

- head" whose "job grew larger as the project gathered momentum"; Dick Davis even received recognition in a personal letter from Prime Minister Mackenzie King, who was "pleased...to have the findings of such a representative group of Canadians, interested in planning for the needs of youth." CYC, v. 22, f. 7a, Mackenzie King to R.E.G. Davis, Mar. 22, 1947.
55. *Youth, Marriage and the Family*, iii-iv.
 56. The members of the CYC family committee were: Mrs. Fraser, "chairman"; Mr. Jack L. Amos, Workmen's Compensation Board, Toronto; Mrs. Davis; Miss Mae Fleming, Chief Supervisor of Welfare Services, Department of National Health and Welfare, Ottawa; Mr. R.S. Hosking, General Secretary, National Council YMCA, Toronto; Dr. S.K. Jaffary, Associate Professor School of Social Work, University of Toronto; Mr. Robert Letendre, Secretary, Quebec Provincial Committee [of the CYC], Montreal; Rev. G.H. Levesque, Dean Faculty of Social Sciences, Laval; Miss Leila O'Gorman, Supervisor of the Family Division, Catholic Welfare Bureau, Toronto; Miss Jessie Waters, Supervisor, Adoption Dept., Children's Aid Society, Toronto; Miss Dora Wilensky, Executive Director, Jewish Family and Child Services, Toronto. *Youth, Marriage and the Family*, iii-iv. Margaret Davis and Lois Fraser were not close friends, though Davis admired Fraser "for her brilliance and her involvement in social issues"; Margaret Davis interview, Aug. 4, 1989.
 57. *Youth, Marriage and the Family*, xi-xiii. The one Catholic woman on the committee, Miss O'Gorman of the Catholic Welfare Bureau, was adamant in her refusal to consider formulating recommendations on either birth control or divorce, on threat of resignation. She got the support of two male members, both from Quebec, and they promised to denounce the final report of the family committee if their opposition on these issues was not recorded. The correspondence concerning O'Gorman's threatened resignation from the committee is contained in CYC, v. 42, f. 2, and v. 43, f. 12.
 58. CYC, v. 18, f. 11, J.R. Mutchmor [Board of Evangelism and Social Service of the United Church of Canada] to Miss Elizabeth Thompson [CYC clerical staff], Oct. 31, 1946.
 59. CYC, v. 55, f. 3, Lois Fraser, Minutes of the Administrative Committee at Toronto, Oct. 14, 1944, 11.
 60. *Youth, Marriage and the Family*, 105-6.
 61. *Ibid.*, 217-19.
 62. *Ibid.*, 215.
 63. *Ibid.*
 64. *Ibid.*, 216.
 65. *Ibid.*, 217.
 66. CYC, v. 42, f. 8, Minutes of the meeting of the Family Committee of the Canadian Youth Commission, held at 3 Willcocks Street [Toronto], May 17, 1944; CYC, v. 42, f. 3, Esther Kingsley to Miss K. Cameron, Personnel Department, Small Arms Limited, Longbranch, Ontario, July 6, 1944; CYC, v. 42, f. 3, "Dear Madam..." [Letter to workers], United Electrical, Radio, and Machine Workers of America, Toronto, Aug. 23, 1944.

**“WORKING DAY AND NIGHT HELPING DICK”:
WOMEN IN POST-WAR PLANNING ON THE
CANADIAN YOUTH COMMISSION,
1942-48***

Linda M. Ambrose

“I don’t know whether I should consider taking on anything else until the Youth Commission is out of the way,” wrote Mrs. Margaret Davis in May 1946. Refusing an offer of part-time work from the Toronto Children’s Aid Society, she explained, “I am working day and night helping Dick with the remaining reports.”¹ “Dick” was R.E.G. Davis, Margaret’s husband and the Director of the Canadian Youth Commission (CYC). Largely through the initiative of the national YMCA, the CYC had been established in 1943 as an independent body to study the problems facing youth and to make recommendations to government and private youth-serving agencies about the needs of fifteen to twenty-four-year-olds in the post-war period. The reports Margaret Davis refers to were part of a series of eleven books which included the research findings and the commission’s recommendations on a variety of topics including employment, education, citizenship, religion, recreation, family, and health.² This paper focuses on the role women played on the Canadian Youth Commission and argues that their contribution was significant, not only because of the variety and amount of work they performed, but also because their ideas permeated commission discussions and shaped the final reports. As a result, a study of the CYC yields important information about wartime attitudes of women.

