'KEEPERS OF MORALE':

By

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Abstract

Historians differ as to whether World War II brought about major changes in women's public and private roles. Using the Vancouver Council of Women as a case study, this thesis argues that its war-time activities were conducted in terms of a continuing ideology about women's roles, which enabled the VCW to adapt to the war-time situation requiring women to take on duties outside their traditional sphere, while limiting its ability to perceive a wider social role for women. The VCW's response to the war was a concerted effort to promote government policies at home while furthering the tenets of its maternal feminist philosophy. Relying on what it considered to be women's feminine talents the VCW maintained that women's efforts were best put to use in war fund drives and the protection of the home front. The VCW's assistance in the mobilization of women into paid war work that incorporated their traditional work experiences revealed the narrow perception that it had of women's public sphere. Its resolutions for post-war planning failed to offer broadening possibilities for women in the post-war world. Patriotism, the preservation of the ideals of home life and the promotion of women's feminine qualities were more important to the VCW than the pursuit of broad feminist goals. The war was not to alter the VCW's views regarding women's proper sphere; its beliefs and activities signified a continuation of prewar views regarding women's public and private status. Women's proper sphere was still domestic.
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To my family in Newfoundland I am forever grateful for their continued love and encouragement over what often seemed like an endless task. Finally, I would like to dedicate this thesis to the memory of my mother, Laura Rose. It was because of her war-time experiences that I initially became interested in the effects of war on women's lives. To her I am forever indebted.
Chapter I: Introduction

This study addresses one of the major questions posed by feminist historians of women in Canada during World War II: why, in spite of the advances made during the war years, did women's social, political and economic status not change significantly in post-war Canadian society? Feminist historians generally agree that women's war-time mobilization was a necessity for both the Canadian and American governments in prosecuting total war. Yet they differ as to whether the war brought about major changes in women's public and private roles. Some see the post-war changes in women's status as a reversal of war-time gains. Others claim that, as such, no permanent gains were achieved for women during war-time because of the persistence of underlying attitudes about women's position in society, and because the temporary war-time changes were accommodated through existing ideologies. Using the Vancouver Council of Women (VCW) as a case study, this thesis will argue that its war-time activities were conducted in terms of a continuing ideology about women's roles. This ideology enabled the Council to adapt to the war-time situation requiring women to take on duties outside their traditional sphere, while limiting its ability to perceive a wider social role for women.
Several American historians have paved the way for historical inquiry into the effects of the war on Canadian women. Indeed, many observations on American females' experiences are relevant to Canadian women. The war precipitated an unprecedented entry of women into both the American and Canadian labour forces, particularly in industry, so that women took jobs previously held only by men. Once hostilities ceased women on both sides of the border were expected to leave their war-time work and return to traditional female employment, or to the home as wife and mother. The impact of total warfare permeated American and Canadian society from the workplace to the home, determining the duties and roles of American and Canadian women whether as housewives, mothers, employees, consumers or civilians.

William Chafe's ground-breaking work set the tone for historical debate about the impact of World War II on women's status. Chafe argues that the unprecedented entry of married women into the American war-time labour force advanced women's fight for independent economic status and

he concludes that this happened specifically because of the war. 2 But Chafe's analysis of the effects of war-time participation on the American women's post-war status has been criticized, particularly by feminist historians. In a reassessment of women's experience during World War II, American historians such as Karen Anderson and Maureen Honey, and to a lesser extent, Susan Hartmann and D'Ann Campbell, question claims that the war had a liberating effect on women's lives.

According to Anderson the debate has centered around one major issue: "whether to stress the widening of opportunities for women in paid work or the persistence of sexist values and discriminatory practices in the economy, the family, and the society in general." 3 She argues that the effect of war on women's status was not positive. In a study of American women in the Puget Sound area, Anderson shows that women's employment in non-traditional fields did not result in a re-evaluation of women's capabilities, but only in a reallocation of roles during war-time. She argues that by altering tasks to "conform to traditional


preconceptions regarding women's [work]"4 the war allowed most people to retain "conventional notions on what women should do."5 During the war years, inherited cultural norms continued to determine women's roles and in Anderson's view "facilitated an anachronistic retreat into the 'feminine mystique' of the post-war period."6

Although Susan Hartmann agrees with Anderson that "conventional standards survived and reasserted themselves after the war", her conclusions about women's struggle for increased equality are more positive. Hartmann analyzes women's post-war status from a longer time perspective than Anderson and maintains that, during the 1940s, "women's behavior in the public realm had undergone considerable change and would continue to develop in altered patterns."7 She argues that "feminism was very much alive during the war years"8 particularly within women's organizations where


6 Anderson, Wartime Women, p. 64.

7 Susan Hartmann, The Home Front and Beyond: American Women in the 1940s, (Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1982), p.27.

women's groups provided "active vehicles for engagement in the political process." Hartmann does point out, however, that American women's organizations were divided in philosophy and priority, especially on issues of class and race. She differentiates between what she sees as two strains of war-time feminism. "Status-oriented feminism" was manifested "principally in the movement for female participation in policy-making" whereas "survival-oriented feminism" dealt with more practical issues such as labour standards, childcare and domestic service.

D'Ann Campbell argues that traditional attitudes towards women remained intact during the 1940s, not only because of the overriding influence of ideological forces and the power of parental control, but more importantly because of women's overall satisfaction with their gender roles. Campbell maintains that women's basic conservatism not only determined their public and private roles during war-time but continued to affect them in the post-war years. War may have offered new challenges, but women, Campbell maintains, responded with "the norms of inherited values." In her view, American women during the war "did not change their interpretations of their primary roles" and she concludes that "gender norms - and, even more, gender

9 Hartmann, The Homefront and Beyond, p. 144.
10 Hartmann, "Women's Organizations During World War II", p. 315.
identities - change in the long, rather than the short, term."11

Maureen Honey has dealt with the efforts of the government to propagate a particular image of American womanhood and argues, as does Karen Anderson, that such an image continued segregated gender identities, as well as segregating women into different classes. She examines the U.S. Office of War Information's co-operation with the magazine industry in creating a myth emphasizing women's domestic qualities. Honey concludes that war propaganda not only intensified class differences in the portrayal of women war workers, but also prevented the development of any model that would have helped women form "non-traditional conceptions of women's work."12

Scholarly consideration of Canadian women during World War II is mainly confined to one feminist historian, Ruth Roach Pierson.13 Like American feminists, she concludes


that the assumption of "great gains" for women and "the bewilderment over the postwar reversals" is a gross error in judgement. She argues that war-time social attitudes still emphasized that Canadian women's proper sphere was domestic, and only the exigencies of war required women temporarily to assume masculine job roles. In Pierson's view, traditional preconceptions of women's capabilities determined their roles in the public sphere during war-time and affected Canadian government policy on women's post-war status. As an example, Pierson points to the assumption of the Canadian government's Advisory Committee on Reconstruction that the majority of working women would voluntarily return to the home at the war's end. Even the Women's Subcommittee on Reconstruction did little to address the concerns of female workers; it saw working class women primarily in domestic service and married women only as secondary wage earners. War-time gains for women were temporary because, in Pierson's assessment, they were made


15 Pierson notes that the Advisory Committee on Reconstruction reported that 45 to 55% of the 600,000 women who had entered war-time work would return to marriage and family after the war.

16 Pierson Canadian Women And The Second World War, p.21.

She argues that "the seeds of backlash were already present during the war itself." This explains why women adopted a "full skirted and redomesticated post-war model" and why "for more than a decade feminism was once again sacrificed to femininity."20

Only one historian has attempted to reassess some aspects of Pierson's thesis; Gail Cuthbert Brandt is highly critical of Pierson's analysis of the Women's Sub-Committee on Reconstruction, arguing that it takes no cognizance of the circumstances and attitudes of Canadian society at the time of the report.21 Taking a more sympathetic view of its findings, Brandt contends that, although the Committee was plagued by administrative problems, such as unrealistic time constraints and the complex nature of reconstruction bureaucracy, it did offer women a choice between various careers and marriage.22 Yet she does concede that there was a "lack of significant change in public attitudes towards women's roles"23 and that "most Canadians simply wanted to see women

18 Pierson, "They're Still Women After All", p.218.
19 Pierson, "They're Still Women After All", p.219.
20 Pierson, "They're Still Women After All", p.220.
22 Brandt, "'Pigeon-Holed and Forgotten'", pp.239 and 253.
23 Brandt, "'Pigeon-Holed and Forgotten'", p.239.
return home after the war". Similar conclusions were reached by two other Canadian feminist historians who analyzed the effects of war-time propaganda on women's lives.

One of the major issues of interest to feminist war historians is the existence of continued gender segregation in the public sphere during and after the war. American feminist war historians emphasize the overriding influence of culture and ideology, rather than economic factors. They argue that long-standing norms regarding gender roles continued to influence society in general, and the family in particular, and that such norms either were willingly embraced by women or were imposed upon them by parents, governments and the media.

Canadian studies of war-time society have concentrated on the analysis of the institutions of government, the armed forces and the media in assessing women's status and they


25 Susan Bland's quantitative analysis of war-time advertising in Maclean's Magazine concludes that the increase in the number of advertisements directed to homemakers in the post-war years is proof that attitudes towards women's roles had not changed. "Henrietta the Homemaker, and 'Rosie the Riveter': Images of Women in Advertising 1939-50", Atlantis, Vol.8, No.2, Spring 1983, pp.61-86. Yvonne Malmeous-Klein's study of conflicting images of Canadian women in war-time National Film Board productions argues that women were unlikely to find new roles after the war by viewing NFB films and that the industry was a male preserve in the executive and directional spheres. "How They Saw Us: Images of Women in National Film Board Films of the 1940's and 1950's", Atlantis, Vol.4, No.2, Spring 1979, pp.32-33.
too suggest the dominance of culture and ideology in the continued gender segregation of the post-war years. Pierson's identification of the "fear of loss of feminity" and, to a lesser extent, Brandt's argument for stability in public attitudes towards women's roles all suggest the persistence of pre-war views of Canadian women's public and private status during the post-war years.

The over-riding question raised by these histories—whether ideologies and norms about women's roles remained intact or changed during war-time—should be examined in relation to attempts by women's pressure groups during the war to address problems related to women's public and private status. Among American historians only Susan Hartmann has attempted to link women's organized war-time activities to the growth of feminist activism. In Canada, Ruth Roach Pierson and Gail Cuthbert Brandt have looked only at the women's federal committee which studied the long-term effects of World War II on women's status. Therefore, the extent of feminist activism within women's organizations during World War II remains to be assessed.

This thesis will focus on the activities and philosophy of the Vancouver Council of Women during the 1940s in order to learn more about how women's organizations tried to influence the political structures and social views that affected women's lives during war-time. Such an assessment

26 Pierson, "They're Still Women After All", p.219.
of women's organized activities can provide greater insight into the evolution of social structures and beliefs than can the study of individuals.27

A major question to be examined is the effect of the belief in segregated gender roles on the programmes of organized women's groups during war-time. If the belief that women could best achieve recognition in the public sphere through the private virtues of being feminine, peace-loving, maternal and sacrificial continued to be accepted by a large segment of Canadian society during the war in spite of temporary changes in women's roles, then this might offer an explanation of the so-called reversal of gains after the war. Such an explanation has been suggested but not documented.

The thesis will examine how perceptions of women's public and private roles were reflected in the war-time programmes of the Vancouver Council of Women and in its position on the post-war roles of women. It reveals that the VCW's philosophical beliefs and maternal feminist nature determined the stance that the Council would take regarding Canada's part in the war and the types of war-time service it deemed appropriate for women. The VCW believed that

27 In a recent study social psychologist Mike Robinson, pointing to the power of group activism, observes that the capacity of a single person to achieve on his or her own is, in general, far less than that of the group. He maintains that the "social power of the individual is mediated by the groups to which he or she belongs." Mike Robinson, Groups, (Chichester: John Wiley & Sons, 1984), p.1.
women's war-time efforts should be confined to activities that relied on their feminine skills, and it therefore encouraged the view of women as nurturers and men as providers in spite of war-time aberrations. The Council's support for continued gender segregation during the war, and its efforts to propagate traditional views regarding women's public and private status, limited its ability to promote broaden opportunities and alternative choices for women. By encouraging women to maintain their feminine nature while assisting in the prosecution of war, the VCW sustained pre-war views of Canadian women's public and private status and transmitted them into the post-war years.

Founded in the late nineteenth century, the VCW operated as an umbrella organization for Vancouver women's volunteer groups and traditionally espoused social and civic reform causes. By the 1940s the Council had over 80 affiliates. With a combined membership of affiliates of between 8,000 and 10,000 the VCW prided itself on being the "most powerful women's organization in Vancouver."28 This makes it an excellent vehicle to study women's activism.

Although the Council's activities were confined mainly to social and civic issues, from its inception it expressed a concern about the status of women. The preamble to the VCW's constitution emphasized its goal of "the betterment of

women's [and children's] position in society". To the extent that feminism has been associated with "public, organized campaigns" to further women's status the VCW can be considered a feminist organization. The Council's rationale for women's entry into the public sphere points to the VCW's commitment to maternal feminism, a philosophy which maintained that women's role as mothers required that they participate in the public sphere. This philosophy encompassed the belief that women's special qualities (maternal, nurturing, sacrificial and peace-loving) should encourage them to enter public life and promote reforms not achievable by men. Also known as social-reform feminism, it argued that women's lives were directly linked to the effects of social upheaval, such as poverty and war, and therefore it was women's duty to address these issues.

The middle-class composition of the VCW also influenced its perceptions of women's roles and shaped its policies. Previous studies of the VCW and its parent organization, the

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29 Preamble to VCW Constitution. Vancouver Council of Women, Manuscript Collection, Vancouver, UBC, Special Collections.

30 Early women's historians saw the suffrage campaign as the focus of women's history. For a discussion see Linda Kealey, ed. A Not Unreasonable Claim: Woman and Reform in Canada, 1880s-1920s. (Toronto: The Women's Educational Press, 1979), pp.7-8.

