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Role of women's movements in enlarging citizenship in Québec [1]

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The problematic of social movements, by introducing different conceptions of social change, has renewed political thought. How have feminist movements transformed the political debate? Does their relationship to power reside in their challenge to it or in the alternative power structures that they have put into place? Or, are they an avant-guard of minority groups that are seeking a differentiated integration into the democratic arena? Now that theories of social change, especially those inspired by Marxist theory, appear to be defunct, we are beginning to investigate the role of social movements (both old and new) in the development of democracies (Touraine, 1994).

The renewal of the historiography on revolutions, for example, nourishes a skepticism about their capacity to engender beneficial changes for all and has come to corroborate observations which were made by Marcel Mauss (1969) in the aftermath of the Russian Revolution: societal change is only durable and profound if it comes about after engaging the majority of the population. Hostile towards professional revolutionaries, Mauss advocated an enlargement of democracy and its operating mechanisms (Fournier, 1994).

Resisting all of the agitated minority's manipulations and vehemently critical of the post-industrial society and its attendant forms of alienation, the new social movements of the 1970s, from which feminism was born, will have the effect, if not always the goal, of enlarging democracy's base. Thus, it seems to me, feminism directly offered democracy the possibility of attaining its largest contemporary hopes of redemption: will the system emerge enlarged as a result of its fruitful confrontation with women's demand to be included? This presumes, of course, that the egalitarian proposition includes the gamut of all feminist demands and, an even more uncertain condition, that democracy is still considered by all as the most adequate political system. This complex issue pertains more to political philosophy than to the particular study of a movement in a given epoch (Kymlicka, 1990)[2]. However, as we will see, we

[1] I would like to thank my assistant, Louise Bienvenue, for her collaboration in the presentation of this text as well as for her comments. This manuscript was translated by Tanya Schacter (McGill University).

[2] For a contemporary philosophical study of the feminist question, I would like to thank Véronique Munoz Dardé for having brought to my attention her reflections entitled "Exercise de raisonnement pratique sur la question de la sonorité. Pour un féminisme "racine kantienne".

cannot place women's issues in their historical context without making reference to this larger debate as it appears in feminist writings and practices.

Like many movements driven by a revolutionary will, the feminism of the 1970s proclaimed itself the ultimate reference and universal model for women's liberation. As did the protest movement from which it was born, feminists claimed to erase the past; an action which had permanent repercussions on the way in which feminist historians *reinterpreted history*. It also created an immense hope for change: by denouncing the political rules as patriarchal or sexist, it demonstrated Occidental pseudo-democracy's in-adequacy for taking women's position into consideration. By contesting the universal character of male suffrage in Québec (which lasted up until 1940 and which excluded Amerindians and Inuits) the feminist critique challenged the very political structure that would have to be radically transformed in order to make room for women as well as for the most disadvantaged. The exclusion of the majority of women from political power and from the spheres of power was the point of departure for concerted reflection by feminist researchers and militants who, taking this variable into account, sought for a way of reconceptualizing politics.

The initial ambition of the movement far surpassed the sole claim for the inclusion of women into the public spheres of society; rather, it was a question of transforming the concepts of politics to render them more apt to take into account the positions which women occupied in democratic societies (Vickers, 1989)[3]. In what respect was the women's movement an echo of widespread, shared sentiments? How was the joining of the movement and women achieved? Is it possible that such a radical critique of patriarchal power permanently distanced its militants from political life? Or, on the contrary, has it opened a path for other women in politics?

Here, we are looking to reveal what, in the propositions advanced by the Québec feminist movements, was able to modify the representation of women in the political order and in the symbolic order. It is obviously not a question of being exhaustive nor objective: this type of essay participates in the critical questioning of citizenship which is presently being pursued as much in political circles as in academic circles, both of which produce and establish the values of those discourses.

The task is also to better understand feminist critiques of power. What can we say today about the influence of women and their groups in political life? Is it a matter of claims for integration or is it a matter of oppositional movements that are resistant to any inclusion? We will approach these questions through an examination of women's use of citizenship in the twentieth century, focusing on the example of Québec.

By commenting on what is considered to be the *normal model of integration* in politics, the vote, elections and the participation of women in partisan politics, and by analyzing the alternative strategies which were put into place by certain groups of women, I will try to describe those tendencies in Québec and Canada which seem to me to be the most significant.

FEMINISM, NATIONALISM, AND THE WELFARE STATE OR HOW THE BATTLE FOR SUFFRAGE WAS AN INTEGRAL PART OF FEMINIST STRUGGLE FOR SOCIAL REFORMS

In searching for documents demonstrating women's exclusion from political life, feminist militants and historians uncovered the existence of groups of women who, in the years surrounding the turn of the century, were in favor of social reforms and obtaining the right to vote. They discovered heroines who made daring claims and who were later memorialized for their courage in leading a struggle that was understood to be an unequal one. Although at first resulting in defeat, Québec women's battle to obtain the right to vote from the Taschereau government appeared avant-guard. Of course Québec women participated in federal elections, having received the right to vote on May 24, 1918, but they were not able to exercise this right in their own province. Failure to do so was explained in terms of women's alienation and the Catholic clergy's categorical refusal to see women enter political life.

Accordingly, although the first wave of the feminist struggle had as its essential objective gaining the vote for women, it failed in the face of the uncompromising subscribers of clerical and

nationalist ideology. Marie Gérin-Lajoie, Caroline Beique and Justine Lacoste-Beaubien, founders of the Fédération nationale Saint-Jean-Baptiste (FNSJB) in 1907 and bourgeois women who espoused the liberal beliefs of the bourgeoisie, attempted to add political claims to the social measures that they already advocated. But it was to the clergy that responsibility was attributed for having dissuaded Marie Gérin-Lajoie from continuing her campaign in favor of the right to vote: obtaining this right would have ruined what, in its eyes, was the sacred value of the family (Lavigne, Pinard & Stoddard, 1983; Trofimenkoff, 1986). Thereafter subordinated to the will of its Bishop, the Fédération consolidated its social reform work and attempted to obtain increased benefits for women in the spheres of social philanthropy.