Youth had become the focus of much attention during the war years because of the important part they were playing both in the armed services and in civilian life working in industry and agriculture. Personnel shortages during the war gave many young Canadians their first opportunity for employment, in sharp contrast to the Depression years of the 1930s when it had been virtually impossible for youth to find work. However, during the 1940s uncertainty prevailed about the prospects for youth after the war. On the one hand, there was a feeling that youth should be rewarded for their part in the war effort, and on the other, there was fear that youth discontent might turn to “political upheaval” if the post-war period did not offer sufficient opportunities for them.³

The Canadian Youth Commission, the first nation-wide study of Canadian youth, is noteworthy not only for its scope but also for its methodology: it obtained the opinions of thousands of young Canadians through interviews, questionnaires, rallies, hearings, and written briefs. Although originally started under the auspices of the YMCA,⁴ the Youth Commission

was begun only to disclose that the problems of youth could not be isolated in terms of young Protestant men. Boy or girl, Protestant or Catholic, Jew or Gentile, all were concerned, for sex or race or creed have little to do with alleviating the social impacts of unemployment, of idleness, of loneliness or hopelessness.⁵

Not only did the CYC attempt to obtain a representative sample of all Canadian youth, but in the selection of the fifty-four commissioners there was a conscious effort to represent all the regions of Canada; the Protestant, Catholic, and Jewish religions; the major political parties (including the CCF); the various sectors of industry, labour, and agriculture; and both genders. Women, in fact, played three main roles in the work of the commission: they were recruited and volunteered their time to serve as commissioners; they were hired as writers of the reports; and they worked as volunteer "consultants" on the research subcommittees.

World War II is regarded by some historians as a major turning point in the history of Canadian women because it marked "the massive entry of married women into the paid labour force."⁶ Historians' attention has focused on what women were doing in Canada during the war, and the seminal work of historian Ruth Pierson documents women's involvement in the armed forces, in war industries, in volunteer work, and in domestic work.⁷ Yet Pierson argues that despite the variety and increase of activity outside traditional roles, these wartime experiences cannot be regarded as a great step toward women's emancipation because they were only temporary. At the end of the war women were encouraged to return to the more traditional roles of domestic and family responsibilities and traditional sex-typed jobs. Most women did just that.

In an attempt to explain the retreat back to traditional roles, the authors of *Canadian Women: A History* have speculated that

given the limited opportunities for women to move out of female work ghettos during the war, the physical and emotional strain endured by those who combined paid employment with domestic labour, the aggravation of wartime shortages, and the anxiety caused by the absence of loved ones, many Canadian women themselves looked forward to a return to full-time home life at war's end.⁸

While war weariness may explain the apparent acquiescence with which some women returned to homemaking roles, certainly not all women unanimously endorsed the post-war return to the home. In the mid-1940s, other less traditional options were being suggested. The women associated with the CYC were among those making the suggestions.

A study of the CYC women reveals that they were deeply involved in planning for youth in the post-war era, and that involvement itself is a statement about the fact that they thought it appropriate for women to be prominent in public life. It is important to look at their ideas about gender despite the fact that those

ideas were not translated into immediate results. The study of women involved in post-war planning shows that different notions about the future status of women in Canada (some of them quite controversial for their time) were proposed and forwarded.⁹ Even though they were outnumbered by public opinion and largely ignored by government policy-makers in the immediate post-war years, the women on the Canadian Youth Commission provide one example of a dissenting minority voice whose own actions and ideas were not compatible with a return to traditional gender roles.

The commission's director, Dick Davis, was fully convinced of the importance of including women in the work of the commission. His early planning notes about structuring the CYC show that from the beginning he intended to include women among the personnel. In a November 1942 memo (several months before the official start of the CYC), Davis listed some specific women as possible recruits for the commission. For example, he wanted Mary Ferguson (who was married to the editor of the *Winnipeg Free Press*) as one of the representatives of Western Canada, and Irene Baird (a popular author and National Film Board consultant) as a voice for community youth services. When he could not think of a specific name, he simply concluded his lists with the entry "a woman," indicating that he intended to have women represented in every area of commission inquiry.¹⁰ This early and extensive inclusion of women is noteworthy, particularly in contrast to the Government's Committee on Reconstruction which established a subcommittee on women only after the fact, and only after being lobbied by women to do so.¹¹

Although there was no question in Davis's mind about whether or not to include women in his list, he did stop and hesitate about how to record the names of female members in official publications. "Actually this afternoon I am preparing our Employment Report for publication, and find myself stuck on a nice point of etiquette," he wrote to Irene Baird, after she had agreed to serve as a commission member.