National Council of Women of Canada (NCWC), of which it was part, have underlined this middle-class character, particularly at the Executive level.32

The VCW's promotion of community service among women offers another insight into its views of women's war-time roles. Few academic studies have focussed on women's volunteerism, particularly during war-time, or on volunteer activities as promoting women's awareness of the need for change in their political and social status. While the hostilities continued, the VCW heartily endorsed war charity events and circulated war-time propaganda urging civilians to accept rationing and other restrictions. But such advocacy did not divert the Council from its main interest - the promotion of social and civic reform. While the VCW proceeded with renewed vigour to promote social change under its war-time banner, at the same time, its attitudes and perception of women's roles in society remained consistent with its pre-war ideology. The war-time situation was not to alter the Council's views regarding women's proper sphere in Vancouver society.

Chapter II: The Vancouver Council of Women - its Origins, Influences and Entry into the World War II Effort.

The Vancouver Council of Women's response to World War II was not mere token support, but an enthusiastic, concerted effort to promote Canadian government policies at home while furthering the tenets of its maternal feminist beliefs. The VCW's participation in war fund drives and salvage efforts, its pro-British sympathies and support of local industries, its lobbying efforts on behalf of armed forces personnel and its attempts to secure the home front from "alien" interests were signs of its patriotism and nationalism as well as its belief in the possibility of women's initiatives.

These views on the VCW's part did not originate in 1939 in reaction to Canada's entry into the European conflict. The Council's patriotism, maternal feminism and elite social structure had been fundamental elements of its identity since November 1894, when a group of Vancouver's concerned women citizens banded together to work towards the reform of society.
As a chapter of the newly formed National Council of Women, a community service organization,1 the VCW adopted its federal counterpart's constitution and philosophy, proclaiming itself a "non-sectarian and non-partisan movement of women" in order to avoid political and religious strife with its various affiliates. In addition, to maintain each affiliate's independence, the VCW guaranteed that it had "'no power over...[them]...beyond that of suggestion and sympathy.'" The federal pledge, adopted by the VCW at the time of its establishment, set the framework for the Vancouver Council's future activities:

We, Women of Canada, sincerely believing that the best good of our homes and nation will be advanced by our own greater unity of thought, sympathy, and purpose, and that an organized movement of women will best conserve the greatest good of the family and the State, do hereby band ourselves together to further the application of the Golden Rule to society, custom and law.2

The belief that the prosperity and stability of the family and the state were inextricably bound together served as the VCW's rationale in the early 20th century for including both private and public concerns in women's sphere

1 Lady Ishbel Aberdeen became the president of the International Council of Women in 1883 and established in Canada in 1893 a National Council, declaring that its mission was "in one word, mothering". "Presidential Address" NCWC 1894, p.1 cited in Terence R. Morrison "'Their Proper Sphere': Feminism, The Family And Child-Centered Reform In Ontario, 1875-1900", Ontario History, Vol.68, Part II, p.65.

2 See copy in VCW Manuscript Collection, Box 3, File No.14.
of influence. The Council argued that to end the social ills afflicting the family, women must move beyond the home and into the public realm. Espousing the view of an 'ideal of true womanhood' the VCW maintained that woman's maternal skills, domesticity and unique moral authority could be decisive in solving the community's social and political problems. In doing so, the Council articulated a stereotyped view of woman as an altruistic, nurturing and maternal being whose guidance would surely bring about much needed reforms.

Believing that women were morally superior to men, and therefore able to achieve reforms where men had failed, the VCW rallied its supporters to combat the evils of early 20th century society. It proclaimed that by providing women with a "common meeting place" and by standing "shoulder to shoulder" the Council could attack "any outstanding evil or injustice" in society. Its initial lobbying efforts to win protective legislation for mothers and children, better working hours for women and girls in factories and stores, and the suppression of "pernicious literature" which, it


4 VCW Minutes, 1912, Box 6, Files 1-2, Special Collections.

5 In 1904 the VCW endorsed both the Infants Protection and Mothers Pensions.

6 In 1915 the VCW inaugurated the Women's Employment League and provided the initial funding before handing its administration over to the city.
argued, contributed to child delinquency, reflected the maternalizing aspects of the VCW's activities and philosophy.

As for those women leading these campaigns, only those who were financially secure and had leisure time would make up the ranks of social reformers; other women had no such resources or opportunities. A study by Gillian Weiss of Vancouver clubwomen from 1910 to 1928 shows that the typical member of the VCW during the 1920s was married, of British origin, usually middle-aged and of middle-class background and that such women's organizations in the early 20th century were an "accepted and effective medium for maternal feminist activism." Despite the VCW's claim to speak with "the tacit approval of a large membership", Weiss


8 For a detailed description of all the clubs, see Gillian Weiss, "'As Women and as Citizens'", Chapter 2.

9 Weiss reported that 70% of Vancouver clubwomen were married, 26% were single and 4% were widowed or otherwise. She also noted that 12% of clubwomen were employed full-time. Weiss determined the members' class status by the members' husbands' background and their place of residence.

maintains that "only a small core of women were involved in generating policy and opinion."11

Weiss's characterization of the VCW is also borne out by the World War II evidence. The Council's Executive12 and the members of the Standing Committees13 "formed the active core" of the Council of Women.14 Twenty-one women served on the Executive during the war period, twelve of whom served four or more years. [See Table I].

11 Weiss notes that the great majority of VCW members were members of affiliate societies who often did not attend the business meetings. "'As Women and as Citizens'", pp.45-46. Mary Patricia Powell makes similar observations in "Response to the Depression: Three Representative Women's Groups in British Columbia" M.A. Thesis, Dept. of History, U.B.C., 1967.

12 The Executive consisted of eleven officers; Standing Committees varied each year. Most of the activity centered around the approximately 100 women who were Executive and Standing Committee members.

13 These Committees were: Agriculture; Arts and Letters; Child and Family Welfare; Cinema and Printed Matter; Citizenship; Economics; Education; Housing and Town Planning; Laws for Women and Children; Migration; Mental Hygiene; Moral Standards; League of Nations; National Recreation; Natural Resources; Publications and Publicity; Social Health; Soldiers-Sailors-Pensioners and Dependents; Taxation; Trades and Professions for Women; and Affiliations. Special Committees were set up for Radio in 1941 and for National Defence in 1945.

14 Weiss, "'As Women and as Citizens'", pp.49-50.
TABLE I: VCW EXECUTIVE MEMBERS, 1939-1946

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- Compiled from VCW Executive Reports, 1939-1946.

Thus, VCW policy during the war was executed and administered by a small core of women leaders. Members of the Council’s war-time Executive were a socially privileged group, since 90 per cent were drawn from Vancouver’s middle-class and had both the economic security and leisure to devote to reform causes. Many were women of elite social standing, well-known professionals or politically active citizens, most were married and practically all were

15 The members' class status was determined by their place of residence and social and economic background and, when known, their husbands background. Calculations show that 19 of the 21 women listed as Executive members of the VCW from 1939-45 resided in the West End or West side of Vancouver; 2 women lived on the East side.

16 Harriette Porter, VCW President (1939-40) was a past member of the Board of Directors, Crippled Children's Hospital; Ada Crump, VCW President (1940-41) was a School Trustee; Helen Smith (1886-1955), VCW President (1942-44) was a former MLA (Vancouver-Burrard) (Lib.) (1933-41); Helena Gutteridge, Convenor for Housing and Town Planning (1939-42) was a former Alderwoman; Judge Helen McGill was Convenor of Laws for Women and Children (1939-40; 41-46); Lillian Patterson, VCW Vice-President (1939-40) was wife of the late Dr. Frank Porter Patterson, former MLA (Cons.) (1937). Laura Jamieson (1888-1964), Convenor for League of
involved in more than one voluntary organization. Those who served as convenors came from much the same social background. At least 70 per cent of the women who served as Convenors of the Standing Committees were drawn from Vancouver’s middle-class. [See Table II].

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- Compiled from VCW Executive Reports, 1939-1946.

Nations, (1939-40) was a juvenile court judge and MLA (Vancouver Centre) (1939-45;52-53); Dorothy Steeves (1895-1978), Convenor for Taxation, (1939-40) was a MLA (CCF), (North Vancouver) (1934-45).

17 Harriette Porter, VCW's delegate of the Crippled Children's Hospital, was Past President of the Point Grey Women's Institute and Life member of the New Westminster Anglican Diocesan Board. Ada Crump, VCW delegate for the League of Women Voters, was a member of the Parent-Teachers Association, the Kings Daughters, the WCTU and President of the Child Welfare Association. Susan Lane Clark, VCW Vice-President (1939-40) was the President of the New Era League and representative on the Mothers Pensions Board. Ella Bingham, Past President 1939-40 and Convenor for the VCW Radio Committee, 1941 was first Vice-President of the Women's Educational Auxiliary of the United Church and Vice-President of the Elizabeth Fry Society.

18 Of the 59 other women listed as Convenors from 1939-1945, addresses were located for 49. Out of these 49 women, a total of 41 lived on the West side or the West End, while only 8 lived on the East Side.
The middle-class composition of the VCW was to have long-lasting effects on the policies that it endorsed because the Council was drawn from the more conservative elements of society and protected the interests of its own class. This became particularly apparent in the VCW's campaigns to support the federal government's war-time policies and activities.

The VCW had watched international events in the late 1930s with great concern and, believing that women had a special duty to preserve peace, it often urged government officials to condemn acts of violence by aggressor nations. In 1937, the VCW recommended that news reels which glorified war be censored and suggested that the "parade of cadets and soldiers" used to introduce new films be replaced with less militaristic images. In its condemnation of Japanese aggression that same year, the Council demanded that the Prime Minister impose economic sanctions on Japan and recommended that Canada ally itself with other nations to punish those who broke international law. Later, the Council's League of Nations Committee argued that an embargo on war materials sent to Japan was necessary so as to "disassociate our country from the barbarous bombing[...] of

19 Resolution presented by the Cinema Committee, VCW General Meeting. Carried. April 5, 1937, Minutes.

20 VCW Special General Meeting, Oct. 21, 1937, Minutes.
life in China by Japan."21 In 1939, even as the crisis was building in Europe, the VCW maintained that women's special moral authority could save the world from war. In June, VCW President Harriette Porter expressed hope that there was still time left for all women "to mobilize for peace just as men get together in the race for armament and the building of battleships."22

However, once war broke out, the VCW, like most Canadian women's organizations, adopted a fervently pro-war stance, a reflection of the views of that portion of its membership drawn from patriotic societies and veterans auxiliaries. [See Appendix I]. Two days after Canada's entry into the war, the VCW's Sub-Executive sent a resolution to the federal government vowing "to place themselves at the disposal of His Majesty's Government".23 Again and again throughout the war the VCW displayed its patriotic support of Dominion Government policies. Its support for conscription for overseas service is merely one example among many.24

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21 VCW General Meeting, January 9, 1939, Minutes.

22 "Can Women Preserve Peace? - The Views of Leading Clubwomen", The Vancouver Clubwoman, Vol.1, No.1, June 1939, p.13. Its editor, Amy Kerr, was a VCW member.

23 VCW Sub-Executive Meeting, September 12, 1939, Minutes.

24 The NCWC President reminded women that they should stand "strongly behind every effort to increase Canada's position and strengthen the cause of the United Nations."
The Council's patriotic fervour was most evident in its support of the "boys" at the front. Since the VCW drew almost one-quarter of its membership from patriotic societies and veterans groups, its affiliates were particularly concerned with problems affecting Canada's armed forces. In one resolution, for example, the VCW criticized the Mayor of Vancouver for remarks made suggesting that soldiers were being used as cannon fodder. Most of its resolutions, however, dealt with matters concerning the rights of men in the armed forces personnel and their position as family men. The Council lobbied for free medical aid for the forces and their dependents and it attempted unsuccessfully to change the Sunday boat schedule to Victoria to lengthen the soldiers' day trips to their families. Similarly, while the VCW supported a proposal that members of the Merchant Marine be exempt from taxation, it also established committees to help new wives of soldiers adjust to life in the city.

"Women's National Head Asks 'Yes' Vote on Plebiscite", Vancouver Sun, April 11, 1942, p.12.


26 VCW Sub-Executive Meeting, Oct.5, 1942, Minutes.

27 Despite the VCW's efforts the Department of National Defense informed the Council that sailing times could not be altered due to a shortage of steamers. VCW Sub-Executive Meeting, January 5, 1942, Minutes.


29 VCW Sub-Executive Meeting January 5, 1942, Minutes.
Showing concern for war veterans' widows, it also requested that their $20 monthly allowance be continued for the remaining years of their lifetime, and also asked that pay allowances to the wives and children of naval officers and petty officers be equal to that of civilians.

The Council showed a special interest in the situation of widowed mothers of soldiers, and one affiliate argued that their needs are often "equal to the wife of a man in the Service" because they often "must maintain a home, whereas the wife does not always do so." Criticizing the conditions of the Dependents Mothers' Allowance, the League argued that mothers' benefits should be equal to those of wives and that they should receive them "within six weeks of the enlistment of their men." The women's concerns for soldiers' mothers may in fact have reflected the circumstances of some of its members who had sons in the services. However, the VCW's main objective in addressing the needs of soldiers' mothers stemmed from its belief in the sanctity of motherhood and, in particular, its high

30 VCW Resolution to Minister of Pensions and National Health, General Meeting, March 4, 1941, Minutes.
31 VCW General Meeting, May 4, 1942, Minutes.
32 VCW Sub-Executive Meeting, June 7, 1940, Minutes.
33 VCW General Meeting, Sept. 8, 1941, Minutes.
34 Members of the Civilian Pensioned Mothers' Association and the Point Grey Women's Institute intimated this at separate meetings in the fall of 1939.
regard for those women who had produced sons who were offering their lives for the freedom of their country. Furthermore, the underlying objective of many of the Council's resolutions concerning the armed forces was to ensure that family life was not adversely affected by the absence of the men. The Council hoped that armed forces personnel would rest assured that life at home was carrying on as usual while they were overseas.

The VCW supported the Canadian government's war campaigns and believed that Vancouver women could support the war while performing their domestic duties. Suggestions ran the gamut from collecting discarded toothpaste tubes\(^{35}\) to encouraging housewives to "buy British"\(^{36}\) goods only. Even the Council was not exempt from such domestic tasks, as its members knitted goods for servicemen "while racing through a minimum of resolutions" so it could hear speeches from civic candidates at its Executive meetings.\(^{37}\) All of these efforts reveal the Council's perception that women's war-time service should conform to traditional female roles.

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35 Suggested by the Convenor of Natural Resources, Agreed. VCW Meeting, April 1, 1940. Minutes.