The movement's dissidence only lasted a short period of time and was completely ineffectual in the immediate; however, far less ineffectual was the social actions in which its 22 affiliated groups engaged. If this aspect of the Fédération's activities which reached into the realms of charity, education and economic action, had tangible effects for the thousands of women who benefited from them, it did not appear to be that significant to many of the feminists of the 1970s who attributed it to the traditional role of women. This role, calling to mind women's subservience to the clergy, was directly rejected as a bearer of obscurantism and conservatism unlikely to shed light on the present. In order to underscore, above all else, the feminist consciousness of the pioneers, praise was directed to the action of these first heroines who fought their battle on the terrain of equal rights.

For reasons which arise from the collusion which operated during the 1960s and 1970s between feminism and progressive nationalism, research on female suffrage hardly considered these feminist associations' role in the process of enlarging the public sphere of women. Because of the Church's considerable influence on women, it did not seem possible that women could have emancipated themselves from its tutelage. This is why the analysis which prevailed, for a time, within feminism stressed these women's alienation and their subordination to clerical ideology: for women philanthropy was only another way of applying the precepts of Christian charity. And even if these bodies made claims for equal rights, this demand came far behind their desire for social cohesion.

In contrast to this perspective, Laurin, Juteau and Duchesne (1991), as well as Eid and Laurin-Frenette (1980) and Danylewicz (1988) prefer to talk about the Church's appropriation of women. This allows them to underscore the considerable work carried out by the communities of nuns in sectors such as education and social services and to explain the preponderance of Christian ideals in structuring the female labour market. The debate would be played out fundamentally between the Church and the state, leaving only a marginal place for voluntary activities, especially female ones.

Thus, by wanting too much to align these associations with contemporary feminism or by ignoring their influence, we have a tendency to underestimate the importance of the social claims that they advanced. We have also attributed the main responsibility for losing the suffrage campaign to the clergy, even though this campaign was just as ill regarded by the majority of women's groups, especially the *Cercles des fermières*. These associations' arguments against the right to vote are well-known: assimilated without any distinction into the clerical and nationalist ideology, they upheld the artificial division between the private and public by reinforcing women in their private role, even if their social action went beyond the designated private sphere. Emphasizing that the claims for the right to vote were primarily advanced by groups of Anglo-Protestant women in Montreal, the Church did not miss the opportunity to reanimate old disputes. Dissensions between the umbrella anglophone and secular organization, the Montreal Local Council of Women, and its Catholic francophone counterpart, the FNSJB, obviously did not help the cause of women's rights.

The definitive condemnation of these groups masked a more profound and apparently paradoxical dimension of their action. It was in these reform movements, characterized by a social feminism and appealing to women's social obligation, that a feminism of rights emerged and developed. How and at what point did the breach which led first English Canadian women and then Québec women onto the path of equal rights open?

[3] For a detailed and critical analysis of feminist visions see the excellent article by Jill McCalla Vickers: "Feminist Approaches to Women in Politics".

THE FEMALE SOCIAL REFORM MOVEMENT

The period around the turn of the century saw a blossoming of a host of women's organizations which formed part of what English Canadian and American women have characterized as a reform movement. Thousands of women mobilized in campaigns for temperance; better hygiene standards; healthier housing conditions; and improved living and health conditions, especially for children; etc. Widely documented in Canada, this movement was felt throughout North America, nourishing very interesting controversies about the meaning we should attribute to it.[4] Seen at first as an action of women from the middle and bourgeois classes, it was roundly criticized for its inability to move women outside of the stereotypical roles to which they were assigned (Errington, 1988)[5]. While reformist, this movement was also criticized for its conservatism and its manipulation by women from the comfortable classes (Kealey, 1979).

Nevertheless, it was these mothers, those whom Veronica Strong-Boag (1986) calls *club women*, who transformed their relation to public life. They considered it to be their moral duty to intervene in the public sphere in order to reform it and infuse it with feminine qualities. If, at first view, such claims seem to consolidate women's subordination to male politicians, they had in fact the virtue of getting the majority of women to leave the private roles which were assigned to them. This is why, today, we are rediscovering these social reform movements. The importance of these reform activities for the emergence of claims for equal rights (including the right to suffrage) and in the laying of the foundation of the welfare state is at the center of the inquiry (Black, 1989; Strong-Boag and Fellman, 1986; Bock and Thane, 1991; Skocpol, 1993a, 1993b).

The claim for the right to vote can only be understood in this context. This era of so-called social or maternal feminism is revisited in order to demonstrate the extent of the reforms obtained and to attest to the particular strategies utilized by these groups in order to attain their ends. In the face of the different parliaments irreducible opposition to their claims, numerous feminists adopted a strategy that they considered to be more fruitful: the demand to give *mothers* full access to citizenship. A whole series of measures were put into place to reward social maternity: raised to the level of national duty, maternity would legitimate the attaining of benefits (maternity allowances) and rights, in particular, suffrage. This results in the emergence of a maternal state, which Skocpol (1993) claims emerges, in large part, from the transfer of the powers of these women's associations.

For Québec, this process was also initiated by numerous associations. The current of *social maternity*, as it was called, was one of the most fertile terrains for enlarging the social roles of women.