The names of the Commission members are to be listed on a special page, but I am not quite sure how you would like to have your name appear. The three or four other married women use their husbands' names, but for some reason or other we have you down as Mrs. Irene Baird. Perhaps consistency isn't important in a matter of this kind, but you should at least have the privilege of saying what your preference is.¹²

Irene Baird assured Davis that indeed she preferred to be called Mrs. "Irene" Baird, as did a commission member from Quebec, Mrs. "Paulette" Smith-Roy when she was asked the same question. In both cases, the women pointed out that their own first name instead of their husband's was the professional name to which they and others had grown accustomed.¹³ Davis's awkwardness on the "point of etiquette" is a reflection of the fact that women's participation in a public

commission like the CYC was still somewhat novel. It was not common for women to join together with men in discussions intended to shape public opinion and direct public policy.

In the end, seven women agreed to serve as commissioners, and each one brought professional prestige to the CYC by virtue of her work and her personal associations. The CYC was based on a networking system in which many of the members knew each other from previous associations in their public lives. In total, fifty-four commissioners were invited to participate in order to fulfil a variety of functions, but especially to bring prestige to the commission by virtue of their own professional reputations, and to use their personal influence in promoting the CYC in matters such as fund-raising and making contacts. They also helped to shape the commission's own policies and give direction to its research and recommendations by raising issues of concern which they felt worthy of merit. It was a group in which the seven female commissioners made their own significant contributions in all of the above areas.

Four of the female commissioners were professionals with independent reputations built on that career work, two from Ontario—Irene Baird and Alice Vibert Douglas—and two from Quebec—Paulette Smith-Roy and Renée Morin. Irene Baird worked for the National Film Board of Canada, travelled internationally, and later served the Canadian embassy in Mexico as a representative of the Film Board. She was also renowned as the author of *Waste Heritage*, an important work of fiction on unemployed youth in the Canadian West during the Depression.¹⁴ Dr. Alice Vibert Douglas, a professor of astronomy and the Dean of Women at Queen's University, had also served on the government's Advisory Committee on Reconstruction as a member of the Subcommittee on the Post-War Problems of Women.¹⁵ Students of the 1940s remember her involvement on the Board of the Student Christian Movement at Queen's. Paulette Smith-Roy was suggested to Davis by Father Georges Henri Levesque, who described her as "very clever and very cultivated...[one who] has experience in leadership and moreover...enjoys a great prestige in Quebec."¹⁶ She worked at Laval editing a magazine for the co-operative movement.¹⁷ Renée Morin met Dick Davis at the Couchiching Conference in the summer of 1943, and he was anxious to have her serve as a commissioner because, as he said, "she strikes me as a very alert and very enthusiastic woman with many contacts with youth in the province [of Quebec]."¹⁸ Morin was involved in adult education, and later published articles in the journal of the Canadian Association for Adult Education.¹⁹

The remaining three female commissioners were included because they were highly regarded for their involvement in volunteer work with community agencies and women's organizations. Mrs. W.H. (Clara Evelyn) Clark was involved with women's organizations including the YWCA and the Imperial Order of the Daughters of the Empire (IODE), and she was a vocal advocate of the adult education movement in Canada. Mrs. G.V. (Mary) Ferguson travelled extensively speaking to women's groups and was one of the founders of the Winnipeg Volunteer Bureau.²⁰ Mrs. Kaspar B. (Lois) Fraser was a highly respected

representative of several social agencies. Serving simultaneously on numerous boards, she later became President of the Canadian Welfare Council.²¹

These seven women on the commission, like the male members, were part of society's intellectual elite. Like the men, they were very busy people apart from their activities with the CYC; yet as commissioners, they served in a volunteer capacity in addition to their regular work. Therefore they merit inclusion in any discussion of women who "worked night and day" in the interests of the commission. The female members of the commission contributed in three important ways: they exerted personal influence to promote the interests of the commission; they brought intellectual acumen to the process of shaping commission policies; and they voiced positions on issues which they considered important to society generally, and to women specifically. In all of this, they demonstrated that although it was a non-traditional role, women could be very comfortable and competent operating in the public sphere.