36 Suggested by the Ladies Guild to British Sailors Society, June 4, 1940 VCW Sub-Executive Meeting. Minutes.

37 *Vancouver Daily Province*, December 5, 1939. Theresa Galloway, Convenor for Trades and Professions for Women recalled that she often placed knitting projects in a basket at the entrance to her beauty parlour during the war and that clients knitted while getting their hair done. Interview with Theresa Galloway, Vancouver, January 1989.
In the early months of the war the VCW did little to encourage women to seek paid war work or active military service. Its support for this type of war-time service would come only later, as the mobilization of women became a necessity.

The Council also raised money for war-related purposes, an activity familiar to clubwomen with leisure time and a good cause. The leaders of local war fund campaigns valued the VCW's expertise, particularly because of the prominent social status of its members and their long experience with philanthropic works. In addition the Council urged its affiliates to start their own fund-raising projects. By the end of 1940 the VCW established its own War Savings Stamps Committee and, for the first time, its President was appointed to the Welfare Federation Drive Committee. VCW leaders also contributed their administrative skills to other war-time fund-raising initiatives; for example, Ada Crump, Ella Bingham and Helen Smith, well-known VCW


39 Ada Crump was appointed to the Board of Directors in 1943 and was a member of the Budget Committee. The VWF distributed grants to its 45 member agencies. During the war its special interests included providing recreational services for children and youths and assisting the population dislocated due to the war. *Vancouver Welfare Federation, Annual Report*, 1941 & 1943.
members. All assisted the October 1941 campaign in Greater Vancouver, Victoria and New Westminster.

The Council's support for national government fund raising campaigns resulted in the federal government accepting its suggestion that War Savings Stamps holiday folders be printed as Christmas gifts. The VCW argued that war-charity functions contributed to the successful outcome of the war. As Helen Smith, Liberal MLA member for Burrard (1933–1941) and a future VCW President, maintained, "It is all very well to sit and knit and do other war work, but it is more important still to pay for this war and to finance Canada's war effort." Fund-raising was synonymous with war-time living and by 1941 the number of charity events in Vancouver had risen so dramatically that the Co-ordinating Council for War Work and Civilian Services advised charities to post the dates of large welfare parties

40 Mrs. Bingham served as VCW President from 1937–38, Mrs. Crump was President from 1940–41 and Mrs. Smith served on various VCW committees in the 1930s and later was VCW President from 1942–43. "Women's Help Invaluable In National War Drives", Vancouver Sun, Sept. 27, 1941, p.13.

41 "Local Council Women Start Christmas Shopping Early" Vancouver Sun, Sept. 10, 1940, p.8.

42 Vancouver News-Herald, December 3, 1940 in VCW Scrapbook.

43 The Co-ordinating Council for War Work and Civilian Services, set up in October 1939 by the Vancouver Council of Social Agencies, represented over 60 welfare and public organizations. The VCW was active on its Wartime Health Measures and Special Problems in Child Care Committees. "Citizens Council Will Co-ordinate War Effort" Vancouver Sun, November 11, 1939, p.36.
in their offices to prevent overlapping events.44 In order not to overshadow other war-time campaigns, the VCW urged the public to participate in other war-time volunteer activities, such as the Air Raid Precaution (ARP) Training Seminars at the Vancouver Fire Department.45

The VCW also believed that women must secure the home from possible evil and no other war-time activity did it take so seriously as potential alien infiltration. At the beginning of the war one affiliate, the Point Grey Women's Institute, recommended that the VCW do all it could to "curb anti-British propaganda in our midst", a view which received a mixed response from the Council. Although Mrs. D.E. Humphreys, the VCW Convenor of Agriculture, favoured the policy, arguing that such propaganda was "preventing our boys from volunteering"46, Laura Jamieson, a prominent CCF member, maintained that this issue should only be dealt with through the Criminal Code.47 Appearing to respond to her concerns, the VCW agreed instead to "ask those in authority to curb anti-British propaganda".48 However, other than

44 "Co-ordinating Council to Prevent Overlapping", *Vancouver Sun*, June 17, 1941, p.6.


46 *Vancouver Daily Province*, Sept.12, 1939 in VCW Scrapbook.

47 *Vancouver Daily Province*, Sept.12, 1939 in VCW Scrapbook.

48 VCW Sub-Executive Meeting, Sept.12, 1939, *Minutes*. 
Jamieson's reservations, there is no evidence that any other VCW affiliate expressed a dissenting opinion on the issue. Meanwhile, the VCW displayed its patriotic support of Britain through other means, including the offer of "homes and hospitality" to British evacuee children, and through pro-British fund raising activities, such as teas for visiting members of the Royal Family.

As further evidence of its role in securing the home front from foreign interests, the VCW supported protectionist policies which would promote the growth of domestic industries and resolved that imported products of cotton goods should be labelled with their country of origin.

As part of a widespread campaign in support of local and Canadian industries, the VCW presented members of the B.C. Products Bureau of the Board of Trade as guest speakers at its general meetings. Towards the end of the war, the Bureau tendered the Council a luncheon to "keep before the public the importance of buying B.C. goods."

49 Resolution to NCWC, June 4, 1940, VCW Minutes.

50 VCW Sub-Executive Meeting, April 7, 1941 Minutes. The VCW held a tea for Princess Alice at the Georgian Room.

51 Resolution presented by the VCW's Natural Resources Committee, Sub-Executive Meeting, Feb.5, 1940, Minutes.


53 This luncheon was held in May 1944. Report by the VCW President, Annual Address, March 1945 Annual General Meeting.
brief the VCW reiterated its protectionist views and requested that the federal government "prohibit the importation of any products which can be produced in Canada in quantities sufficient for our real needs."54

The VCW also criticized what it considered foreign interests in British Columbia;55 at its February 1941 general meeting a guest speaker warned of the penetration of some thirty Japanese factories into the local dress manufacturing industry. A suggestion by Helena Gutteridge, a well known socialist and former alderwoman, that the VCW halt such attacks and instead encourage the purchase of local and Canadian goods without showing racial discrimination56 was ignored. Instead, its membership gave overwhelming approval for action against local Japanese businesses. In March 1941 the VCW's Trades and Professions for Women Committee resolved that employers should be encouraged when possible to hire "British Columbians" only.57

After the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbour British Columbia's 23,000 residents of Japanese origin became sub-

54 Resolution, Emergent Executive Meeting, Nov.28, 1941, VCW Minutes, February 1942.
55 The VCW Standing Committee on Trades and Profession, NCWC Yearbook, 1941.
56 VCW General Meeting, Feb.3, 1941 Minutes and Vancouver Sun, Feb.4, 1941, p.8.
57 VCW General Meeting, March 4, 1941, Minutes.
jects of further suspicion and discrimination. Due to the public outcry in the province, the Canadian government announced plans in February 1942 to remove all persons of Japanese ancestry from the West Coast. Acting on behalf of its affiliates, the VCW called for an even more stringent evacuation policy and demanded that its members report subversive activities to the Royal Canadian Mounted Police, stating that "anyone knowing of such incidents without reporting them, is just as guilty as the one concerned." The Council requested that the Minister of National Defence immediately remove "all Japanese from the Coast" and one month later, it added "other aliens" to their list. In May the VCW reiterated its demands once more, noting that Vancouver "has now become the pooling centre for Japanese in the province." Fearing that the NCWC members were not fully aware of the seriousness of the Japanese problem in British Columbia, the VCW President vowed to travel to the NCWC's next statutory meeting to present Western views.

58 **Vancouver Daily Province**, March 4, 1942 in VCW Scrapbook.
60 VCW Sub-Executive Meeting, April 13, 1942. Minutes.
61 VCW Sub-Executive Meeting, May 21, 1942. Minutes.

62 "Council Scor[n]es Eastern Attitude Towards Coast Japanese Problem", **Vancouver Daily Province**, April 14, 1942, VCW Scrapbook. As one member commented, "it won't hurt them to take the aliens to work for them, they are not in danger as we are on the Pacific Coast."
Council's public accusation that the NCWC was slow in reacting to the "alien" problem revealed its strongly racist views, which continued even after the war to cause tension between the two Councils.63

That the VCW's position on the Japanese, its patriotic support of the forces and its pro-British sympathies reflected the beliefs of most Canadians at the time can not be denied. Yet, the Council's war-time policies and programmes also mirrored those of middle-class Vancouver society. Its war-time activities were conducted by a small group of socially prominent women, who represented the views of a white, predominantly Anglo-Canadian middle-class. As such, they were overwhelmingly supportive of the federal government's war-time policies and campaigns.

The VCW's philosophy and programmes also reflected its limited perception of women's war-time roles. The Council's maternal feminist leanings gave credence to the view that it was women's moral duty to protect the home and the nation during times of peril, and in keeping with these beliefs,

63 The NCWC later became a member of the Co-operative Committee on Japanese Canadians and denounced the Supreme Court's decision that upheld the federal government's right to deport Japanese Canadians under the War Measure Act. NCWC Annual Meeting, March 4, 1946 Minutes, VCW Scrapbook. The VCW advised the NCWC that it rejected its policy which it saw as "a threat to the rights of all Canadian citizens regardless of racial origin" and also denounced it as representative only of the "NCWC executive in Toronto" and not of "the considered opinion of the LC's of Canada." The VCW demanded that the NCWC let the media know that "we disassociate ourselves with" the NCWC resolution. VCW Sub-Executive Meeting, February 27, 1946. Minutes.
women were to fulfill such expectations. The VCW's declarations urged its members to accept the exigencies of war-time living and confirmed its belief that women's actions would protect "the greatest good of the Family and the State". The war-time duties of women envisioned by the VCW were those of the traditional female domestic experience: women would secure the home from outside negative influences and create a stable home life while the men were away. The Council never lost sight of this vision throughout the war.

64 Excerpt from VCW Pledge.
During World War II the Vancouver Council of Women believed that stricter social controls were a necessary part of the sacrifice required to ensure security on the home front. In the Council's opinion, war-time living with its consequent social disorder called for stronger social authority through legislative measures and moral instruction. The efforts of the VCW to further these ends were reflected in the types of social and civic reform for which it lobbied. Yet, a closer analysis reveals that although the VCW's reform efforts attempted to address war-time problems, they, in effect, also promoted greater institutional control, preserved the VCW's class interests and confirmed the Council's middle-class feminism.

The VCW believed that the sanctity of home life must be protected at all costs and therefore it attacked juvenile delinquency, alcohol consumption, and promiscuous sexuality, all reported to be on the rise during the war. One of the main causes of such problems, the Council argued, was the lack of parental supervision because, owing to war-time circumstances, both parents often were away from home during the day and even at night. In addition, war-time prosperity increased the chances of irresponsible behaviour, which the VCW linked to alcohol abuse and the spread of venereal
diseases. The Council therefore argued for extended police supervision, social legislation, and moral and civic instruction for civilians and children.

The VCW's campaign for a Women's Protective Division in the Vancouver Police Force dated back to 1918, but received increased attention during World War II because the Council believed that women police held special moral authority in combating evil influences in war-time society. In 1942, the Council's Moral Standards Committee requested that the force add more women with full police status, that is, with the power of arrest. Although the VCW stressed that women and men should be treated equally as police officers, it had a preconceived image of an appropriate female candidate: someone who was older and unmarried, who was a stern disciplinarian and who had "knowledge of Vancouver's conditions".1 The VCW's prerequisites were questioned by one former city policewoman. Acknowledging that the Council had secured women's position on the force twenty-five years previously, Evelyn LeSueur accused the VCW of discriminating against married women and demanded that the Council "wake up, get women on the force again, and support them all the way."2 The VCW then sent a delegation to the Police Commission which assured the Council that estimates for a Women's Division would be included in the upcoming budget. Though

1 *Vancouver Daily Province*, October 6, 1942.

2 *Vancouver Daily Province*, October 6, 1942.
the VCW vowed to continue a study of wage discrepancies between policemen and women,3 its increased interest in the campaign seems to have been prompted mainly by the reported increase in juvenile delinquency4 and promiscuity, particularly among young women. The Council endorsed an emergency resolution in December 1943, asking that more policewomen be placed on duty because of reports "that many young girls are on the street late at night intoxicated in the vicinity of Dance Halls."5 To the VCW, only the stern discipline of a police woman could counteract what it considered to be the negative effects of the war on home life and it continued, unsuccessfully, to try to get more police women.6

The threat of sexually transmitted diseases also received the Council's close attention, and it supported the NCWC's recommendation that the federal government educate Canadians on the subject.7 Encouraged by the CCF Women's Group, the VCW established its own study group within its Public Health Committee to analyze venereal disease

3 In 1943 Vancouver policewomen's monthly wages were $105, while policemen received $135 per month.


5 VCW General Meeting, Emergency Resolution from the Women's Institute, Dec. 6, 1943, Minutes.

6 Alanda Lewis concluded that the VCW's campaign had received "poor co-operation" from the City. Presidential Address, VCW Meeting, March 1946.

7 NCWC Statutory Meeting, May 5, 1941 discussed in VCW Minutes, 1941.
treatment for pregnant women and in 1942 asked that blood testing laboratories be set up at U.B.C. Although the provincial government agreed that such facilities were needed, none were built during the war.8 As venereal disease cases escalated,9 the VCW called for more stringent measures: more police on the streets, enforcement of pre-marital blood testing, cancellation of licenses of hotels and rooming houses of ill-repute and suspension of licenses of beer parlours which encouraged immoral behaviour.10

The Council saw a direct link between alcohol consumption and venereal disease, and so its campaigns for social order called for stricter liquor legislation. The anti-liquor campaign received most of its support from those VCW's affiliates which supported the conservative social beliefs of the Women's Christian Temperance Union. Within weeks of the proclamation of war, the WCTU urged Canada in its fight against "German Hitlerism" to restrict the sale and advertisement of liquor and eliminate canteens in armouries.11 Although the VCW decided to leave the issue of wet canteens to the discretion of the military, it did urge

8 VCW Sub-Executive Meeting, Oct.5, 1942, Minutes.

9 The VCW reported that 1,750 cases existed in Vancouver in 1943 and that the number had increased to 2,400 in 1944. Minutes, June 1945.