THE MATERNAL STATE

In fact, the suffragist movement's notable figures shared with the majority of other women's groups a maternal conception of citizenship: this is why they reconciled themselves, without any problem, to the decision to withdraw from the Provincial Committee for Female Suffrage, founded in 1922 by Marie Gérin-Lajoie. Their ambiguity was not that which we perceive: it was that of women trying to obtain the maximum advantages for all women without renouncing the role that they considered to be essential in the family. In Québec, the action of militant minorities, firmly bent on obtaining rights for women, did not prevail; most women grouped together under the banner of large organizations with conservative orientations. For one must not forget that the sacred character of national belonging, predominated over all other considerations (Thébaud, 1992), what elsewhere has been labeled the nationalization of women. The Church played an active part in this process and revived the national flame by threatening all those women who would not conform with excommunication.

These parameters framed women's political action and this is why the enlargement of the public sphere, to which some of them aspired, was done through the social reform movement. The considerable work expanded and the success which they obtained are clearly attested to by the progress of hygiene and public health in a city such as Montréal. The development of sanitary units, a direct result of the hygienic movement which was animated by women, enlightened doctors, and visionary reformists, shows the extent of the change effected (Desrosiers, Gaumer and Keel, 1991; Cohen and Gélinas, 1989). The essential role of women's voluntary associations in the founding and administration of hospitals, like that of Sainte-Justine (Charles, 1990), also indicates the

existence of entire health sectors which escaped the Church's absolute control. Whether it was in rural or urban areas, women were gathering together in clubs and associations, friendly or otherwise. The rural and semi-rural areas, which have been described as backwards, did not lag behind. The association of the *Cercles de fermières*, since its founding in 1915, did not cease to establish all types of mutual aid for country women and especially housewives in small cities and villages (Cohen, 1990). The acquisition of a certain degree of autonomy by the *Cercles* vis-a-vis the Church is striking, and the *Cercles*, before a painful break with the Church in 1944, was among those agents who made the clerical discourse evolve in favor of social Catholicism, which at that time was adhered to only by the Québec clergy (Cohen and Van Den Dungen, 1994)[6]. Without going into what has been shown elsewhere, we can affirm that the *Cercles*' demand for assistance addressed to the state (symbolically in their case) had the effect of removing them from the tutelage of the Church and permitting them to form a more autonomous association. This is emblematic of the expectations that they had of the Québec state. In it the *Cercles* saw the enlightened guide that would support their social reform actions, while recognizing their value and conferring to them the corresponding power.

Obviously, not all of these groups were the same: different interests placed them in opposition to one another. They joined together as a result of a common conception of the role of women, which was based on a notion of service and duty as opposed to the more contemporary notion of rights. However, we can already see at work a different conception of political engagement, which then bore the simpler term public. Their practice of citizenship did not occur through mixed political parties but through the regrouping of women to obtain measures which were to satisfy precise and particular needs.

This was also what they are reproached for. While calling for a strict neutrality in the appreciation of their activities, or at least for an egalitarian perspective in the study of male-female relations, this perspective was criticized for being based on a double standard (Lamoureux, 1991)[7]. Why should we qualify women's social action as philanthropic yet say that men's was the prelude to socialism and communism? This interpretation takes on its own account the narrow political vision it criticizes, makes short shift of historical findings. The groups that proclaim themselves to be part of social feminism did not have the objective of constituting themselves as a party.

This type of analysis harbors a conception of a political change which, for women, also would have had to occur via the constitution of a party for it to be valid. That the reform movement gave birth notably to social service is not sufficient to confer political credit on these women's actions. Even if this analysis recognizes the soundness of those policies in supporting the essential role of women in the family and in the foundation of the welfare-state, it says nothing about the possibility that these women might have exercised their duty as citizens in a different fashion. This type of critique refuses the articulation of sexual difference for political

4 This question, essential for appreciating the role of the suffragettes in enlarging citizenship, remains the object of a number of controversies. Few studies have examined its history, but we possess, especially for English Canada, some excellent clarifications, such as those of Veronica Strong-Boag (1986) "Pulling in Double Harness, or Hauling a Double Load" and of V. Strong-Boag and A.C. Fellmann eds. (1986) *Rethinking Canada: The Promise of Women's History.*

5 These were the branches of the Women's Christian Temperance Union (WCTU, founded in Ontario in 1874) which had almost 10 000 members across Canada ten years later, the Girls' Friendly Society, the Dominion Order of the King's Daughters, the YWCA, etc. Jane Errington, who wrote a succinct resume of this history, underlines these association's efforts to coordinate their efforts, beginning in 1893, as well as their conservative character. According to her, these organizations were divided on the question of women's suffrage. A minority among them considered it to be an important struggle, while the majority of the other reformers considered sexual differentiation to be normal, natural and favorable: "Most women in reform recognized and welcomed the innate differences between the sexes. And most of the nation's mothers began to agitate for the vote only after it became clear that the reforms so necessary to their society's regeneration would not be enacted without it", J. Errington (1988), "Pioneers and Suffragists", p. 68.

6 A comparison with Belgium allows us to see how the Cercles were among the first groups in Québec to develop the Church's doctrine of social action: Y. Cohen and P. Van Den Dungen, "Les Cercles de fermières en Belgique et au Québec" (forthcoming).

7 The author speaks of a double standard for analyzing these movements: "While activities of women in these reform movements is fundamentally analyzed in terms of philanthropy, male activity is seen as the prelude to radical political movements such as socialism or communism", D. Lamoureux (1991), "Idola Saint-Jean et le radicalisme féministe de l'entre-deux-guerres", p.51. See also this author's work *Citoyennes? Femmes, droit de vote et démocratie* (1989).

ends. It is unthinkable that these organizations must have developed alternative strategies to bypass political exclusion. In the end, this analysis holds, they would have had to conduct themselves as we, today, would like them to have done, as radical feminists, or as some of them did.[8]