Because of her personal influence with John Grierson, head of the National Film Board, Irene Baird was instrumental in providing Davis with strategies on how to urge the National Film Board to begin promoting the activities of the CYC. She was similarly helpful, because of her reputation as a popular author, in publishing news of the commission's work in *Saturday Night*.²² After reading one such article, a colleague of Davis's commented to him that "she is paying dividends already for her selection as a member [of the CYC]."²³ As a group with big goals and a small budget, the commission counted on these kinds of contacts in order to survive and promote itself. Clara Clark assisted the commission in the area of fund-raising although financial matters were typically an all-male sphere for the CYC. In one of the fund-raising drives, Davis counted on Clark's influence with the IODE to stand the commission in good stead for a substantial contribution from this women's group.²⁴ Community groups of all kinds were an important element in publicizing the work of the commission, and the influence of certain female commissioners was significant among national women's organizations. Mary Ferguson was a key person in introducing and interpreting the work of the CYC to a variety of groups, both at home and abroad. She wrote to Dick Davis from London, England, reporting,

Because of biographical data stating I was on [the] Youth Commission wherever I've gone (N. S. E. & West), I've been shown youth organizations' leisure time programs, training schemes, etc. etc. Today I discuss with the distinguished educators of Edinburgh the C.Y.C. and Canadian Education in general.²⁵

Clearly then, the women who belonged to the CYC played important public roles in promoting the commission.

In the same way, female members of the CYC were central to the process of shaping commission policies. Vibert Douglas's correspondence with Davis shows how seriously she took her work for the commission. Forced to miss the

initial meeting of the CYC because of a conflict in her schedule, she took time to compose a long list of ideas entitled "Notes on Youth Problems" which she forwarded to Davis.²⁶ The quality and depth of her commentary prompted Davis to have copies of her notes made and distributed for discussion at the meeting in Niagara Falls in May 1943.²⁷ Douglas continued to serve as an initiator of ideas as she later pressured Davis to lobby the Government with the concerns of youth, and reiterated her concern that youth should be trained for leadership and responsibility.²⁸

Mary Ferguson also helped Dick Davis to sharpen his position and clarify the policies governing the committee structure of the commission and its relationship to affiliated groups. In a long letter to Davis, she spelled out what she said was her own confusion about the relationship of local youth organizations to the national CYC organization. In reality, her letter presented to Davis a problem which was much bigger than her personal misunderstanding. She, in fact, had a very clear picture of the rivalry which existed between two levels of the organization in their race to raise funds. Her letter served to alert Davis to the problem, and he thanked her for her contribution, saying, "I always like the direct way you go at things and feel it is a pity you are not a little closer to headquarters so that we could have more opportunity to talk things over."²⁹ Davis was a person who respected his colleagues, and he recognized Mary Ferguson's contributions as high-calibre ones.

The women on the commission did not stop at contributing ideas about how to promote, finance, and structure the commission. They also influenced the content of the commission's deliberations. Full commission meetings were brainstorming sessions where the women raised issues which they felt important. Some of these were general issues affecting society at large, such as the paucity of opportunities for adult education, the consequences of youth unemployment, the most recent statistics on ages of delinquency, and the appalling conditions of life in rural Canada. Beyond making articulate comments on these general issues, the women on the commission clearly attempted to raise questions of specific interest to young women.³⁰ The examples which follow show that the female commissioners were concerned about traditional prescriptions of gender roles and the effect those prescriptions might have on the lives of young Canadian women after the war.

Perhaps the most urgent question facing women in this wartime context was the prospect of female unemployment following the return of veterans to industry at the war's end. In a discussion on post-war employment prospects, Mary Ferguson asked whether the commission was equally concerned about the opportunities available to women as well as to men. She made her case forcefully, saying that "our concern should be for both." Not surprisingly, she was outnumbered by a chorus of male voices arguing that economic stability required a certain social order, namely that "we think [that the] duty of earning the living rests on the man. If a girl marries the man supports her. Man first."³¹ The discussion was cut short, and the problem of single women as wage-earners was not raised,

let alone the fact that many married women would need to continue to work to support their families. The men no doubt felt victorious, having concluded that "full employment" meant the employment of men only, and that "artificial schemes" should not be allowed to muddy the waters. Ferguson had the last word (though undoubtedly some commissioners remained unconvinced) when she insisted, "You have to think of more than economic return."³²

This was not the last time that the issues of working women would surface, however, and the women of the commission kept the problems of young women on the agenda. Irene Baird served on the research subcommittee which studied employment issues, and she reminded the commission that many women would be demobilized from war industries, and that at least some returning military personnel were women.³³ The final report of this committee on which Baird was so active included a ten-page chapter devoted exclusively to the employment of young women. Concerned about young female workers, the report noted that women working in war plants and as temporary civil service workers would probably be dismissed at the end of the war, and pointed out that "in the majority of cases their earnings are too low to permit of savings and their benefits from unemployment insurance insufficient to maintain them adequately."³⁴ The report pointed a finger at teaching, banking, and the civil service as examples of professions which "discriminate against married women" and urged that "the post-war period would seem a good time to overcome the prejudices against married women working outside the home." This assertion was based on the idea that "freedom of choice to work outside the home should be the recognized right of every married woman, even if comparatively few avail themselves of it."³⁵