10 VCW Resolution, June 1945, Minutes.

the NCWC to promote anti-liquor legislation and recommended that the government restrict the hours of operation and the sale of liquor at provincial government-owned stores.12 Yet, the VCW's efforts did little to affect the federal government's policies on liquor control and even on a local level its anti-liquor protests were of little avail. When the City approved a new cabaret license in 1942, the VCW complained that its recommendations were being "passed over lightly"13 and that its representation of "the greater part of Vancouver's family life" was being ignored.

The Council blamed liquor consumption and sexually transmitted diseases on civilian women and argued that such problems were causing the breakdown of family life. The VCW particularly questioned alcohol consumption and increased sexual activity among young women which, it concluded, produced "drunken girls, unfaithful wives, [and therefore] delinquent children."14 The VCW thus recommended in 1944 that the provincial government segregate men and women in drinking establishments. When one VCW member commented on the "disgusting exhibitions of drinking that the armed forces are putting on" in Canada, the VCW president, Ada

12 VCW resolution sent to the NCWC Statutory Meeting with minutes, May 5, 1941, Minutes.

13 "Women Protest City Council 'Brush Off' on Cabaret Question", Vancouver Sun, April 14, 1942, p.7.

14 Resolution from WCTU, VCW General Meeting, April 3, 1944, Minutes.
Crump, angrily announced that she "resent[ed] that nasty smack at our boys who are giving their lives for us."15 Implying that the guilty parties were the women involved, she argued that "the civilian population is 10 percent worse than the armed forces in the matter of drinking." Crump announced that "it is up to us, to prevent civilians from leading our boys down this way of degradation."16 Questions about the behaviour of men in the armed forces were quickly squelched as unpatriotic. The Council's intention was obvious: to teach the evils of drink. If this failed, the VCW hoped to rely on the police, particularly on the good judgement of police women.

The Council showed particular concern for the war's effects on children. Maintaining that war-time working conditions left children without sufficient supervision, the VCW stressed the need for maternal influences in a child's life: a stable home and direct supervision. With this idea in mind, the VCW's Committee on National Recreation argued in 1941 for extension of supervised playground hours from May 24th to mid-September.17 The Council also monitored the films that children saw at the cinema and were quite relieved to hear, for example, that the child stars of

17 VCW General Meeting, Feb.3, 1941. Minutes.
"Dead-End Kids" were taking on more "manly roles." To promote its views on the importance of family life, the VCW began a weekly program on a local radio station.

The VCW also feared that the war-time economic boom was luring older children into the labour force. Concerned about youths with unsupervised time and with money, it reminded parents that war-time employment was temporary and argued children should be kept in school. The VCW argued that the absence of parental control was one of the main causes of delinquency among juvenile girls. To aid in the rehabilitation of young female offenders the Council recommended that the provincial government segregate them from the more hardened criminals. Other VCW antidotes to juvenile delinquency were stricter curfews and a Family Court with a judge experienced "in marriage and motherhood." These

18 See Vancouver Sun, Nov.8, 1938, p.6 and "Local Council Happy 'Dead-End Kids' Now 'Gallant Sons'", March 4, 1941, p.7.

19 VCW's Radio Committee, Minutes, 1941.


21 Emergency resolution from the Committee of Trades and Professions for Women, June 1, 1942, Minutes.

22 VCW General Meeting, Dec. 4, 1944 Resolution from Laws Committee, Minutes.

23 Presidential Address, VCW Annual General Meeting, March 1945.

24 VCW's Moral Standards Committee, General Meeting, October 4, 1943, Minutes.
VCW solutions ran complementary to those suggesting that juvenile delinquency be combatted with positive measures, including "city-sponsored youth activities".

The Council's attempt to determine the right kind of citizens for Canada also extended into other areas. Before World War II the VCW had argued that women's entrance into the political sphere was necessary to bring about essential reforms, and it deplored women's inaction when not exercising their voting rights or running for political office. The Council lobbied for female representation on various Vancouver civic boards, but followed the NCWC's policy of "the right women in the right place, not any woman in any place".


28 At the Dec. 1937 General Meeting, the VCW urged women to use their right to vote and to vote for women candidates. See also "'Vote Women Candidates And Don't Betray Those Who Got Vote For You'" , Vancouver Sun, Dec.7, 1937, p.6.

29 VCW Sub-Executive Meeting, Correspondence from NCWC President, Mrs. Spencer, Feb.28, 1941, Minutes.
Smith on the Town Planning Commission or the Air Raid Precaution Executive, but it won regional representation to the federal War-time Prices and Trades Board. It was also represented on a Special Joint Committee with City Council for the Study of Civic Administration, which was established under the auspices of the Vancouver Council of Social Agencies by the Co-ordinating Council for War Work.

In 1941 when an unprecedented number of women were elected to the Provincial Legislature, the VCW pressed for more successes. Its President urged women to ask "why haven't we a woman in the cabinet, a woman premier or a woman mayor," and predicted that in the future "the Vancouver Local Council of Women will bring forth a women's party." Yet, it had only limited success in encouraging women to participate in civic affairs during the war.

Although the VCW supported women attempting to further their political status and held meetings of its members for

30 VCW General Meeting, December 7, 1942, Minutes. Although a woman had been chairman of the Town Planning Committee in 1937, none were added during the war. Sub-Executive Meeting, January 4, 1943, Minutes. Susan Lane Clark was appointed in 1945.

31 VCW Sub-Executive Meeting, Sept. 14, 1942, Minutes.

32 During the war a woman was appointed to the War-time Prices and Trades Board. The VCW liaison officer, Mrs. Weldon, attended its regional meetings.

33 VCW General Meeting, Nov. 3, 1941, Minutes.

candidates during civic elections, the Council's membership disagreed on the breadth of Vancouver's franchise. Until the 1940s, the municipal franchise was based on property qualifications and therefore included only owners and certain tenants. A large percentage of the population, including many women, could not vote in municipal elections. The VCW's left-wing members supported franchise extension, paralleling arguments put forth in the Legislature by the CCF.35 It was on the recommendation of the Women's CCF Central Group that the VCW agreed in February 1941 to have its Citizenship Committee study a proposal36 to incorporate the principal of one man, one vote in the City Charter. When the committee presented its findings in April 1941, its head maintained that voting by all city residents would run the risk of putting the city into the hands of inexperienced administrators. "Young people with no property sense" she feared, "would vote for people with expensive tastes that might not be in the best interests of the community."37 A year later the VCW President's reminder to affiliates to "go out and use our privilege of voting"38 in city elections


36 VCW Sub-Executive Meeting, Feb.3, 1941, Minutes.

37 "Women Argue 'One Man, One Vote' Principal for City Electors", Vancouver Sun, April 8, 1941, p.7.

38 VCW General Meeting, Dec.7, 1942, Minutes.
demonstrated her belief that voting rights were earned. The CCF affiliates proposed franchise extension again in 1943, and 1944,39 but were defeated both years.

The Council's stand on the civic franchise underlined its commitment to its own class interests. The VCW's claim to represent the views of all Vancouver women was particularly discredited by its rejection of universal municipal suffrage. Such displays of middle-class bias prevented the VCW from taking a more aggressive stand on civic franchise rights, which might have won it broader public support.

The VCW's call for stricter immigration laws was an attempt to preserve Anglo-Canadian hegemony in Vancouver society. The Council suggested that sects such as the Doukhobors, Hutterites and Mennonites be barred because of special privileges which exempted them from bearing arms. It also recommended that these and other aliens be prevented from acquiring or leasing real estate for more than one year, both during the war and for five years after,40 recommending that "the best lands and those nearest trans­portation [...] be reserved for British settlers."41 The VCW agreed that Canadian citizenship be limited to "only

39 It was defeated by a vote of 177 to 77. VCW General Meeting, May 3, 1943, Minutes and VCW General Meeting, June 5, 1944, Minutes.

40 "Severe Sentence Asked for Assaults", Vancouver Sun, Nov. 2, 1943, VCW Scrapbook.

41 Resolution to the Provincial Government, VCW General Meeting, Dec. 2, 1940, Minutes.
those who can be assimilated, who will become Canadians with like privileges and responsibilities."42 As in the franchise issue, the Council promoted a restricted view of citizenship in Vancouver. Its ethnocentrism illustrates the limitations of the VCW's views of democracy and its rejection of those that it considered not suitable as proper citizens.

In contrast to the VCW, two other organizations founded during the war encouraged broader participation of women in civic life. The Women's School for Citizenship,43 organized in 1941 by women including Laura Jamieson, Helena Gutteridge and Evelyn LeSueur, and the Women's School for Democracy,44 established in 1944, combatted the seeming apathy of women toward civic affairs through education about the structure and processes of government.

Stricter control of society during war-time was necessary to carry out the national government's domestic policies. The Council's campaign for a Women's Police Division, curbs on juvenile delinquency, stricter liquor controls and a halt to the rise in venereal disease was generally consistent with federal government domestic objectives. But

42 VCW General Meeting, Oct. 2, 1944, Minutes.
43 Vancouver Sun, May 7, 1941, p.7.
44 "Open April 12 School for Democracy", Vancouver Sun, April 5, 1944, p.11.
the Council did not acknowledge the causes of delinquency, alcoholism and venereal disease; instead it lobbied for greater institutional control to address these problems. In fact, these efforts were similar to those of earlier middle-class women reformers whose efforts resulted in "a form of social action designed to alter not society, but society's victim" and "reconciled the preservation of their own class interest in maintaining the status quo with the urgings of a humanitarian conscience."45

The VCW's efforts to defend middle-class interests were also obvious in its response to the questions of municipal franchise extension and the enforcement of stricter immigration laws. In both cases the Council revealed its narrow perception of democratic rights, views based on the hegemony of its own class and ethnic group. In particular, its failure to support the enlargement of the municipal franchise and widened voting privileges especially for women, while reminding its own members to use their voting privileges in civic elections, placed them directly in opposition to their working-class sisters and, in effect, confirmed the middle-class nature of its feminism. Its selection of nominees for civic boards also confirmed the VCW's support for the exclusive participation in civic affairs of middle-class women with experience in public life. Thus there were limits to the VCW's reform mandate: its ultimate goal was

45 T.R. Morrison, "Their Proper Sphere", Part II, p.73.
to attract the support of women whose views were acceptable to the Council and who respected existing institutions of social authority and valued social stability.
Chapter IV: The Vancouver Council of Women on the Home Front

Ruth Roach Pierson notes that the belief that women's "social role was to be emotionally supportive of men, [and] to smooth over difficulties"1 took on special significance during World War II. This became particularly evident as the federal government acknowledged that women's traditional duties of volunteer and domestic work were necessary to bring about the successful prosecution of war. By emphasizing woman's war-time role as a volunteer, a thrifty housewife and an efficient household manager, the Vancouver Council of Women supported the federal government's war-time co-ordination of women's voluntary services and its anti-inflation and conservation programmes. The VCW directed much of its collective energies towards rallying the support of women in the home to war-time programmes; it urged women to register their names for voluntary emergency duties, it called on them to canvass and give to war fund drives and it asked them to support federal domestic policies, including food rationing. In doing so, the VCW helped to perpetuate the view that women's war-time participation would best be put to use in activities that complimented their feminine qualities of charity and sacrifice.

1 Ruth Roach Pierson, "They're Still Women After All", p.43
It was appropriate that one of the Council's first campaigns called for Vancouver women to respond to the war as housewives and preserve food in preparation for 'battle' on the home front. In September 1939 it suggested that fruits and vegetables could be preserved and distributed by the Red Cross with the assistance of the Council. The VCW Convenor of Agriculture, Mrs. D.E. Humphreys, therefore agreed to investigate the plan of "turn[ing] B.C. into a vast kitchen for the next six weeks" and called for housewives to mobilize as "an army of women" and can the fruit and vegetables to be sent overseas. Clearly, to the VCW, women's domestic skills would be important in winning the war both at home and abroad.

Five months before the war, the NCWC had announced that it would co-operate with any movement to have Canadian women registered for defense services. When the war started its President Mrs. Edgar Hardy became the honorary chairman of the Committee on the Voluntary Registration of Canadian Women on the recommendation of the federal government. In support of the National Council, the Vancouver Council of Women agreed to co-operate with the programme to register women for war service. As part of British Columbia's effort

2 VCW General Meeting, Sept. 12, 1939, Minutes.

3 "Movies and Working Girls' Problems Concern Local Council", The Province, Sept. 20, 1939, report of the VCW activities in the VCW Scrapbook.

4 Vancouver Sun, April 22, 1939, p.14.
to determine the skills needed from women in the event of a national emergency, a Provincial Committee for the Voluntary Registration of Canadian Women (VRCW) was established in September 1939 with Tilly Rolston, a former VCW President (1935-37), as Provincial Chairman. A Registration Week was proclaimed beginning October 16th, to encourage the enlistment of all females between the ages of 16 and 65, and booths in all electoral districts were opened where women could register. The front page headline in a local newspaper hoped to remind Vancouver women that "Your Name is for Voluntary Service."5 The questionnaire used in the programme was set up to determine the applicants' physical capabilities, ability to care for refugee children, organizational skills, and suitability for various volunteer war emergency jobs, such as nursing, driving, tailoring and commercial preparation of food. It also emphasized that there was a need for women without work experience, including housewives, as well as those with previous training and skills. The statistics were to be gathered, tabulated and sent to Ottawa for inclusion in the Voluntary Service

Registration Bureau under the auspices of the Department of Labour.  

Although the Provincial Registration Committee expected an enthusiastic response, the numbers were disappointing. Only 5000 women in Vancouver registered initially and by November, the number of Vancouver applicants had risen to only 10,000. The Committee had hoped that the number would be much higher, considering that the total civic female population between the ages of 16 and 65 was estimated to be 82,000. Yet it appears that the Committee may have had unrealistic expectations. In fact, women may not have responded because they thought that registration meant conscription or voluntary work with no monetary reward. Furthermore, many women had already registered with volunteer organizations and others simply "didn't get around" to registering. Perhaps another reason for the poor turn-out was that the Canadian public did not expect the war to last.

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6 In 1941 the Department of National War Services established a Women's Voluntary Services Division. Centres were set up in all major cities and a roster was kept of local clubs that recruited volunteers. Pierson, *They're Still Women After All*, p.35.


very long and only with Canada's increased involvement in the European conflict did civilian support increase.