THE WELFARE STATE

Instead, we should question ourselves about the reasons which prompted these associations to trust the state to manage and conduct their claims. To this end, the history of feminine associations' being taken over by the welfare-state and its bureaucracy is full of useful lessons. It attests to the major changes in the conception of citizenship that people had: at the base, these voluntary, charitable and even professional associations believed in the capacity of the state to be the arbiter of the conflicts which opposed them to the Church or to each other. They therefore placed a large portion of their prerogatives and their skills in the hands of the state under the pretext that it represented democracy and could manage the interests of the most disadvantaged as a good mother would. This is not possible because the state, itself, has every interest in enlarging its spheres of influence. At the summit, the state proceeded at the beginning of the century, to redefine the concept of citizenship. Far from being restricted to an enumeration of equal rights, citizenship was recast by the fathers of the *Welfare State* (Beveridge, Tittmuss and T. H. Marshall) as a social and political responsibility (Harris, 1975). Susan Pedersen (1990) summarizes it in these terms[9]: "A citizen is one who not only participates in the political life of the city and possesses political rights, but is also one who contributes to the economic and social well-being of the group and who receives from it social and economic benefits (*entitlements*)". This definition, by its very essence, is inclusive of the women who inspired, animated and were in the forefront of this movement.

These are some reasons which propelled the majority of women in the 1920s to engage in social action: for them, this did not signify their retreat from public life but their investment in it, starting from their own preoccupations; they considered it to be a civic action. The right to vote was only one aspect, and a minor one for many of them. As a result of their conception of family life and of the defense of the language, highly inspired by Catholicism, women became the defenders of French-Canadian nationalism, a particularly acute form of their engagement in the national political life.

Furthermore, their action had considerable political consequences which ought not to be diminished. This enlargement of the state's sphere of intervention in the 1920s and 1930s resulted, as we know, in an ever-increasing encroachment on what we call the private domain and in a Minotaur state. By conferring their prerogatives on a state which they quickly learned was neither neutral nor benevolent, the women's associations were cheated. They would never become the recognized partners of the state, nor acquire the power they worked for; they even had to beg the state for the right to exercise their prerogatives (for example, in health professions) while the autonomous action of their associations rarely stepped outside the bounds of a pressure group relegated to the ministers' antechamber. Their acceptance of the complementary sexual roles, which is allied to an acceptance of secondary citizenship status, becomes quickly identified with their subordination to the state.

Feminist critiques claim that this subordination lies at the basis of the patriarchal society. This is Carol Pateman's sexual contract theory. Challenging the structural enslavement of women by men, Pateman (1988), in a noteworthy essay, argues that the domination that is expressed in the sexual contract is that which founds and legitimates the existence of the social contract. Without eliminating the family or work done by women in the family - the latter decreed as relegated to the private sphere -, contemporary political life will not exist as such. And so, is sexual discrimination the rule of democratic political life?

If this analysis justifies itself in theory, in practice it is flawed. Far from ignoring families and the sexual contract which subordinates women to men, the Welfare State immersed itself in the lives of families and regulated them.[10] Pedersen insists on the contingent aspect of these decisions, which were accompanied by a new preeminence of the state in a domain which was the almost exclusive arena of charitable associations (especially feminine ones), and I was equally able to prove this with respect to the *Cercles de fermières* and certain professional associations. The historical analysis of this process considerably nuances the political

analysis: the exclusion of women from political citizenship in the 1920s was challenged in the 1940s. Such a reversal attests to the depth of these women's associations' actions which, far beyond their immediate political results, oriented their members towards self-affirmation. In this sense, and no matter what we say, these groups paved the way for contemporary feminism, in Quebec as well.

Far from being disinterested in private life, the state integrated the principal prerogatives of women into its functions. Relegated to the role of wife-mother, certain militant feminists realized the importance of attaining equal rights. The main reversal in favor of feminist claims, which occurred during the 1950s, consisted of no longer linking allowances and other social benefits distributed by the state to the qualities of the recipients. This is why, today, it is such a delicate matter to accord social benefits while taking into account religious, ethnic or sexual differences.

The return to the strict principle of equality appeared as the means to short-circuit the process of exclusion. Equality is always the sign of abandoning all discrimination based on sex, religion, age, etc. With the refusal of measures to offer protection tied to sex, the modern revolution of rights emerged. It was also at this moment that the junction between feminism of difference or natural rights and conservative nationalism reversed itself; modern feminism will be on the side of equality. Thérèse Casgrain's itinerary is the best testimony. Symbolizing the Québec women's fight for suffrage, she also incarnates their ambivalence.

We have sketched out certain historical conditions in which the turnabout of women advocating rights happened and we have seen the reasons why the claim for equal rights seemed henceforth to epitomize all feminist claims. It was not that the more conservative associations suddenly disappeared: they themselves, as was the case for the *Association des femmes pour l'éducation et l'action sociale* (AFÉAS) and many others[11], underwent a one hundred and eighty degree shift. As we can see, the history of feminine suffrage attests to the existence of more complex variables which political studies do not always take into account. Let us now see what a more directly political reading has to say about the same debate.

WOMEN IN POLITICS: WHERE AND WHEN?

Usually, we distinguish between three generations of women and political representation in Canada (Robinson and Saint-Jean, 1991). In fact, political studies about women's participation really only begin in the 1970s. The period prior to the 1970s is considered to be traditional: women like Pauline Jewett, Judy Lamarsh and Flora Macdonald were the *first women* in politics, women characterized by a strongly dichotomized persona in terms of the public-private divide. Their biological difference nourished the debate which was almost exclusively focused on their capacity to reconcile their roles as mothers and as politicians. Two strategies were utilized to try and normalize their presence in politics: one tried to designate them as asexual women: they are the wives of, the daughters of, etc. The other underlined the negative

[8] After having declared Idola Saint-Jean to be a radical feminist, Lamoureux (*ibid.*) represents her as living proof for the existence in the 1930s of the only desirable solution.

[9] S. Pedersen (1990), "Gender, Welfare and Citizenship in Britain During the Great War". I thank Ellen Jacobs for drawing my attention to this article and for allowing me, thanks to her own work, to come back to the English case of Welfare, see E. Jacobs (1990), *Recherches féministes*. See also J. Harris' (1975) pioneering study, "Social Planning in Wartime: Some Aspects of the Beveridge Report".