These were emotionally charged issues, and the women on the CYC felt the frustrations very deeply. On one occasion, Lois Fraser exploded at a meeting of the full commission during a discussion of education issues, asking, "Why should we force a good teacher out of her job just because she marries? If we get a good teacher we should keep her after marriage." This was still a controversial idea for Canadian society in the 1940s, but the final report of the education committee agreed with Fraser's argument, recommending that

public opinion must allow greater personal freedom in the private life of the teacher, instead of maintaining irrational taboos. Above all, the outmoded ban of married women teachers must be discarded.³⁶

During another discussion at a full meeting of the commission, Vibert Douglas called for a sharpened focus on the issue of "domestic servants," saying a more appropriate term would be "household worker." She pointed out that this type of employment was a particularly troublesome problem for young women since the conditions of work and the status of the workers lacked legal definition.³⁷ Ruth Pierson has argued that when wartime concerns about domestic service were raised (most notably in schemes such as "Home Aide" designed to increase the number of young women entering domestic service), they were based

on a selfish class interest, motivated by middle-class women's difficulties in finding suitable "help."³⁸ Pierson points out that domestic service was identified as "a suitable occupation for women" and implies that wartime initiatives to increase the number of women entering domestic service only served to reinforce the low status of women trapped in this female work ghetto.

But do the women on the CYC simply provide another example of middle-class self-interest in their discussion of women working in domestic service? The evidence suggests that while the women commissioners did not intend to revolutionize the gender composition of domestic service, they certainly did intend to increase the power of women who worked in that occupation. The kinds of issues which they raised on behalf of household workers show a certain gender solidarity, rather than class-based interests. Women critiquing the employment committee's deliberations clearly had the interests of the worker in mind when they attacked the notion that working conditions for household workers should "be determined by voluntary code rather than by legal provisions."³⁹ What was required instead, they argued, was legislation to ensure a minimum wage, overtime payments (including "two hours of time 'on call' to count as one of actual work" for live-in workers), and protection under "workmen's compensation and unemployment insurance benefits."⁴⁰ In these specific employment recommendations, the Canadian Youth Commission came to quite a radical position as they "even advocated unionization with the power of collective bargaining for domestic workers."⁴¹ Within this traditionally female occupation, women on the CYC argued that young women should be empowered to negotiate the terms of their work, and to expect working conditions which paralleled those found in other types of wage labour.

The fact that such concerns were recorded in the final reports of the commission is clearly due to the influence of female commissioners, but it is also due to the influence of female writers who collated and drafted the reports of each committee. Beyond those who held official membership as commissioners, some women worked in the less public role of writing for the commission. It was in this role that Margaret Davis, the director's wife, made such an important contribution to the CYC. She was one of several women who wrote for the commission, and their influence should not be underestimated. These writers had the unenviable task of collating immense amounts of material collected in a nation-wide Gallup Poll of youth as well as through other topical questionnaires, briefs submitted by youth groups, and personal interviews with young people. The commission received in total over 800 briefs dealing with at least seven topics including family, recreation, employment, religion, health, education, and citizenship issues. The committee structure of the CYC often meant that several people made contributions to each report and the job of the hired "writer" was to edit and provide coherence to the piece as a whole. Margaret Davis did a great deal of this editorial work and then passed the drafts on to others for criticism. In that context, one of her colleagues, Eleanor Ruth Long, who had agreed to read and critique a draft of the Youth and Family manuscript, remarked, "Recognizing

only too well the sad state in which it was willed to you, I think you have done an heroic piece of work on it."⁴²

In addition to the huge amounts of data to be incorporated, the writers were also faced with several revisions on each manuscript, as the fifty-four commission members tried to achieve unanimous approval for the content of each report. With a wide variety of political and religious viewpoints represented on the commission, this policy inevitably delayed the progress of each publication, and it complicated the work of the editors. Jean Morrison, who was paid \$400.00 for her editorial work on the Citizenship Report, expressed her frustration to the Director:

Dear Dick,

I understand the Citizenship Report is being circulated to all members of the Commission, so I gather it will be some time before comments are all in....

I have been wondering whether you can give me some idea when the next editing will have to be done on it. I have been invited to give some lectures at the School of Social Work during February, and I won't feel free to do this if the Report is likely to need rush attention during that month. If you can guess at the prospects, it would help me plan my time.⁴³

The policy of commission unanimity was eventually dropped because it made the task too unwieldy. But the case of Jean Morrison provides another example of a married woman who, like Margaret Davis, divided her time between mothering young children and accepting professional contracts writing, editing, and lecturing in the fields of adult education and social welfare.