The Provincial Committee of the VRCW blamed the low number of applicants on the spread of rumors. Although the Committee did not direct its insinuations to any specific group, some members of the Progressive Women's Federation, a left-wing, labour-oriented women's group argued that registration "might be considered as preparing women's minds for conscription".9 The PWF's cool response to the war effort revealed the existence of a division of opinion among Vancouver women about their war-time role. The federation's decision to schedule a public forum on the question "Are Women Exploited in War Time?" was further proof that they questioned the merits of women's involvement in war-time service.

9 "Progressive Women Discuss Registration", Vancouver Sun, Oct.21, 1939, p.12. Formed in 1937, the PWF's aims included ""better living conditions, social legislation, [...] and extension of democratic rights and liberties for men and women."" The PWF did not wish to conflict with the VCW's aims but suggested that because "that body was international in nature its machinery was often too cumbersome for quick action." "18 Women's Groups Join New Progressive Women's Federation" Vancouver Sun, March 19, 1937, p.10. Members included: Domestic Workers' Club, Nursing School Association, Hotel and Restaurant Association, Ukrainian Labor and Farmers Group, Women's Educational Group of the CCF, Women's International League for Peace and Freedom, Progressive Jewish Women, West End Cuhma Club, Women's Auxiliary Workers and Democracy, Women's Auxiliary Waterfront Workers Union, Women's Central CCF Club, Cuhma Club Juniors, Nursery Association, Women's International Woodworkers Association and Vancouver Mothers' Council, later The Housewives League. "Progressive Federation Would Have Gov'ts Apply War Funds to Social Use", Vancouver Sun, October, 8, 1938, p.13.
While the more left-wing women's groups posed such questions, the VCW took little notice of these concerns. Although its President reported in 1944 that she occasionally received phone calls from women willing to support the Council's war activities "if they get paid"10 the VCW failed to acknowledge that many of Vancouver's women were looking for work and could not afford to offer their services without monetary reward. The fact that the VCW gave no further attention to the comment revealed that it considered women's war-time service a volunteer effort and this belief did not alter, even when women were mobilized for the paid war-time work force.

The view that women's war-time role was most appropriately fulfilled in charitable efforts was also evident in the VCW's participation in war fund campaigns. When the Vancouver Air Supremacy Drive was set up in late 1939 the VCW President became the vice-chairman of the Drive and stipulated that the "money made stay in Canada."11 Over $70,000 was raised through a series of 'Tag Days' to buy ten trainer airplanes and train personnel under the British Commonwealth Air Training Scheme at Vancouver's Municipal Airport, and as a token of appreciation one of the airplanes


11 VCW Meeting, November 1939, Minutes.
was designated with a crest proclaiming that it had been donated by "The Women of Greater Vancouver."12

Yet not all of the VCW's war fund drives received the financial support that it hoped. Early in the war Council Vice President Helen Smith reported that Vancouver women were concentrating their efforts too heavily on providing soldiers comforts13 and two years later she expressed the same fears. Although the VCW continued to support Victory Bond sales,14 Smith noted that it was still difficult to arouse the support of the public to finance the war, evidenced by the fact that, by late summer 1941, War Savings Certificate Sales had dropped considerably.15 Attempting to reactivate the campaign, Smith claimed that certificates would "prevent inflation" and suggested that more might be sold if an honour roll were established."16 However, by early 1942, Smith noted that only 30 of the Council's 77 affiliated societies were systematically contributing to the War Savings Stamps Committee and she warned that "unless we

12 VCW Files, Folio 4-19 re Air Supremacy Drive.

13 Vancouver Sun, Oct. 5, 1939, p. 6.

14 Vancouver Sun, June 3, 1941, p. 8 and "Local Council of Women Buys $50 Victory Bond" Vancouver Sun, March 4, 1942.

15 For discussion of the war savings campaign see VCW General Meeting, April 7, 1941, Minutes.

16 VCW Full Executive Meeting, Sept. 19, 1941, Minutes. Affiliates were asked to purchase $4 war certificates monthly, as well as donate $1 monthly to the War Savings Stamps Committee.
convert the Canadian payrolls into a fund for the purchase of arms and munitions, no business will be safe."17 A month later she concluded with disappointment that Vancouver women were "not fully awakened to what our sisters are putting up with in the old land[...]This is the time to save, we will then have money when the war is over."18 Vancouver's faltering Air Raid Precaution Drive also requested that women in the city take over the canvassing of funds in its Residential Division and the Council agreed to offer its support.19 In April 1942, VCW Vice President, Mrs. F.H. Lewis called a meeting to discuss "ways and means to push this thing through" because "the drive was dragging and returns not coming in as they should."20 The insufficient response of Vancouver women to war fund drives was not however entirely a regional problem and in 1943 the Dominion Government even approached the NCWC to use its influence to encourage Canadian women to buy more Victory Bonds, War Savings Stamps and Certificates.21

17 "Plan Victory Mass Meeting", Vancouver Sun, February 3, 1942, VCW Scrapbook.
18 VCW Meeting, March 4, 1942, Minutes.
19 Special Full VCW Executive Meeting, March 21, 1942, Minutes.
20 VCW Meeting, April 10, 1942, Minutes.
As part of its effort to aid war-time projects, the VCW also endorsed the federal government’s health care program, which offered suggestions about how to safeguard the family’s health in spite of restrictions on the availability of certain consumer products. The Council responded with the establishment of a nutrition committee and sponsored a talk by Merle Turnbull of the Canadian Nutrition Association on "The New Science of Nutrition and Health". One of its affiliates, The Vancouver Women’s Building Association, organized nutrition classes beginning in 1942. Meanwhile, courses on nutritional dietetics were offered by the Greater Vancouver Health League and the Extension Department of UBC "with special emphasis on wartime conditions" and homemakers were given instructions on how to manage a household effectively under war-time restrictions. Throughout the war the Council was to remind its members that the nutrition classes were a war measure and required "our moral support."


23 VCW General Meeting, Nov. 3, 1941, *Minutes*.


26 VCW General Meeting, Feb. 9, 1942, *Minutes*. 
In its attempts to combat war-time inflation, the federal government came to rely heavily on the support of women's groups such as the VCW, since it considered women's sound judgement necessary in maintaining a well-managed household. At a discussion of the federal rationing programme, a member of the Wartime Prices and Trades Board informed the VCW's Executive that it was "up to all women to do the right thing and buy the right allowance." The VCW responded as a willing participant in war-time rationing campaigns: it assisted with the distribution of food coupons, took control of rationing booths and organized 1800 women to distribute coupons. In doing so, the Council hoped to demonstrate how women could help win the war while still carrying out the daily routines of normal life. Once inflation, fuel and food shortages and rationing became analogous with war-time living, the VCW, as an advocate of national policies, urged Vancouver women to accept the challenges as part of the sacrifice necessary to bring the war to a triumphant conclusion.

At the same time the VCW felt it had a duty to protect the rights of civilians in their fight against war-time

27 The Vancouver Daily Province, Jun. 17, 1943 in VCW Scrapbook.
28 VCW Sub-Executive Meeting, Feb. 2, 1942, Minutes.
29 Mellish, Vancouver's Women 1894 to 1986.
30 Beginning in January 1942 sugar was rationed and, following after, so was butter, ham, bacon, beef, tea and coffee.
inflation. In the early days of the war the Council first urged women to spend normally and endorsed the action of the Provincial Executive of the Retail Merchants Association, which recommended that a Provincial Committee to the Wartime Prices and Trades Board be established. Such a committee, the VCW argued, would protect the rights of consumers, producers, wholesale and retail distributors, as well as protect the public from unfair prices. The Council also recommended that the federal government keep down the price of foodstuffs. In October 1939 at a general Council meeting the proposed excise tax on tea, coffee, tobacco and canned fish was discussed. The VCW Convenor of Agriculture, Mrs. D.E. Humphreys, proclaimed that although she was a member of the "low income" group and would "probably always be" members should pay additional taxes "rather than embarrass the government with resolutions." In 1941 the VCW established its own Consumers Council to discuss ways of dealing with the difficulty of marketing butter during war-time. Expressing concern for


32 VCW General Meeting, Sept. 12, 1939, Minutes.

33 "Wartime Adjustments Are Discussed by Local Council", *The Province*, Sept. 12, 1939 in VCW Scrapbook.


the special problems of single people, the VCW's Economics Committee suggested in June 1943 that the federal government should print ration coupons in smaller monetary values, so that consumers could buy smaller quantities and avoid food wastage.36

Although the VCW was mindful of consumer rights, for the most part it did feel that women should obey the federal government's war-time economic policies. When the NCWC was asked to "use [its] influence to make it unfashionable to be extravagant"37 the VCW followed suit. When sugar became scarce due to hoarding by overzealous buyers, the Council suggested in February 1942 that, as part of a stricter rationing plan, future purchasers should be obliged to sign their names upon the purchase of certain goods.38 Commenting on attempts by some members of the public to by-pass rationing laws, President Ada Crump bluntly stated that, "We're not trying to help the war effort, if we try to beat the law."39 The VCW therefore recommended that the Justice Department "deal drastically" with both the operators and

36 VCW Sub-Executive Meeting, June 1943, Minutes.

37 Executive Report read from the NCWC Executive Meeting, VCW General Meeting, Jan. 5, 1942, Minutes.


consumers on the black market; it reminded women that their duty was to abolish the black market, as well as to assist the Wartime Prices and Trade Board in curbing inflation.

Yet, in spite of the VCW's attempts to arouse public support for the war and educate consumers about the necessity for war-time restrictions, public criticism of government war-time domestic policies was mounting, and the most vocal came from the political left.

The Vancouver Housewives League, allegedly Communist influenced, initially supported the actions of the Wartime Prices and Trade Board by establishing a Consumers Information Bureau to ensure that consumers received sufficient information regarding war-time economic restrictions. By June of 1943, however, the Housewives League had become extremely disappointed with the federal government's economic policies and voiced criticism about increased prices, fuel shortages, inefficiency in rationing procedures, the lack of certain consumer goods, and the reduced standard and quality of goods. In an attempt to pressure the government into quick action, members of the League organized a Consumer Conference in late June 1943 and

40 VCW Resolution, Sub-Executive Meeting, June 7, 1943. Minutes.

41 Address by Helen Smith, VCW General Meeting, June 8, 1945, Minutes.

extended an invitation to all interested groups, including the VCW. However, the Council decided not to send a representative, presumably because of the League's controversial political leanings; as well, it refused the League's application for affiliation.

Criticism of the federal government's policies was also voiced by Vancouver's radical paper The People, which described Ottawa's proposed price-fixing and cost of living index as attempts "to avoid paying a proper cost of living bonus" to the province's workers and a poor excuse "against raising wages to decent standards." The most blatant criticism came from its managing editor, Kay Gregory, who agreed that housewives were willing to make sacrifices, but that they were distraught at the existence of unfair practices, which allowed some families to have an abundance of food while others did without. She reported that "patriotic housewives, determinedly refusing to buy on the black markets, see their friends obtaining surreptitious supplies of extra sugar, plenty of tea and coffee, canned fruits and

43 VCW Sub-Executive Meeting, April 5, 1943, Minutes.

44 VCW Meeting, March 1942, Minutes; VCW Meeting, April 13, 1942, Minutes; VCW Executive Meeting, May 1942, Minutes and VCW Sub-Executive Meeting, June 1942, Minutes.


jam."47 Gregory also criticized the slow actions of the Wartime Prices and Trades Board which contributed to the failure of the commercial and home-canning industries,48 and argued that "centralized control of all our food problems, supply, distribution and price, is the only solution."49

The left's call for greater centralization and control of resources revealed that at least a segment of the public saw the need not only for new strategies to beat war-time inflation, but for a major reorganization of government. Its popularity at the electoral polls represented a broad upsurge of support for the left, particularly the CCF, during the war years throughout much of central and western Canada.50 Editorials in left-wing papers point as well to a growing war weariness among some Vancouver women, faced with war-time restrictions, and of their mounting unwillingness to adhere to the national government's war-time demands. Left-wing women's groups were increasingly uncertain about the efficiency of war-time government policies, as well as how long women's support for the various home front campaigns would endure. Their criticisms were a marked contrast to the predominantly positive reactions of the VCW.

47 Gregory, "Housewives Welcome Rationing", p.3.
48 Gregory, "Housewives Welcome Rationing", p.3.
49 Gregory, "Housewives Welcome Rationing", p.3.
To the Council, women's most important duty during the war was to provide patriotic service without question or criticism, and its programmes conveyed this message to the woman in the home by praising her role as volunteer worker, patriotic consumer and frugal homemaker. Foremost emphasis was placed on women's ability to make sacrifices on the home front, whether giving an extra dollar to the Victory Loan or using excess meat drippings in place of lard. In each case the message to women was that they could best help the war effort by performing their traditional duties at home and offering leisure time to war service. With such views in mind, VCW President Crump proclaimed that during war-time women were "keepers of morale in our country" who had a "special duty to carry on our everyday life on the home front."51 Her hopes, however, were a marked contrast to the concerns expressed by left-wing women and the growing evidence of public discontent regarding war-time measures. But the VCW did little to address these concerns. In effect, its campaigns supported federal war-time economic and domestic programmes and did not question their fairness or effectiveness. To the VCW, women's role was to smooth over any difficulties; throughout the war it stressed that women's volunteer efforts and their domestic duties were their part in the prosecution of war. Women would remain in

the home attending to household chores, frugally maintaining the household budget and waiting for their men to return from the war. Charity and thrift, women's traditional feminine virtues, would determine their contribution to the war effort. Thus, for the VCW, women's proper sphere - in spite of the exigencies of war-time living - was still the home.
Chapter V: Vancouver Council of Women's Views of Women in Paid War-time Work Force

Representative of that segment of Vancouver public opinion that supported the federal government's war-time campaigns, the Vancouver Council of Women actively participated in efforts to recruit women for paid war-time service. Its support was couched in terms that emphasized women's service as an act of patriotism and a necessity to win the war. Yet, while the VCW agreed to assist in the recruitment of women for industrial and military service-areas outside women's traditional spheres of employment - it did so without the intention of broadening women's work opportunities. In fact, even during the war the Council stressed the view that women's paid work was best confined to areas that coincided with their domestic skills and relied on their feminine nature.

