To the French Speaking Liberal Women of Canada," written by Madame Tancrede Jodoin, President of the Quebec Women's Liberal Association, *The Liberal Woman*, Ottawa: National Federation of Liberal Women of Canada, Vol.1, No.8, November 1948, p.2.

²³Franca Iacovetta (2000) explores how dominant gender ideologies of liberal minded reform women operated in their social service work with immigrant and refugee women.

²⁴NAC, Fonds FNFLC, MG 28, IV 3, Vol.1078, "A Message from the President," by Nancy Hodges, *The Liberal Woman*, Ottawa: The National Federation of Liberal Women of Canada, Vol.1, No.1, January 1948, p.1.

²⁵Ibid., Vol.1057, "Speech given by National Director of women's work," Mrs. S.C. Tweed, to President and members of the executive of FNFLC, December 16, 1947, p.1.

²⁶Ibid., Vol. 1078, "A Message from the President," by Nancy Hodges, the

quotes are from the reply of Douglas C. Abbott, Minister of Finance to the federation's resolutions, *The Liberal Woman*, Ottawa: The National Federation of Liberal Women of Canada, Vol.1, No.2, January 1948, p.2.

²⁷*Ibid.*, Vol.1078, "Resolutions of National Convention," held in October 1947, *The Liberal Woman*, Ottawa: National Federation of Liberal Women of Canada, Vol.1, No.1, January 1948, p.2. The position on the UIAC would later be dropped.

²⁸*Ibid.*, "A Message from the President," Nancy Hodges, *The Liberal Woman*, Ottawa: National Federation of Liberal Women of Canada, Vol.1, No.3, March 1948, p.1.

²⁹*Ibid.*, "Feminae Rei Publicae," by Mary Mack, President, Eastern Ontario Women's Liberal Association, *The Liberal Woman*, Ottawa: National Federation of Liberal Women of Canada, Vol.IV, No.1, January 1951, p.4.

³⁰*Ibid.*, "Dad Looks After That," by Dorothy Jorgens Dowhan, Editor, *Nanton News*, Nanton Alberta, *The Liberal Woman*, Ottawa: National Federation of Liberal Women of Canada, Vol.IV, No.II, March 1951, p.2.

³¹Archives nationales du Québec a Montréal (ANQM), Fonds CED, 06, M-P 129, Reel 9936, "Historique du Cercle d'économie domestique de Dolbeau, 1952-1962," from the speech of M. l'abbé G. Levesque, aumônier diocésain de l'U.C.F., 1962. The fact that all club documents, monthly bulletin l'Essor and correspondence were written in French and its members were of French origin attests to the exclusivity of the CED.

³²ANQM, Fonds UCFR, 06, M-P 129, Reel 9936, "L'Union catholique des fermières *Buts, Organisation, Programme, Statuts*," 1949, p.17.

³³Louis Balthazar (1993) argues that French-Canadian nationalists saw the nation as an ethnic entity and racially homogeneous.

³⁴*Ibid.*, Reel 9936, Marie Dupuis, secrétaire générale de l'Union catholique des fermières, "Le Role de la femme et de la jeune fille dans l'établissement rural," 1949, p.35.

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