A third woman who was engaged as a professional writer for the CYC was Blodwen Davies, who, as a well-known popular author, had written short popular history pieces for magazines such as *Chatelaine* in the late 1920s and 1930s. Davies was selected very deliberately over other candidates, not because she had a particular expertise in writing about social welfare themes, but because her reputation as an effective popular writer would boost the sales of the finished book. The CYC wanted to publish a summary volume, a précis of all their other books in one short, readable format which would appeal more to the general reader than to the expert. Although Davies was respected for her creative flair, Dick and Margaret Davis found it difficult to make her work to their exacting standards, because as Mr. Davis told his colleague,

Miss Davies writes very well and her manuscript is full of eloquent passages but she tends to ride a certain number of hobbies and has absolutely no idea of logic in presenting her material.... The decision was reached that Margaret should prepare an outline for each chapter, on the basis of which, Miss Davies will make another attempt.⁴⁴

In the end, Blodwen Davies moved to Ottawa for the duration of this writing assignment so that she could work more closely with Margaret Davis.⁴⁵

Although she was not one of the seven females with official membership status on the Youth Commission, Margaret Davis played an integral role in a variety of commission activities. She was particularly close to the work of the CYC because of her personal relationship with Dick Davis, but her involvement was clearly more than that of a woman taking a casual interest in her husband's work. Margaret Davis was a professional woman in her own right, bringing expertise in a variety of capacities including technical writing of reports, attendance and involvement in full meetings of the commission board members, and participation on a committee which researched and collated information on youth and family life. She even frequented meetings of the core Administrative Committee, the small decision-making group around Dick Davis which really directed CYC administrative matters. She was almost always present at those meetings, designated either as an "invited guest" or "committee representative."⁴⁶

The fact that Margaret Davis was so fully involved in the work of the youth commission is evidence that her marital partnership with Dick Davis was also accompanied by a professional compatibility. George Tuttle, who worked as the Associate Director of the CYC, remembers the Davises as a couple who shared a common zeal for life and a common social gospel motivation to improve their world. He described Margaret and Dick's working relationship as a lively ongoing exchange of ideas, an exchange which provided a forum for refining their approaches to their work because they were "two very forthright individuals who did not always agree on every point."⁴⁷

Before her marriage in 1941, Margaret Svendsen was well established in a promising career in psychiatric social work in Chicago. She met Dick Davis at a North American YMCA Conference where he was a member of the Canadian National Council staff and a conference delegate, and she was the conference speaker. After a courtship of some four years, Svendsen was persuaded in 1941 (at the age of 41) to leave the United States, her career, her mother, and her sister, to come to Canada as Davis's wife. Over the next couple of years, as Margaret was making the adjustment to Canada, to married life, and to motherhood, she did not leave professional social work completely behind. In the personnel list of a CYC publication in 1948, Margaret was listed as "Mrs. R.E.G. Davis, Case Consultant, Jewish Family and Child Service and Protestant Children's Homes, Toronto."⁴⁸ She had taken on a new identity as Davis's wife, but she remained eminently qualified, as a graduate of the Chicago School of Social Work, to perform paid labour as a social worker. In her part-time capacity as a case consultant, she travelled periodically between Montreal, Ottawa, and Toronto, working even while she had a pre-school son at home.⁴⁹ Already a middle-aged professional at the time of her marriage, Margaret Davis did not renounce her professional commitments to take on the traditional role of full-time mothering. Yet neither was she unaffected by her marital and professional alliance with Dick

Davis. In terms of public recognition for her work, she clearly lived the Canadian phase of her professional life in the shadow of her husband's roles.

It was in the midst of her busy life as social worker, wife, and mother that Margaret became involved in the CYC to the extent that she felt she should not accept other work until she had seen the work of the Youth Commission to an end. Her work on the reports of the CYC is an example of how she shared in her husband's career; as such it parallels the experiences of other women who played substantial supportive roles to their professional husbands. Judith Fingard has documented the case of women at Dalhousie University before 1950 and found that when certain male professors were indisposed, it was not uncommon for qualified wives to assume their husbands' duties quite competently, not to mention quite cheaply.⁵⁰ When Dick Davis accepted a new job in Ottawa with the Canadian Welfare Council in 1946 before the Youth Commission had finished, Margaret Davis was hired (and paid a very substantial wage) to finish the job of editing the reports and seeing them off to the publisher.⁵¹ Talking about his attempt to run both the Welfare Council and the Youth Commission, Dick Davis privately confessed his professional dependence on his wife, saying, "if it were not for my wife whom I have exploited unmercifully, I do not know how I would get along."⁵²