In the initial stages of the war the federal government was reluctant to employ women until all other workers were recruited. In 1939 there were approximately 900,000 persons registered as unemployed in Canada's pre-war labour force of 3.8 million. During the first two years of the war the unemployed were therefore recruited into the work force to make up losses due to military recruits or to war-time production.1 In spite of the Prime Minister's announcement

in June 1941 that plans to give women "broader possibilities of employment" were under discussion, 2 325 female ex-munitions workers in British Columbia complained that their services were being ignored while their "sisters [services] in the East are being so pressed." 3 The provincial labour minister, George S. Pearson, also appeared to be hesitant about recruiting women and insinuated that they could not perform industrial work equal to men without the possibility of injuring themselves. 4

In March 1942 Prime Minister Mackenzie King announced the extension of the National Selective Service, allowing women into war industry, but he made it clear that women were being mobilized because all other prospective workers had been employed. 5 In fact, the Director of the NSS, Elliott M. Little later maintained that the selection of women would be based upon the non-availability of men. He explained that "the important thing is to get the bread-winners working first; then the women who can work full time; then, when it becomes necessary, the women who will

2 "Women to Get Larger Role in Canada's War Effort", *Vancouver Sun*, June 14, 1941, p.3.

3 "Vancouver Has 300 Trained Women Munitions Workers-Their Offer to Help Train Others 'Pigeon-holed' by Ottawa While Crying Labor Shortage", *Vancouver Sun*, Nov. 24, 1941, p.6.


work part time."6 In May 1942 the federal government created a Women's Division of the NSS with Fraudena Eaton, a former Executive member of the VCW, as Assistant Director (later Director) to deal with the employment of women. However, a year later, in a radio address, both Mr. Little and the Deputy Minister of Labour still emphasized that, in spite of the variety of war-time jobs performed by women, the situation was only temporary; they reminded the public that women excel at teaching and nursing and recommended that women with such training could not be spared from these jobs.7

As the demand for female labour increased, the federal government also appealed to housewives to perform part-time work.8 Yet, most of the jobs suggested were the traditional low-paying tasks deemed appropriate for women, such as hospital domestic work, clerical work and the clothing industry. Housewives were reminded that, by performing such jobs, they would allow other women, particularly younger and strong women, to do full-time industrial war work. At the same time suggestions were made that they posed considerable supervision problems. A federal Department of Labour

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6 Mr. Little spoke at a Canadian Daily Newspaper Association Convention. The Labour Gazette, April 1942, p.414.


publication reported that, compared to the single woman worker, housewives would have to be supervised for punctuality and attendance, because "in managing their own homes for years they have become thoroughly individualistic as a rule." In spite of the federal government's misgivings about the employment of women in part-time and full-time work, as the war continued women became part of the Canadian workforce in unprecedented numbers. In fact, the proportion of females in the Canadian labour force rose from a pre-war level of 25% to a high of 36% in 1944. In Vancouver, while women accounted for only 19% of the workforce in 1930, by October 1944 they made up almost 30% of the city's total workforce. [See Table III].

9 "Planning for Part-time Workers in Canada" The Labour Gazette, pp.1471-1474.


TABLE III

SEX DISTRIBUTION OF WORKERS
IN RECORDED EMPLOYMENT IN VANCOUVER

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>FEMALE</th>
<th>MALE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No.</td>
<td>% of Workforce</td>
<td>No.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oct. 1942</td>
<td>18,510 21.3</td>
<td>68,352</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oct. 1943</td>
<td>25,478 27.3</td>
<td>67,793</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oct. 1944</td>
<td>25,658 29.9</td>
<td>60,198</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oct. 1945</td>
<td>22,410 28.5</td>
<td>56,248</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oct. 1946</td>
<td>21,573 27.9</td>
<td>55,815</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Because the federal government campaign for women's war-time labour participation was couched in terms of patriotic duty, the VCW pledged its patriotic support to labour recruitment plans. In 1940 the Council's Trades and Professions for Women Committee resolved that the federally sponsored training classes essential for placing women in war industries be continued. A year later the VCW supported the Provincial Council's recommendation that women be trained to produce "equipment and supplies for the prosecution of the war "because it maintained that "more men will be needed in the active fighting forces." 

Although the VCW acknowledged that women's employment in war-time industries was essential, it suggested areas of

12 VCW General Meeting, Sept. 9, 1940, Minutes.
13 VCW General Meeting, May 5, 1941, Minutes.
work that fitted in with women's traditional sphere. With this in mind, and in view of the prominent part played by agriculture in Canada's war effort, the VCW supported the establishment of the NCWC's Agricultural Committee in 1940. As the war progressed and fear of food shortages grew, the VCW encouraged women to enter farm work in order to produce goods for home and allied consumption. The Council's campaign for a provincial Women's Land Army, similar to the Women's Land Army established by the Ontario Farm Service Force in 1941, reflected its belief that women's placement on the farm was a natural extension of their domestic sphere. However, the Council was also aware of the poor working conditions on farms that made agricultural labour unappealing to many women. In an attempt to correct such inadequate working conditions, in November 1942 Mrs. Mabel Tomer, the VCW Agricultural Convenor, urgently recommended that an organized recruitment programme for farm labour be set up. In presenting her arguments Mrs. Tomer maintained that women would make ideal farm workers, but suggested that attempts would have to be made to "'glamorize' agricultural labour and make it more attractive to women." In spite of her attempts, no immediate action was taken. One month later, the VCW's Agricultural Committee

14 VCW General Meeting, January 9, 1940, Minutes.

reiterated that a Women's Land Army was needed "due to growing shortages of farm products and expected greater shortages...[plus the]...increasing demand of food products for our armed forces and our Allies."16

The Council's efforts to place women on farms received more attention when it joined with British Columbia's farmers to urge the provincial government to co-operate more closely with the federal authorities to introduce a Women's Land Army. In February 1943, Helen Smith and Mabel Tomer of the VCW addressed a meeting with government officials and representatives of the Fraser Valley Milk Producers Association, the B.C. Federation of Agriculture and B.C. Fruit Growers. The seven women delegates, including Dr. Olga Jardine of the PCW, and two MLAs, Tillie Rolston and Nancy Hodges, scoffed at suggestions that any mobilization of women would require more work. After the meeting the delegates formed an Advisory Committee17 to work with a government inter-departmental committee to study the establishment of a Farm Service Corps. The federal government agreed to look into the possibility of recruiting women, but it stressed that "essential men should be returned or

16 VCW General Meeting, Dec. 7, 1942, Minutes. See also "Women's Land Army Idea Backed by Local Council" Vancouver Sun, December 8, 1942, p.6.

maintained on the farms."18 Finally in May 1943 an agreement between British Columbia and the Dominion was reached for the recruiting, transporting, and placing of male and female farm workers.19

It is difficult to assess the extent to which the VCW's involvement facilitated the agreement, since the impetus to establish it came from many provincial groups and local politicians. Although there is no reference to any motions put forth by Mrs. Tomer, who was one of four women on the Farmers Institute's Advisory Committee, it is certain that she continued to express the opinion that women's service on the farms was needed and that women could be trained to do such work. As an owner of a farm on Barnston Island, Mabel Tomer was no stranger to farm work. She argued, "[I've] done it for 15 years and have never suffered from it. Other women could be taught to do the same."20

The Council continued to fight for more female farm recruits and, after the Provincial Farm Corps was set up, the VCW lobbied for more middle-aged women as farm workers. In June 1943 the Council was surprised to learn from the Junior Department of the National Selective Service that no


20 Vancouver Daily Province, March 3, 1943 in VCW Scrapbook.
provisions had been made for women aged 45 and over who wished to enter farm work and that few employers requested women of this age bracket. At the same time, the VCW recommended that the age limit for younger recruits be raised, presumably so that they would be encouraged to finish their education. It appears that the Council envisioned the ideal farm recruits as either young, single women with no family responsibilities who had finished their education and were just entering the work force, or older women who in all probability did not have pre-school aged children at home. In fact, the VCW addressed the problem from the viewpoint of the war-time labour shortage rather than the economic needs of women, and therefore failed to acknowledge the needs of women not of these age groups. As well, the Council was reluctant to endorse the employment of women who might have had small children at home. To the VCW the recruitment of young single women or older women as farm workers was appropriate because certain types of agricultural labour were traditionally performed by women.

In the armed forces, as well, war-time jobs for women were limited for the most part to those that encompassed traditional skills acquired in the home or female-dominated trades. Few fears were expressed that women’s military jobs would deviate from what was thought to be women’s proper

21 VCW General Meeting, June 7, 1943, Minutes.
sphere and so the Council supported the entry of women into the military labour force. The federal government took great care to ensure that women recruits in the armed forces continued in tasks that emphasized their feminine characteristics and jobs that did not fit such views were described as temporary. On one occasion, for example, when the VCW invited Lieutenant Patterson of the Canadian Women's Army Corps as its guest speaker it was informed that 2000 more female recruits were needed to relieve men for active duty from positions as clerk, drivers and cooks. As the war was nearing its conclusion and concern about women's post-war job plans grew, Captain N.S. Paige, a CWAC recruiting officer, assured the VCW that military positions for women were being streamlined so that "their qualifications will be later useful in civilian life."

The armed forces were obviously aware that the NCWC and its local affiliates could be used as an effective propaganda tool to advertise for more female recruits. At the annual meeting of the VCW in March 1944, for example, Major J. Brayshawe suggested that the Council "could do a great deal to help, by broadcasting the need for girls". Shortly thereafter one of the VCW's executive members,

22 Pierson, "They're Still Women After All", p.125.
23 VCW General Meeting, Jan. 4, 1943, Minutes.
24 VCW General Meeting, March 6, 1945. Minutes.
25 VCW Annual General Meeting, March 7, 1944, Minutes.
Mrs. Bagley, was appointed the first Vice President and Chairman of the Speakers Committee, established to inform the Department of National Defence about the need for more women recruits.26

The VCW also concerned itself with military women's post-war employment possibilities.27 In honour of those who had performed in the services, a resolution from the Overseas Nursing Sisters was carried recommending that women and men who had performed overseas service be granted income tax exemptions of $1200 for single men and women and $1800 for married men and widows of overseas service men.28 Yet, the VCW's efforts to lobby for the concerns of females in the armed forces was minimal at best and gave no serious consideration to whether any women would wish to remain in the forces once the war was over. This was consistent with its view that women's military service was a temporary aberration caused by war and not a viable career option for women under normal conditions.

As the war progressed and more women entered paid wartime work, the demand for child care services increased. In July 1942 the Dominion-Provincial War-time Day Nurseries

26 VCW General Meeting, Feb.1, 1943, Minutes.
27 VCW Meeting, April 5, 1943, Minutes.
28 VCW Meeting, May 14, 1945, Minutes.
Agreement 29 secured the establishment of day care facilities for children of mothers engaged in war industries, with costs to be shared equally by the federal and provincial governments. Although Ontario and Quebec signed the agreement, British Columbia argued that there was no immediate need for the entry of women with children into war-time industry. 30 Eight months later, however, it was estimated that in Vancouver 15,000 married women with children were working in industry 31 and a political debate began over the establishment of day care services in British Columbia. The debate centered on two issues: whether child care facilities were a war-time necessity and whether mothers of young children should work at all, even during the war. The debate received attention not only because the war required more women to work outside the home, but because of a shortage of adequate housing facilities due to the influx of war workers in the city. 32 In fact, war-time child care


32 Jill Wade notes that in April 1943 the federal Real Property Administration declared Vancouver a "congested" city and that by December the housing shortage was more acute than any other city in Canada. "'Black Treachery': The 1944 Vancouver Housing Crisis", Unpublished Paper, History 506, U.B.C., 1982.
centres were advocated as alternative sites for childrearing during the daytime. Consequently, day care services were advocated by welfare and charity workers, left-wing women's organizations and the Vancouver School Board.

The VCW, however, maintained that if mothers took jobs in the workplace, the child's welfare would eventually suffer. In fact, it reacted cautiously to government-sponsored day care and seemed ambivalent about the needs of working mothers. Furthermore, it considered the alleviation of Vancouver's crowded housing conditions a solution to the day care demand, therefore failing to address possible solutions to either problem. In November 1942 the VCW first addressed the issue when its Sub-executive reported that resolutions regarding Day Nurseries "should go to [the] National [Council] and Mrs. [Fraudena] Eaton [of the NSS]" but no reference was made again to day care until almost a year later. In spite of the VCW's endorsement of government campaigns to mobilize more women for war work, it argued that married women with children should only be called in to the war-time work force once all other workers had been mobilized and that they should be the first to leave their jobs. Its Committee for Trades and Professions


34 VCW Sub-Executive Meeting, November 2, 1942. Minutes.
for Women, which claimed to uphold the rights of all women workers, argued that it was not logical for so many married women to work when so many single girls were unemployed. Consequently, in late 1943 it recommended that if women were to be released soon from the shipyards, married women with small children should be the first to go. Furthermore, both the VCW's Town Planning and Child Welfare Committees argued that the issue of day care could only be resolved if Vancouver's crowded housing situation was rectified and therefore it recommended that a war-time housing scheme for war workers be implemented and that "workers with children have priority." 

However when a Day Nurseries Association representative spoke at a Council meeting and urged that day nurseries be extended, the VCW Committees agreed to further study the issue. In January 1944 they asked education authorities to amend the School Act to allow for the creation of "infant schools" (separate from elementary schools) for children from 3 to 6 years of age. The proposal mirrored one put forth two months earlier by the Vancouver School Board's

35 "Former Woman MLA to Lead Clubwomen", Vancouver Sun, March 4, 1942, p.7.

36 VCW General Meeting, October 4, 1943. The vote of 34 for/and 5 against was taken at the General Meeting on December 6, 1943. Minutes.

37 VCW General Meeting, November 1, 1943, Minutes.

38 VCW General Meeting, December 6, 1943, Minutes.
Daycare Committee, 39 whose membership included Ada Crump, VCW Past President. The Council stressed that changes were needed strictly because of "an acute housing shortage in Vancouver." The fact that "mothers of young children are accepting employment which takes them away from their families during the daytime" 40 was viewed more as a temporary war-time problem than as evidence of economic necessity. "Infant schools" were therefore recommended only "where the need is greatest".