[10] Certainly, women are still subordinate and dependent on the status of the head of the family, through which flow the benefits which they are accorded. However, Pedersen (1990, p. 986 and following) notes that in Great Britain, where assistance programs have been established since World War One, the state does not look to legislation to define a particular family structure or precise sexual roles, thereby denying the state any determination of the role that women ought to play. In fact, she stresses that it is the charitable and therefore private associations which legislate on these questions, entailing important debates on the necessity of whether or not to link citizenship status to men as heads of the family. Certain feminists are not left behind and also demand to be compensated by the state for the work that women accomplish as mothers.

[11] The case of the AFÉAS is particularly interesting because this one was one of the first to initiate the turn in favor of a feminism of rights, at the beginning of the 1970s. Its ambiguous position on abortion did not fail to create internal dissentions and its eventual and late rupture with the Church. If we consider that the *Cercles de fermières* broke with the Church in 1944, the AFÉAS ' relationship with the clergy, which created it wholesale (the AF*f*AS' ancestor, the Cercles d'économie domestique, was created by the Church to rival the rebellious *Cercles des fermières*) seems more problematic than its discourses would have us believe. The feminist discourse could well be a pretext to other disputes.

aspects of their femininity: they are spinsters, easy women, or *club women*. In order for them to pass into political life it was necessary to neutralize their sex (gender).

The second and transition period, from 1970 to 1990, is the one in which we see a larger number of women place emphasis on power. One of the main reasons which explain the change in attitudes towards women and politics is the action of the women's movement. The setting up of the Royal Commission's inquiry into the Status of Women marked the institutional awareness of this change. With its 160 recommendations which aimed at assuring women's equal rights in public life, with the increase in the number of married women (68%) and mothers (54%) who had a salaried job, and with the more general claim for employment equity, it had a far from negligible effect on the political and symbolic representations of women. The number of women holding elected office reached 20% in at least three provinces, and oscillated between 20 and 30% at the municipal level in the larger Canadian cities.

Furthermore, the effect, in the 1980s, of a new variable in North-American political life, what has been called the *gender gap,* must be underlined: in 1954, while men voted in a proportion of 10% more than women in the United States, this percentage reversed itself to the benefit of women who, in 1984, voted 7% more than men (Mueller, 1987). Although we do not have the numbers for Canada, the female electorate was courted (the leaders' political debate in 1984 was organized by the National Action Council) and all the candidates had to state their opinions on issues which are of particular concern to women (social programs, peace in the world, etc.).

The feminist vocabulary thus became the rule: numerous female politicians were presented as belonging to groups or networks, from which they drew their force and legitimacy. The stereotype which frequently circulated in the media during this period was that of super-woman: she was young, active, ambitious, and able to do everything, family life included. Liza Frulla, Sharon Carstairs, Iona Campagnolo seemed to incarnate these idyllic images which the press seized on, without explaining what it actually cost them to conform to this model. Variations on this same theme can be found in the feminist version of the model, incarnated by Lucie Pépin, as well as in the masculine version, *one of the boys*, which is represented by Barbara McDougal, Kim Campbell, and Sheila Copps. Refusing to make any concessions to feminism, the latter did not hesitate to call attention to the fact that they too were women in a world of men.

However, it is the difference in the electors' and female politicians' attitudes towards women in politics which holds our attention. The large majority of women politicians said that they entered the political arena to ameliorate the human condition (they declare themselves to be against violence, racism, etc.) and not, like their male colleagues, to make a career. And so we note a high degree of idealism, accompanied for the older feminists with a community service ethic (Vickers, 1989) and a sense of obligation as citizens, both strongly impregnated with the Christian duty to serve. Power does not represent an objective in itself, they are not seeking to have power but to utilize it in order to attain other ends. In this sense, they do not fundamentally differ from their predecessors in the associations: except that they use the vote, the party and politics to reach their goals.

In the end, the presence of women in government produced significant favorable changes for women and the most disadvantaged. The political pioneers are the most well known examples of this: Claire Kirkland-Casgrain established laws for married women in Québec and Monique Bégin had universal health insurance approved. In using their different way of doing politics, of understanding their role and of exercising it, these elected Canadians forged the path to a representation of politics and its institutions that would be more open, politics with a human face, we could also say. Nevertheless, these conclusions call to others which are more or less implicit.

THE IMPOSSIBLE FEMININE POLITICS

The first assessment is that traditional political institutions tend through a reification of individuals, to ignore differences and to be neutral, that is to say, inhuman. Women who specifically seek to humanize politics by familiarizing it, for example, come up against insurmountable obstacles. Those who succeeded were able to pass through the steam roller of partisan political organization and this is why they appeared in the stereotyped figures of the woman and the militant. It is equally interesting to note that their accession to positions

of control was henceforth achieved on basis similar to that of men; as a solitary race for power. Although it is still too soon to be able to analyze globally, the case of Kim Campbell attests to the fact that there is no real opposition to women taking control of a party, even a conservative party[12], and that she can do so without having any real network in the party to support her and being a total unknown in the harem.

Not one of the analyses and political predictions imagined such a scenario. One of the reasons for putting Kim Campbell into orbit is certainly tied to the profound crisis in which the Mulroney Government left the party. Nevertheless, the Progressive Conservative party's strategy, which consisted of thinking that a young and militant woman like Kim Campbell could save the party, merits deeper reflection as it tends to verify the hypothesis, often advanced by certain analysts, that in periods of crisis the parties' *establishments* do not hesitate to call on a woman whom they invest with supreme power, to run to their aid and save their chestnuts from the fire.