The nature of Dick's "exploitation" of Margaret is not clear from this one letter, which was probably intended as a humorous remark between friends. Yet undoubtedly this is a reference to the fact that the work of the Commission had extended much longer than either of the Davises had first anticipated. Initially, the whole project was to be completed in two years, but as that deadline passed in mid-1945 with most of the reports still unfinished, Dick Davis looked ahead to the future direction of his own career, and accepted the Welfare Council job in Ottawa, to begin in January 1946. Because Dick was so busy with his new job, Margaret was playing a key role by the summer of 1946 in seeing the work of the Youth Commission through to the end. She was doing this work while caring for their young son and managing the Davis household—they had moved from Toronto to Ottawa early in 1946, in the midst of a housing shortage.⁵³ It is not at all surprising, then, that she had refused the idea of other professional employment when the Children's Aid Society offer came in May 1946. With her work for the Commission, her husband's career move, and adjustment to a new city, Margaret Davis was not ready to take on anything more. Meanwhile, Dick Davis was very anxious to see the Youth Commission work completed, and recognizing that his wife was devoting herself to it at the expense of other career opportunities, he made his remark about "exploiting" her. Certainly when the reports were finally published, the credit for having completed the task was given to Dick Davis and he was regarded as the main driving force behind the project from beginning to end.⁵⁴

But a careful reading of the sources shows that Margaret Davis made a very significant contribution to the work, and in her writing she exercised a great deal of control over the content of some of the commission's reports. The best

example of a CYC report which reflects the work and influence of Mrs. Davis and other women on the commission is *Youth, Marriage and Family*. This book, the final report of the research subcommittee on family life, was dominated by women both in the process of its creation and in its content. Margaret Davis is acknowledged in the preface as the chief author, and she also served as an active member of this particular committee.⁵⁵

The family committee was the only one of the commission's seven research subcommittees chaired by a woman and the only subcommittee of the commission where women actually outnumbered men (six to five). According to the Commission's policy, Commissioner Lois Fraser (chair of the committee on the family) was free to select, from among her own colleagues, committee members who were considered experts in the field of the family. The six women on the family committee all had experience in the field of social work; they were women whose professional qualifications, not simply their gender, marked them as experts on family life.⁵⁶

There was division within the committee based on religious differences between Protestants and Catholics on issues of morality in family life—more specifically, on divorce and birth control. The introduction of the committee's final report, *Youth, Marriage and the Family*, discusses both concerns and points out that in light of the conservative opinions voiced by committee members who were Catholic, committee unanimity could not be reached on these topics. The decision to leave divorce and birth control issues unresolved was clearly an attempt to avoid alienating the French Canadians and Catholics on the commission and in the intended reading audience.⁵⁷ The female-dominated family committee as a whole was not, however, ready to be painted in conservative colours. Most of the family committee members were more in step with the kind of progressivism which the United Church of Canada demonstrated when it condoned divorce in releasing its 1946 report on "Christian Marriage and the Christian Home," based on discussions at the Twelfth General Council meeting in Montreal. Margaret Davis requested that the CYC obtain a copy of that report to assist her in her work with the committee.⁵⁸

But more surprising than the internal divisions within the committee itself was the fact that some women on the committee found that their ideas were far more liberal than those of Canadian youth. Youth opinion, at least that received by this committee in the form of briefs written by youth groups, promoted some very traditional ideas about gender roles and models of "ideal" (read: patriarchal) family life. Reporting to the CYC Administrative Committee, Fraser explained her committee's delay, citing the problem of

the mid-Victorian point of view expressed by a good many of the youth briefs that have come in to date. It will not be easy to reconcile these with the views of the committee on questions like the role of married women in modern life.⁵⁹

Convinced that the conservative elements were overrepresented in the written briefs from youth (which came mostly from church youth groups), the committee wondered whether

this may, in part be due to reluctance of the individual [youth] member to "give himself away" in the [youth] group by expressing too extreme views, or fear of disapproval for not accepting the teachings of the church or organization sponsoring the group. It should be noted that no labour union and none of the more radical groups submitted briefs on family life. Their interests apparently ran more to employment and other areas investigated by the Commission. The addition of their views might have altered considerably the picture presented in these pages [dealing with youth opinion].⁶⁰

Though it could not deny that these conservative ideas existed among youth, the committee was obviously disturbed by the number of briefs reflecting those views, and especially by the fact that those views were widely held among young women. The final report of the CYC's Family Committee bears the mark of the committee members' attempt to balance youth conservatism with their own more progressive thought. For example, the report *Youth, Marriage and the Family* includes "a group interview with married women employed outside the home," conducted with female union members working in war industries. The young women in this interview dismissed the idea that children suffer negative consequences because of the mother's work.⁶¹ The main challenge for married women who work, according to several interviewees, was having to perform both paid labour and unpaid domestic chores.