Contrary to the VCW's ambivalent views on the need for child care facilities, left-wing women's groups, union officials and left-wing politicians openly condemned what it saw as the city's apathetic response to the day care issue. The Housewives League argued that there was a growing interest in establishing such facilities, particularly in the Capitol Hill and South Vancouver areas, "where a greater number of women are interested in industry". 41 The League therefore formed a Day Nursery Committee and called an open conference in November 1942. The fifty delegates agreed to


40 VCW Meeting, January 3, 1944, Minutes.

assist the Vancouver Council of Social Agencies,42 Children Division and by mid 1943 the VCSA had set up three experimental playschools43 in the city. Its success was later hampered, however, when attempts to secure municipal funding proved futile.44 Alderman George Miller summed up the City Council's cautious attitude to day care, stating that it was "'one thing to establish such nurseries, and it would be another to get rid of them.'"45 By the fall the VCSA faced closing the facilities, but public criticism46 and the efforts of the Housewives League to raise funds,47 allowed the playschools to remain open.

In the Legislature, Laura Jamieson (CCF) argued that day care was needed because many women were in the workforce due to economic necessity.48 "Day nurseries are not substitutes for a home," she argued "but supplemental to a

42 The Vancouver Council of Social Agencies was an associated group of charitable welfare agencies in the Vancouver area.

43 Vancouver Daily Province, August 20, 1943, p.5; September 7, 1943, p.22.

44 Vancouver Daily Province, August 17, 1943, p.2.


47 The People, August 12, 1944, p.7.

48 "Mrs. Jamieson Defends Women In Industries" Vancouver Daily Province, February 12, 1944, Sessional Clippings Book.
home - and trained people must be in charge."49 However, Tilly Rolston, (Cons./Coal.) took great offence to the idea that children not be cared for by their mother, but rather by what she described as "some parched, dried-up, starched, cultured academician."50 She criticized Jamieson's views and argued that Mothers Pensions had been legislated specifically to discourage mothers from taking jobs.51 As women continued to accept war-time employment, Rolston expressed concerns that there now existed "thousands of underfed, neglected children who are key carriers, while mother wields a blow torch."52 Meanwhile, she praised those women who chose not to answer the call to war-time work as "the real foundation of the nation's morale, and the mainspring of our national war effort."53

The provincial government appeared to agree with Rolston and the VCW on the day care issue. Previously the


51 "Claims Insult To Mothers - Mrs. Rolston On Warpath With C.C.F." Vancouver Daily Province, March 4, 1943.

52 "Draft Working Mothers Back To Homes, Says Woman MLA", unidentified newspaper, February 5, 1944, Sessional Clippings Book.

53 "Working Mothers Rear Gangsters - Mrs. Rolston", unidentified newspaper, February 5, 1944, Sessional Clippings Book.
government's social welfare policy advisor had questioned whether "such a labor shortage in B.C. [existed] to warrant the employment of women with young children."

54 Although the numbers of women who possibly needed day care could have been almost as high as 25%55 of all married women, no joint Dominion-Provincial Daycare Agreement was implemented in British Columbia. It appears that society's mixed reactions to the issue may have prevented the establishment of a provincial day care programme. Gillian Weiss succinctly notes that "the debate was very much clouded by changing societal norms and the threat that many saw in the increasing number of women no longer tied to the home."56 Those Vancouver women who looked to the provincial and municipal governments to provide child care facilities were sorely disappointed.

The day care controversy revealed that not all of Vancouver society was willing to accept mothers as labour


55 The total number of women working in Vancouver by October 1943 was 27,478 (see Table I) of which approximately 15,000 were married women with children.(n.34). The total number of married women in Vancouver at the time was approximately 63,101 (Canada. Dominion Bureau of Statistics, Census of Canada. Population By Sex, Age, Conjugal Conditions, Etc. For the Social Areas of Vancouver and Winnipeg). If 15,000 married mothers were working, and 48,101 were at home, then 23.8% of those women who possibly needed day care were married women. This does not include single working mothers who also may have needed day care. (See Appendix II).

force participants and this certainly was the view of the VCW. Furthermore, the VCW designated women as secondary wage earners. The Council's Trades and Professions for Women Committee vowed that single men, especially those who were rejected for military service, should be first on the list for jobs. It concluded that "we should see the men placed before the women take the jobs", and only then should single unemployed women be considered. Yet, during the war perhaps 28 per cent of Vancouver's female population of working age (between ages 15 and 64) was not married, and therefore possibly had no other source of income. By taking such a stand, the Council denied the rights of those women who were working out of economic necessity.

The VCW's ambivalent attitude towards child care services and the treatment of married women workers reflected its views regarding married women's proper sphere. The Council was reluctant to agree to the mobilization of women whose employment, it feared, would disrupt family life, and this perception limited its ability to support working mothers eager to secure government-sponsored child care facilities. To the VCW, mothers belonged at home, not in the workforce - even during war-time.

57 "Former Woman MLA to Lead Clubwomen", Vancouver Sun, March 4, 1942, p.7.

58 See Appendix II.
Moreover, the Council's interest in securing particular types of work for women revealed its true perceptions of women's proper sphere. Farm work was seen as acceptable for women because the VCW saw it as an extension of their work in the home, whereas women's war-time labour force participation in the military was deemed justifiable because it facilitated women's post-war re-entry into more traditional jobs. In essence, the Council regarded women's position in the workforce, whether they were single or married, as separate from and subordinate to that of men.
Chapter VI: The Vancouver Council of Women and the Post-War World

Once the war was over the federal government expected that women would return to the home or to their previous employment, and throughout the war the Vancouver Council of Women endorsed this view. In keeping with its maternal feminist philosophy the VCW recommended to the Provincial Post-War Planning Committee that women confine themselves to traditional female labour roles after the war. This attitude reinforced a narrow view of women's place in society and did not help women broaden their work opportunities in the post-war world.

The ancillary place of women in the war-time economy initially determined that they would not be expected to take part in discussions regarding the planning of Canada's post-war rehabilitation. When British Columbia's Post-War Rehabilitation Council was established in early March 1942 to analyze the post-war future of the province's industries, no female members were chosen. One month later the VCW endorsed a demand from the Provincial Council that a woman should be appointed to the Rehabilitation Council, because post-war planning was a matter "of vital importance to both men and women".1 Realizing that it was facing great public

1 VCW General Meeting, Resolution from PCW, April 13, 1942, Minutes.
criticism, particularly from women's groups, the provincial government finally acquiesced and in July 1942, appointed three women MLA's, Tilly Rolston, Nancy Hodges and Dorothy Steeves to the Council.

One of the prime duties of the Rehabilitation Council was to determine the numbers of returned men and displaced war workers who would seek employment once hostilities were over, classifying them according to occupation and formulating training programmes for prospective workers. The Rehabilitation Council also acted as a clearing house by reviewing proposals sent from all public bodies, including municipalities, boards of trade, labour organizations and women's groups that recommended possible areas of industrial and agricultural growth for British Columbia which could provide employment for returned veterans. In its initial report in 1943 the Rehabilitation Council assumed that ex-servicemen and women would "return to their pre-war vocations". Furthermore, it urged the government to give special consideration to ex-servicemen in terms of training and employment. The Rehabilitation Council acknowledged that there would be a "large number of men and women who will expect opportunities to be available for their

2 "Ask for Women on Council for Rehabilitation" Vancouver Sun, June 24, 1942, p.6.

employment", 4 but it reported that the number of workers to be affected by demobilization still had to be estimated. A supplementary report printed over a year later, proved no more enlightening; the Rehabilitation Council concluded that the exact number of workers to be displaced could not be determined until after the end of the war. 5

When both the federal and provincial governments undertook post-war planning, the VCW supported their plans to place women back in the home and in traditional female occupations. In its presentation to the Post-War Rehabilitation Council in January 1943 the VCW emphasized that women's proper place remained the home. It was also quick to criticize the weaknesses of the Rehabilitation Council's Interim Report; it succinctly acknowledged that although planning attention had been given "to the re-establishment of men and rightly so, no plan would be complete unless thought also is given to the rehabilitation of women." 6

Previously, the VCW had established its own committee on Post-War Planning 7 and, like one set up by the NCWC, 8 it


6 VCW Trades and Professions for Women Committee, brief to the B.C. Post War Rehabilitation Council, January 1943, typed copy of brief in Minutes.

7 Suggested at the VCW Sub-Executive Meeting, May 21, 1942, Minutes.
dealt with matters such as national unity, social and economic planning, education, labour matters, housing, immigration and women's employment. Many of the VCW's recommendations to the Rehabilitation Council reflected its belief in the necessity of women's inclusion in post-war public life and it suggested that women be appointed to all government boards, that they receive pay equal to that of men and that women take part in peace talks. Recognizing that women had offered their labour during war-time, the VCW also argued that "care must be exercised in the post-war period when the change over from wartime industry to peace time occupations [comes], that the services of these women must not be lost." It proposed therefore that women wartime workers be given consideration concerning future post-war job plans, including those women in active service, in war industry, in occupations formerly held by men, and in the civil service.

Yet, while the VCW acknowledged "the full part women are playing in the total war effort," its opening remarks

8 NCWC Special Committee on Reconstruction proposal, VCW Meeting, Dec. 1942, Minutes.


emphasizing the need to remember women's domestic responsibilities set the tone of its plan for women's position in the post-war world. By stressing "the underlying philosophy of the re-establishment of home life" and its conviction "that the home is the foundation of the nation" the VCW's recommendations to the Rehabilitation Council emphasized the view that women's position in the public sphere was subordinate to their domestic role in the home.

In its recommendations regarding women's post-war jobs and job training, the VCW kept within strict guidelines of what it perceived as acceptable work for women. With regard to the further training and education of young women, it maintained that the most appropriate fields were those "of a practical nature designed to improve young women in their present positions." The VCW's aim was to concentrate on the development of women's feminine and nurturing qualities which could be used in the job market, presumably because that was where women's talents naturally lay. Furthermore, the underlying assumption was that women would eventually leave the work force to marry and would use such skills in the home. Areas of work suggested for women included counselling, (especially for ex-service women), infant and

12 VCW Report to the Rehabilitation Council, January 1943, Minutes.

13 VCW Brief to the B.C. Post War Rehabilitation Council, January 1943, Minutes.

14 VCW Meeting, Nov.6, 1944, Minutes.
child care and care for the aged. But the VCW considered that agricultural work and domestic service offered the best work opportunities for women.

In keeping within its conviction that a Women's Land Army was a suitable form of war-time service for women, the VCW also recommended farm labour as appropriate post-war work for women and suggested that a Farm Labour Bureau be established to direct farm women to such profitable industries as horticulture, bulb raising, bee-keeping, poultry raising and dairy farming. The VCW recommended as well that women, especially war brides, many of whom they predicted would be English, should be trained for farm work because "farm women are a vital factor in any land settlement scheme." Yet, when considering post-war jobs for women, most planning by the VCW, as well as the various levels of government, concentrated on domestic service. Prior to World War II the federal government had taken steps to encourage women to become domestic servants in an effort to change the job's negative public image. A Home Service Training Programme was established in 1937 for unemployed women between the ages of 18 and 30 who were dependents of


16 Resolution from the Agricultural Committee, VCW General Meeting, January 31, 1944, Minutes.
urban families on relief. The aim was to make domestic service a more professional and prestigious occupation, as well as to secure fair wages and comfortable working conditions for employees.

However, left-wing women saw domestic service as a poor replacement for the higher paying industrial war-time jobs, which promised better working conditions and less direct supervision over the worker. As one left-wing reporter, Cynthia Carter, succinctly explained, "no young woman who has worked an eight hour day for a decent wage will relish the prospect of working a twelve-hour day for peanuts...No girl who has been 'on her own' in a war plant wants to start saying "Yes, madam, again".17 A major concern expressed by CCF women was the lack of benefits available to those women who were forced to depend on domestic service. Fearing that women would "be thrown on the domestic labor market after the war"18 Laura Jamieson and Grace MacInnis (CCF) (MLA for Vancouver-Burrard) argued that the best way to better conditions for household workers was first to establish a minimum wage, set up proper working conditions and develop the job into a skilled trade.


At the request of Tilly Rolston, a provincial government inquiry was established in 1944 to study the living conditions, hours of work, wages, and training of domestic workers to prepare the government for appropriate legislation. Taking the view that training of domestics had to be regulated first, after which working conditions would be evaluated, Rolston recommended that the training schools for domestic servants be continued.

The domestic service problem had been considered by the VCW in the late 1930s, when affiliates recommended that standards be implemented to raise the job to a skilled trade. Yet, the Council appeared to view the issue more from the perspective of the employer than from the employee, and it concentrated its efforts on guaranteeing that there would be a steady supply of qualified domestic servants. Thus, when it came to lobbying for a minimum wage for domestic workers, the VCW failed to recognize the direct link between status and wages and recommended instead that "no legislation [be implemented] until [the] public are educated." 20

The VCW moved slowly on the issue of better status for domestic workers and it was not until the mid-point of the war that a VCW Sub-Committee made its final recommendations 19

19 The Female Minimum Wage Act of 1934 excluded domestic service.

20 VCW Meeting, July 15, 1938, Minutes.
on the position of domestic workers in Vancouver. In its 1943 report the Council's Trades and Professions for Women Committee noted that "many women now engaged in war industry may of necessity require to seek employment as household workers in the post-war period" and it therefore recommended the re-entry of women into domestic service even during "a time of peak employment". For these reasons the VCW also recommended that domestic workers be included under the Unemployment Insurance Act and that a labour code be established by the government to standardize domestic servants' working conditions.21 With an eye to the professionalization of the trade, the Council also recommended that standards of efficiency be developed, that certificates of proficiency for workers be established and that such workers be registered with the National Selective Service. Ever mindful of the career options open to young girls, the VCW also urged that high school courses include a home service order, with instruction in applied psychology, care and feeding of children and home economics.

Despite the VCW's hopes that more women would enter domestic service, by February 1945 Laura Jamieson noted that none of the girls discharged from the armed forces had expressed an interest in domestic work to their National...
Selective Service personnel officers. Jamieson maintained that, rather than looking to domestic service as the answer to women's post-war employment problems, both single and married women should be encouraged to stay in industry and fight to receive wages equal to those of men. A long-time defender of the working woman, she questioned whether women would "turn around after the war and march right back to barbarism."