This process of coopting relatively young and unknown women serves several objectives: it is supposed to give a breath of fresh air to old parties as well as reinvigorate democratic life. Are the women themselves listened to? This still needs to be demonstrated, especially with respect to their demands. Whether it is the bitter adventure of Édith Cresson in France, parachuted to Prime Minister by Mitterrand and sacrificed by him to the top brass of the Socialist Party only nine months after her nomination, or the equally formidable one of Kim Campbell, who took the blame and presided over the unprecedented collapse of her party, the experience of these women leaders does not really carry with it great hopes for changes: not for them, who found themselves sacrificed on the political altar no less than some of their male colleagues; not for the party, like the Progressive Conservative Party which saw itself wiped out from the political scene in just a few months; and not for democracy, which does emerge neither more diversified nor rejuvenated.

This is why it is appropriate to ask questions about the nature of claims which aim to change politics in the same way that we ask questions about the existence of a women's vote. We often content ourselves with the affirmation, without always being able to demonstrate it, that the feminist movement was at the bottom of this new sensibility of political institutions to women's preoccupations. If the feminist agenda is relatively well-defined (sensitivity to women's questions, to daycare, to employment equity or to political parity which has accrued), it nevertheless would be an illusion to believe that it is part of the common political culture. Today, candidates still emphasize what attaches them to their party rather than those questions which are said to be specific to women. The issue of daycare is considered to be secondary and subordinate to the big issues of the day: jobs, the deficit or the battle against unemployment.

Certainly, some, the groups of the National Action Council (NAC), propose a feminist agenda in politics and the different Councils of the Status of Women, the Fédération des femmes du Québec (FFQ) and numerous other women's groups draw up their conceptions of a more just society. How can we, from a women's point of view, appreciate the effects of these actions? Are they the result of our institutions' capacity to adapt, to change under the pressure of feminist lobbying? And, in this case, how does it happen? Or is democracy so omnivorous that it integrates all that could potentially destabilize it? In this sense, can the sovereignist affirmation which emanates from Québec find its place in the concert of feminist claims?

The political space of feminism in Québec must be clearly delineated. The givens of the Québec problem, specifically, women's relationship to the national issue and to the sovereignist parties, demands that we approach them from a particular perspective.

[12] Robinson and Saint-Jean's study, completed less than two years before the nomination of Kim Campbell to the leadership of the party and of the government, absolutely does not mention the possibility of such an event. And for good reason, she was virtually unknown.

[13] The cited study by A.M. Gringas, C. Maillé and É. Tardy (1989) analyzes more precisely the structural obstacles to women's militancy, while Maillé's article (1990): "Le vote des Québécoises aux élections fédérales et provinciales depuis 1921: une assiduité insoupçonnée" confirms the fact of Québec women's massive utilization of their right to vote and the importance of a specific study of this area.

WOMEN AND POLITICS IN QUÉBEC

We previously saw what was meant by the historical exclusion of women from political power. The breadth and length of this discrimination are matters for debate, and the reasons for this exclusion evoke nuanced interpretations by political scientists (Stasiulis and Abu-Laban, 1990; Gingras, Maillé and Tardy, 1989; Cohen 1981 and 1987). Since the extension of the vote to women, three criteria measure their greater or lesser representation in politics: running a woman for an elected position, women's participation in the ballot and, finally, the articulation of a program which responds to feminist aspirations. The study of these three criteria, instead of explaining a host of questions, presents the advantage of summarizing the state of women's participation in electoral life. It permits one to draw a picture of women's acquisition of citizenship since they attained the right to vote. It must be underlined that these criteria were retained after the feminist critique of the 1970s and that they aim to demonstrate the injustice of a system which presents itself as neutral and universal.

It is on the place of women in elected positions that we shall focus (Maillé, 1990)[13]. According to the exhaustive and *structural* study of female Québécois candidates from Confederation until 1987, we obtain a global statistical portrait of female candidates (elected and non-elected), of women's participation in parties, and of the profile of female political personnel (Drouilly and Dorion, 1988; Drouilly, 1990). In line with the *model of normal integration* of women into politics, the results indicate that they are advancing on the road to power.[14]

Although the results mask the fact that women in politics must adapt themselves to a male world, we act as if this makes no difference. Only the slow, conjunctural, and not necessarily inexorable progression of the number of women candidates and the number elected indicates the extent of women's breakthrough into the political sphere. Looked at from up close, the different participation rates of men and women are major and deserve an appropriate examination.

FEWER FEMALE CANDIDATES AND FEWER WOMEN ELECTED OVERALL

First of all, the overall statistical portrait of female candidates shows that more men than women persist in submitting their candidacy and that men, as a group, succeed more in becoming elected; this explains, for example, the fact that there are 20 time more male candidates than female ones.[15] This discrepancy translates into an even larger discrepancy between women candidates and those whom are actually elected: in all, 47 women were elected, 27 to the National Assembly of Québec and 20 to the House of Commons. Between those men and women elected: women constitute one fiftieth of the number of deputies (1315 elected in Québec and 931 in Ottawa). These rough numbers translate the important disparity which marks women's representation in the two houses: they remain largely a minority.

Furthermore, we must put women's electoral participation in its context. Until the federal elections of 1968, their participation was symbolic: the number of female candidates never went above a dozen, representing percentages of less than 3%, and only Claire Kirkland-Casgrain was elected to the National Assembly in 1961. She remained the only woman in the Assembly until Lise Bacon received a seat and she, in turn, was the sole female minister until 1976 (Caron and Archambault, 1993). In fact, the continuing increase in female candidates until 1987, and more exceptionally in the number of MNAs, was directly tied to the feminist movement. The percentage of female candidates reached 19.8% in the provincial elections of 1985, and 14.8% in the federal elections of 1984, elections in which the percentage of those women elected (20.6%) was more than the percentage of those men elected (15.6%). The 1970s was a turning point for the participation of hundreds of women in the election process. Feminism had immediate effects on women's participation in partisan political life. In fact, it allowed us to believe that in the maelstrom of activity and transformations taking place in the 1970s and 1980s, women's involvement with parties was becoming these parties' gage of their own renewal. It was, therefore, the large parties, that sought to recruit more women into their ranks.