In spite of left-wing lobbying, women did not remain in industrial employment. When large scale lay-offs of Vancouver's female war workers began in late 1944, the Women's School for Citizenship reacted quickly and organized a conference on "The Future of Women in Employment". It bleakly concluded that there was "a distinct feeling of uncertainty as to [the] future of women in employment [...] the general attitude was that women could be called upon in a crisis and


that when the crisis was over, they would have to accept what-ever came."26

Meanwhile, the sentiment expressed in the Provincial Legislature was that attention should be focussed on ex-servicemen because of their patriotic service. Therefore, the concerns of the female war worker were ignored. Tilly Rolston, for example, defended the rights of male war veterans to receive jobs before what she described as "well-dressed, well-fed, well-situated lady veterans of the assembly plant." She maintained that "practically it will not hold water to tell a soldier that these women have as much right to work as any man." Instead Rolston recommended that "the biggest job any woman can do is that of raising a family of good Canadian citizens with a sense of responsibility to their God, their country and their parents."27

Whatever the protests of left-wing women, the federal government appeared to already have made its decision regarding the future of women's work in the post-war world. Like the VCW, a spokesman for the National Selective Service emphasized in 1944 that "women's place in the world of tomorrow is first of all in the home which is the most


important."28 The Federal Minister of Munitions and Supply, C.D. Howe, also reasoned that women were working outside of the home only "because of the war and that they would prefer to stay at home once the war was over."29 When the federal Sub-Committee on the Post-War Problems of Women finally submitted its report in 1944, it too emphasized that woman's most important role was her domestic one, and it predicted that 45 to 55 per cent of all women would return home once the war was over. Of the women workers polled in Vancouver, it was predicted that 53.8 per cent would return to the home.30 For women who chose to remain in the work force, the Sub-Committee concluded that new areas of employment, based on women's traditional jobs, would have to be created. However, few recommendations were made for the married woman worker.

A national survey, completed in August 1945 by the Women's Division of the Dominion Employment Service (successor to the National Selective Service), recommended the most suitable areas of pre-employment vocational training for women and helped set the tone for women's public status in post-war society. The job most often mentioned as having valuable potential for training was domestic service.

28 VCW General Meeting, January 3, 1944, Minutes.
29 "Canada at War", No. 31, December 1943, p.35.
Other job choices considered suitable work for women included stenography, sales, textiles, waitressing, beauty consulting and commercial cooking.31 The reports were submitted to Ottawa and were to serve as a basis for further enquiry and planning of suitable work areas for women.

Meanwhile in Vancouver the establishment of the Department of Home Economics at the University of British Columbia in 1943 had provided proof of the conservative social climate of the day regarding women's post-war employment opportunities. Lee Stewart, a British Columbia historian, maintains that women were "well aware that the resolution to re-establish home economics anticipated U.B.C.'s needs to accommodate men returning from the war more than its responsibility to women on the home front." Such education Stewart argues would therefore "serve social imperatives before individual or feminist preferences."32

Through its post-war recommendations, the Vancouver Council of Women helped perpetuate such limited views of women's public roles. By identifying domestic service and farm work as two of the main areas of work available to women after the war, the Council's proposals reinforced the importance of women's traditional roles and hindered women's

31 "Vocational Training For Women", The Labour Gazette, August 1945, pp.1120-1121.

32 Lee Stewart, "It's Up to You": Women at UBC In The Early Years, (Vancouver: UBC Press for the UBC Academic Women's Association, 1990), p.61.
chances to broaden their economic opportunities. By selecting fields of work that emphasized women's feminine nature, the VCW also stressed a limited view of women's capabilities. In fact, seven months after the war had ended the VCW still maintained that it was women's duty to "watch well to see our returned men do not suffer for lack of jobs." This duty encompassed the Council's post-war goals; post-war planning meant that women's place in the post-war world must not jeopardize that of men. To the VCW, women's participation in the war-time labour force had been intended strictly for the prosecution of war.

Little thought had been given to evaluating women's war-time contribution in terms of offering women widening public opportunities once the war was over; the VCW's goal had been to rally women to patriotic service. Patriotism, the preservation of family life and the propagation of women's feminine and nurturing qualities had been the instrumental components of the VCW's war-time philosophy and programmes.

33 Mrs. Crump's speech. VCW Annual General Meeting, March 4, 1946, Minutes.
Chapter VII: Conclusion

One of the major questions posed by feminist scholars has been why, in spite of broader opportunities available to women in Canada during World War II, their social and political status in post-war society did not change significantly. Using the Vancouver Council of Women as a case study, this thesis has addressed the question by examining what the VCW saw as women's social and political roles during war-time. It has argued that the VCW was able to accommodate the temporary war-time situation which required women to take on duties outside their traditional sphere, while conducting a war-time programme that encompassed an unchanging ideology about women's proper role in society.

Based on the Council's maternal feminist philosophy, its leaders reasoned that woman's influence, her domesticity and her unique moral authority were necessary to help solve society's problems. Not being a pacifist group, the VCW saw no direct link between its maternalism and opposition to war, and therefore at the outbreak of war in 1939 it enthusiastically threw its efforts into aiding Canada's war effort. Having embraced a feminist philosophy that ultimately relegated women largely to the private sphere, the Council embarked on a war policy that was highly patriotic and nationalistic and which drew a distinction between men's
war-time role on the fighting front and women's war-time role on the home front.

The Council's participation in war fund drives and salvage efforts, its attempts to secure Vancouver from alien economic interests, its lobbying efforts on behalf of the armed forces and its pro-British sympathies revealed the extent of its patriotic sentiments, as did the belief that women's war-time role should embody their traditional qualities as protectors of the home. To the VCW, a most significant part of women's duty during war involved preserving a particular way of life on the home front and patiently waiting for the men to return.

The VCW's fear of increased social disorder during wartime encouraged it to lobby for greater institutional controls in society and to propagate the values of a stable home life. The Council also condemned the rumored war-time increases in juvenile delinquency, alcohol consumption and promiscuous behaviour, and called for increased parental supervision of children's activities, extended street supervision by police women, stricter social legislation and moral instruction for civilians. Its prescription for eliminating social disorder involved trying to ensure that the right type of citizens would shape Vancouver's post-war society. This determined the VCW's limited view of the municipal franchise and its attempts to secure British subjects as post-war settlers. The social and civic causes
endorsed by the Council illuminated its Anglo-Canadian perspective, its middle-class bias, its conservatism, its preoccupation with social authority and its interest in social stability.

To the VCW, women's war-time activities were best expressed in patriotic service and volunteer efforts that reflected their housewifely roles and domestic skills. Thus, the Council recruited armies of housewives to can fruit and vegetables to feed Canada's population, and women canvassed local neighbourhoods for metal kitchen utensils, salvaged for the production of essential war tools. The message conveyed was that women's war efforts were best put to use in traditional feminine tasks. The VCW's example of unwaivering support for the federal government's war-time domestic policies reinforced this position. This was in marked contrast to the messages conveyed by many left-wing women's groups which questioned the government's position on these issues.

The Council's attitude towards women's entry into the paid war-time labour force also emphasized the importance of women's domestic skills, and therefore it lobbied for women's increased entry into farm work during war-time. Yet, the VCW's caution regarding the outcome of the war-time employment of married women and its slow reaction to the day care issue confirmed its view that married women's proper sphere was the home. Furthermore, its insistence that all
men be employed before women contributed to the Council's neglect of the concerns of single women workers.

The VCW's proposal to the Provincial Post-War Planning Committee, which encouraged female employment in farm work and domestic service, perpetuated a restricted view of women's public roles and did not help women broaden their job opportunities in the post-war era. The Council had adopted the view expressed by the federal government that women's entry into non-traditional fields of work during the war had been necessary for the prosecution of war. Once the war was over, the VCW expected that women would return to traditional occupations or to the home for marriage and motherhood. The position that the Council adopted regarding post-war planning for women was reactionary rather than forward-looking.

Using the Council as a case in point, it can be argued that women's war-time activism arose out of traditional roles performed by women during peacetime. The VCW's views regarding the type of war-time service to be performed by women reflected opinions current in federal, provincial and municipal government circles. As part of their patriotic effort, women were expected to take on temporary work roles outside their traditional sphere and return to their former roles once the war was over. Thus, the perception that women were first and foremost nurturing, sacrificial and maternal beings, constituted the Council's view of Canadian
womanhood. Furthermore, the fact that similar views were often expressed by government officials signified a continuity of beliefs and norms regarding women's war-time roles and post-war status. Signs of significant changes in women's status were not forthcoming from the Council's policies in spite of the exigencies of war-time which required women to step outside the boundaries of their traditional activities.

Although the Council did represent, for the most part, a segment of Vancouver society's politically active and civic-minded female citizens and an important strain of Canadian feminism, the VCW's ability to offer new roles for women during the war was severely limited by its maternal feminist philosophy and its middle class roots. The Council's view of the domestic service question from the perspective of the employers, its inability to perceive the value of an extended municipal franchise, its ambivalent views regarding day care and the rights of single women workers, and its nomination of women to positions of authority who shared its convictions severely limited its ability to address the concerns of its working class sisters. Furthermore, the VCW's refusal to admit the more radical Vancouver Housewives League to its membership and the creation of the Progressive Women's Federation, a labour-oriented umbrella of women's groups, formed in reaction to the VCW, revealed the wide breach in philosophies of women's
groups in Vancouver during the war years. The Council's cautious strain of feminism prevented it from co-operating with other women's organizations of a more reformist nature. The VCW's war-time activities were concentrated largely on promoting views that assisted in the successful prosecution of war. Patriotism, the preservation of the ideals of home life and the promotion of women's feminine qualities were more important to the Vancouver Council of Women than the pursuit of broad feminist goals.

Feminist historians have debated whether there existed a continuity of ideologies and cultural norms during the war years or whether the war led to changes in the perception of women's private and public status. The VCW's ability to adapt to the temporary war-time situation which required women to take on new roles, while still maintaining a maternal feminist philosophy that saw women's position in society as derived from their domestic sphere, testifies to the longevity of cultural norms regarding women's proper place in society. The Vancouver Council of Women's views regarding Vancouver women's war-time roles and post-war status represented a continuation of pre-war views regarding women's public and private status. In essence, the war had not brought about enduring changes in women's lives. Women's proper sphere remained domestic.
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Appendix I

* TYPES OF ORGANIZATIONS:

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*Terms define the 1 major characteristic of the organization.

VCW Affiliated Societies

Alexandra Children's Home
Altar Society, Holy Rosary Church
Altar Society, Our Lady of Perpetual Help Church
American Women's Club
B.C. Musical Competition Festival
Burnaby Women's Conservative Association
Burrard Women's Conservative Association
Canadian Daughters League No.1
Canadian Daughters League No.8
Canadian Daughters League No.9
Canadian Daughters League No.22
Canadian Federation for the Blind
Canadian Memorial United Church Women's Auxiliary
Canadian National Institute for the Blind Women's Auxiliary
Catholic Women's League, Senior Sub Division
Chalmers United Church Women's Auxiliary
Civilian Mothers' and Wives Association
Community Self Help Association
Crippled Childrens Hospital
Chown Memorial United Church Women's Auxiliary
CCF Women's Central Group Council
Daughters of England Queen of the West
Daughters of England Glazier Lodge
District Kings Daughters
District Women's Christian Temperance Union
Women's Christian Temperance Union, Fairview Chapter
Women's Christian Temperance Union, Grandview Chapter
Women's Christian Temperance Union, Mt. Pleasant Chapter
Women's Christian Temperance Union, Kerrisdale Chapter
Women's Christian Temperance Union, Vancouver South Chapter
Women's Christian Temperance Union, West End Chapter
Fairview Baptist Church Women's Auxiliary
First Baptist Church Women's Auxiliary
First United Church Women's Auxiliary
Elizabeth Fry Society
Ex-Service Women Canadian Legion
Greater Vancouver Girl Guides Council
In As Much Circle Kings Daughters
Kiwassa Club
Ladies Guild British Sailors Society
Ladies Auxiliary to the 49th
Ladies Auxiliary Horticultural Society
Lions Lady Club
Lady Laurier Club
Lady Aberdeen Branch Scottish Country Dance Society
League of Women Voters
Lillian Freeman Chapter of Hadassah
New Era League
National Council of Jewish Women
Point Grey Women's Institute
Primrose Club
Royal Needlework Guild
Ryerson United Church Women's Auxiliary
Shaughnessy United Church Women's Auxiliary
Soldiers, Sailors, Mothers & Wives Association
Soroptimist Club
St. Andrews Wesley United Church Women's Auxiliary
St. Paul's Anglican Church Women's Auxiliary
St. Paul's Hospital Auxiliary
St. John's United Church
United Church Social Service Council
Vancouver Business and Professional Women's Club
Vancouver South Point Grey Women's Liberal Association
Vancouver Women's Liberal Association
Vancouver Symphony Society
Vancouver Women's Building Association
Victorian Order of Nurses
Veterans Mutual Assistance League
Vancouver Chapter Registered Nurses Association of B.C.
Women's Educational Auxiliary
Women's Auxiliary Charter 44 Hotel Greeters
Women's Auxiliary Diocesan Board

In the 1941 Attendance Record as well as the above the following members were listed:
Chapter A. P.E.O. Sisterhood
Surrey Women's Institute
St. Andrews' Caledonian Society Women's Group
Women's International League for Peace and Freedom
Young Women's Christian Association
Appendix II

TOTAL FEMALES IN VANCOUVER BY CONJUGAL CONDITION AND SEX, 1941

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Conjugal Condition</th>
<th>Numbers</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Single</td>
<td>56,421</td>
<td>41.56%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Married</td>
<td>63,101</td>
<td>46.48%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Widowed</td>
<td>12,765</td>
<td>9.40%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Divorced</td>
<td>1,015</td>
<td>.75%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Separated</td>
<td>2,469</td>
<td>1.82%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

FEMALE POPULATION BY AGE GROUP IN VANCOUVER, 1941

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age Group</th>
<th>Female Population</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0 - 4</td>
<td>7,866</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 - 9</td>
<td>7,140</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10-14</td>
<td>8,777</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15-19</td>
<td>10,878</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20-24</td>
<td>13,123</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25-34</td>
<td>24,917</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>35-44</td>
<td>18,245</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>45-54</td>
<td>18,297</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>55-64</td>
<td>15,206</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>65-69</td>
<td>4,748</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>70+</td>
<td>6,576</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Total Female Population of Vancouver, 1941 = 135,773

Sources: Canada. Census of Canada, 1941.
Dominion Bureau of Statistics, Population By Sex, Age, Conjugal Conditions, Etc. For the Social Areas of Vancouver and Winnipeg.