THE 1980S QUÉBEC GENDER GAP

This reversal of priorities and the new space created for women in the political arena are clearly

identifiable. This phenomenon, associated with the gender gap in the United States, translates itself in a particular way in Québec. Until then, confined to third parties, of the right or left, most female candidates were sacrificial candidates. Because these parties had little hope of being represented, less than 33 % of the female candidates had a chance of being elected in Québec and less than 23 % had a chance of being elected in Ottawa although men's probability of being elected was twice as high. However, the inverse occurred in the elections of 1984 and 1985.

The two Liberal parties, which dominated politically in this period, opened their doors wide to female candidates in constituencies where they had every chance of winning. And even if the total number of female candidates is not as high, the chances of being elected are infinitely higher: 14 women were elected to the House of Commons in 1984 and 18 to the National Assembly in 1985. Was this first group of members of parliament "a caution of a male political system which needed legitimacy and legitimization vis-a-vis the women's issue" (Drouilly and Dorion, 1988, p. 27) or do they testify to the urgency of revising partisan structures?

The results are impressive: in Québec we are witnessing a new importance accorded female candidates by the large parties. It followed that the feminization of parliaments has proceeded more rapidly in Québec than in other Canadian provinces, and more rapidly among Québec federal members of parliament than among those from other provinces. Is feminism more claimant in Québec than in other Canadian provinces? How does one explain the fact that feminism produced more women's integration into the larger parties in Québec than in Canada? Why, contrary to English Canadian feminists who mobilized for their own claims, not the least of which is the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, did Québec feminists rely on the parties to have their demands realized? Does the Québec feminist movement have more confidence in political institutions than those of English Canada?

A Feminism Incarnated by the PQ?

We cannot approach these questions by ignoring the context in which the Québec feminist movement evolves. Without delving into the history of the Québec feminist movement and its different tendencies (Lanctôt, 1980; Lamoureux, 1982), let us focus on what resulted at the political level. It was with the Parti Québécois Government and Lise Payette that feminism integrated Québec's political life. A program and a minister for the condition of women accompanied numerous and influential deputies in the party. There were certainly antecedents to the alliance between a social movement and a party: the suffragettes with the Liberal Party of Québec, Therèse Casgrain with the CCF (Trofimenkoff, 1989).

The double alliance between the militant suffragettes and the Liberal Party and that between the feminist movement and the Parti Québecois would condition the political culture of Québec women (Bashevkin, 1983). Contrary to English Canadian women (Bashevkin, 1985), whose ambivalence toward politics is marked by their oscillation between independence and partisanship, that is to say, between their autonomous social movement and their entrance into the party apparatus, Québec feminists' attachment to partisan politics is still evident. Political parties are not banished from the Québécois feminist perspective because of the national community's cohesion around specific values for, in a certain way, they also are the bearers of women's aspirations.

This is why the episode of the *Yvettes*, more than any other, concretized the feminists' attachment to parties. For the feminists who supported the Parti Québécois, the project for equality went hand-in-hand with the independence heralded by the referendum on sovereignty-association. What we have agreed to call Lise Payette's mistake consisted of driving women who did not adopt this vision of Québec nor this social project back into Liberal and *pre-feminist terrain.* With the *Yvette* episode, the feminism of rights wanted to be incarnated by the Parti Québécois, while the Liberal Party saw fit to exploit the event to its own benefit, renewing at the same time their old alliance with women's groups. Symbolically, the latter emerged victorious.

[14] "All of our analysis tends to prove to us that beyond the quantitative differences which result in women being largely under-represented in the electoral process, the forms by which women have acceded to this process for the last twenty years were borrowed from those which men developed. As for the electoral process, there does not seem to be a women's politics", P. Drouilly and J. Dorion (1988), *Candidates députées et ministres. Les femmes et les élections*, p. 40.

[15] The female population of female candidates represents only 5% of all candidates at both levels of government, that is, one twentieth of masculine candidacies", *ibid.*, p. 8.

Thus, the difference in political behavior between Québec and English Canadian women is of a cultural order, although they draw from the same North American feminist sources. This explains, in part, the opposition or the indifference of Québec feminists with respect to what English Canadian women considered to be a considerable gain, notably the enshrinement of legal equality in the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms (Cahiers de la femme, 1992)[16]. It is clear that Québécois feminists could not join them without abandoning another of their credos; that they belonged to the Québec nation or community. They will apply the Québec Charter of Human Rights with force and will thus realize the double aspiration, of equality and independence, of which Lise Payette was made the songstress.

At the same moment when our American neighbors are experimenting for the first time with the mobilization of feminist groups in favor of a unified women's vote to achieve their demands (gender gap), of which the effect and its volatility is recognized by political analysts (Deitch, 1987), and whatever may be the difference in contexts, we can say that there was, in the 1980s, a real breakthrough into the political arena by women and that this was produced by the feminist movement. It is, therefore, undeniable that a social movement exercises an efficient pressure even on traditional and reluctant parties, and that it favors the integration of those in whose name it speaks. Can we thus speak of a major or profound transformation?

Following Jill Vickers (1989), who incites Canadian feminists to take into consideration the essential role of the state and of female specificity, must we not reconsider the feminist analyses of women in power? Could we not just as much, as does Chantal Maillé (1991), characterize this conquering of political power as a tangible reversal of the phenomenon of excluding women from the realm of political power? We may doubt this in light of the recent debates and electoral results. If there was but one way to appreciate the 1993 federal elections, it would be in terms of the complete erasure of problems or issues associated with women. The parties seen to have come back to their starting point concerning women's preoccupations, which were completely ignored by all candidates, especially by the female candidates. Everything goes on as if they wanted to erase the feminist antecedents in women's candidacies in order to place the emphasis on their partisan involvement and their competence; in short, Kim Campbell and the other female candidates wanted to be treated like everyone else, and certainly not like women. One should also note that feminist demands concerning day-care, social coverage for the most deprived, job-sharing, etc., were characterized as claims of rich countries which no longer have any rhyme or reason in a time of crisis. Only the neo-democrats affirmed concerns which appeared to be all the more illusory as the electorate shrank. It is therefore no surprise to see women politicians ignore these problems in order to insist on the issues of the day, unemployment and the deficit. Ought we then talk about retreat, of the end of the gender gap, of demobilization in a period of decline of the Welfare State?

If it is too early to correctly analyze these elections, we cannot prevent ourselves from noticing the coincidence which exists between Québec women's' nationalism and the nationalism which was translated into the massive victory of the Bloc Québécois. Difficult to show in this election, this encounter is not new and conditions the political engagements of a large majority of the female electorate in Québec. This difficult junction of nationalism, feminism and politics again nourishes, let us not doubt it, political life at the century's end.

CONCLUSION

Thus, as we have seen, we must abandon narrow definitions of citizenship, uniquely partisan visions of political life, and dualist conceptions of the exercise of power in democratic societies. Aside from the historical and cultural delineation of these concepts, they reflect profound ambivalences which must be otherwise accounted for. How to integrate the dynamics at work which an analysis in terms of rights, exclusion or electoral compatibility cannot show?

From the historical outline presented, it clearly appears that the social reform movement and the feminist movement are at the origin of contemporary claims for extending equal rights to women and for their partial and gradual inclusion in the Canadian and Québec political system. On this subject, no doubt is allowed: the social and political action of women's groups was a strong catalyst in the parties' and the state's taking their claims into consideration. Neither is there any doubt that women's movements experienced then

a painful awareness: should their militants have to play the political game and accept to be integrated into the state or party's apparatus? Or, to the contrary, should they continue to exercise an outside pressure which they believed to be more effective? Each group chose its voice thereby establishing a diversity of possible means for women to act. Nevertheless, whatever may be the dissensions within the Québec feminist movements, it clearly appears that most of them are strongly attached to political life as it is practiced in Québec; we can see the nationalization of Québec feminisms since the 1920s. Therefore, we should not be surprised that Québec women were coopted by Québec parties in greater numbers than elsewhere in Canada, even if their feminism is always a source of discussion. It remains to be seen if this is the same for the female electorate: the federal elections in October 1993 and June 1997 show an important participation of female electors, whose the partisan distribution will have to be studied.

More generally, and without entering into a heavy historical relativism it is worth noting that the social movements in which women were involved do not lack diversity. The latter adapted their strategies to the needs of the moment, while still taking their own strengths into account. The social reform movement, through its practice of secularism, foreshadowed the modernity about to emerge and, far from lagging behind its English Canadian counterpart, articulated its claims to the parties which were susceptible of advocating it. This practice of entering into institutions makes Québec a regime where external social pressure combined with partisan co-optation create an integrative political system. And even if we are far from an equitable representation which would assure real parity for women of all categories and belongings, the existence of this possibility guarantees advancement. For, henceforth, the debate on these issues is part of political life at large. The proof of this is the adoption of the Canadian and Québec Charters of Rights and Freedoms.

Guaranteeing full citizenship to all women and to all those categories who have been discriminated against, the Charter inscribed equal rights in the Constitution. This perspective, largely instigated by the action of the Canadian feminist movement which reiterates the existence of fundamental rights, aims at eliminating all discrimination. All individuals who feel themselves to be the object of discrimination can always make an appeal to the Charter and have their rights recognized by the courts.

Nevertheless, in its application, the Canadian Charter underwent opposition from a large part of sovereignist political class and from the principal feminist groups in Québec. In the end, one would have to believe that the integration of women into political life comes first by national integration followed by that which concerns their universal rights. Not wanting to part with recognized rights for Québec, as a national collectivity in exchange for individual rights, Québec's opposition to the Charter, in reality, reflects a more global conflict between two conceptions of citizenship: for Quebec, belonging to a distinct national community dictates particular rights and obligations. Not wanting to be left with respect to guaranteeing these rights, Québec gave itself its own Québec Charter of Human Rights. For Canada, the federal consensus could only make sense were the voluntary credo of each individual belonging to his country be renewed, which would in turn guarantee the protection of every citizen against any discrimination. The adoption of the Canadian Charter, a skillful way of renewing Canadian federalism and of short-circuiting Québec's nationalist aspirations, certainly made matters a bit more confusing and installed a new division between feminists groups of all stripes. It does, however, signal the dawning of an era of parity, from which women should largely benefit.

It remains to be seen if the political participation is not a carefully maintained illusion with the aim of ensuring an artificial representation to those who are excluded from power, while power lies elsewhere. Studies on political participation take it for granted that the more one participates, the more one has the chance of making oneself heard and the more democracy is enlarged. In the case of women, as for many minority categories, participation is constantly accompanied by doubts about its effectiveness and about its capacity to emancipate women. The discourses on sexual liberation, on the transformation of attitudes for abolishing violence against women, etc., rely on larger representations of women's emancipation,

[16] Gender, equity and institutional change", *Les Cahiers de la femme*, spring 1992, vol. 12, p. 3. The collection of articles suggests a feminist interpretation of the obtaining of the Charter of Rights and questions which surround legal and employment equity.

which puts into question democracy's unheld promise. This is why feminism is divided about the analysis and the strategies to adopt vis-a-vis institutions. And even if we presuppose that women could participate in the democratic process in an equal manner, feminists will still demand a place for themselves in society. These will be the major ambiguities and the force of the feminist movement; opposed to all partisan characterizations, it carries larger aspirations of change to which the democratic system also needs to adapt itself.

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