It's a problem trying to keep the house clean, do the washing and get the shopping done—gosh, there are days when I come home from work...and I just haven't got the energy to tidy it up.⁶²

Another young woman agreed that responsibility for household management was the main reason why women would voluntarily leave their work in industry at war's end.

Sure I'd like to keep on working [after the war] if I could get a housekeeper to look after the kids and make the meals. If you don't have to worry about running your home I don't see why you wouldn't want to hold down a job.⁶³

The group interview gave the testimony of young women working in non-traditional jobs as industrial workers and members of The United Electrical, Radio, and Machine Workers of America. The group agreed that because of their work experience they had "developed a real feeling of independence and militancy."⁶⁴

One of the interviewees added, "I won't be ashamed to march in parades and even to get up on a soap box if I have to....I'll be out on a job or fighting for one."⁶⁵

By including excerpts from this interview in the report, Margaret Davis as editor gave voice to ideas which she and other committee members personally accepted. It was an attempt to offset the conservative tone of the briefs they had received. Because women with progressive ideas dominated the family committee, this interview supporting their personal opinions about the family was included in the report. Indeed the fact that the interview was conducted in the first place must be traced to the efforts of certain women on the committee. Margaret Davis requested that the family committee cover the costs of hiring Miss Esther Kingsley during the summer of 1944, so that Kingsley could act as a research worker for the committee. The request was approved, and one of Kingsley's tasks was to conduct a series of interviews with women working in industry, to note the effects which they felt upon their family life.⁶⁶ Without the results of Kingsley's research work and the directive efforts of Margaret Davis and other women, the committee on Youth and Family would have reached different conclusions.

In a number of areas, then, the Youth Commission was affected by the participation of women. The seven women included in the membership list were fully integrated into commission activities, and their contributions in lending prestige, assisting promotion, and shaping policy are important illustrations of women playing prominent public roles during wartime. These individuals were prepared to continue their public participation at the end of the war, rather than exchange it for more traditional, less public roles.

But their concern with the role of women in the post-war era was not simply a personal one. When they discussed the future awaiting young women in Canada after the war, their ideas reveal an active effort to ensure that the concerns of women were on the agenda, and to change certain "outmoded ideas" about the role of women generally. Both in meetings of the whole commission, and on the subcommittees where they made such significant contributions, the women consistently reiterated their concerns. They argued in the case of married female teachers, for example, that it was time for public policy to recognize that married women needed and wanted to work, and policies which restricted their access to employment were both outdated and unfair. Concerning women who worked in a traditional female occupation (domestic servants), they argued that these workers had the right to negotiate the terms of their employment and to be protected by law like other paid labourers. Attitudes toward the family were changing, and the women on the family committee found themselves in conflict with traditional ideas about ideal family structure, especially where they perceived that structure to restrict the opportunities for women outside the family.

The fact that these ideas were raised and incorporated into the commission's final recommendations is due not only to the work of the seven female commissioners, but also to other women who played a less public part in the work. Margaret Davis is the most important example. As a writer for the CYC, she had

a major influence on the content of the reports. Though the official public records of the commission did not always acknowledge that role, a careful reading of the sources reveals that she was involved in virtually every level of commission work.

This involvement, and the lack of its recognition, must be understood in its context. Margaret Davis lived her married life in the shadow of her husband's career, and although it does not diminish the importance of her contributions, it certainly makes them more difficult to trace. Furthermore, it reveals a deep irony, in that she perceived herself as merely "a helper" to her husband, while she was in fact playing a leading role in shaping the commission reports and in calling for less traditional roles for women in their post-war experiences of family and employment. When Margaret Davis said she was "working day and night," there may have been some hyperbole intended about the time commitment she was making to the Youth Commission. But when she said she was simply "helping Dick" she understated the nature of her contribution and disguised the extent to which she and other women were actively directing the course of post-war planning in the work of the Canadian Youth Commission.

NOTES

- * I would like to thank Wendy Mitchinson, John English, Jamie Snell, and the *HSE/RHÉ* reviewers for their very useful comments on earlier drafts of this paper. This is a revised version of a paper I presented at the Tri-University History Conference in Waterloo in January, 1990. I received financial support from the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council during the time I worked on this article.
- 1. National Archives of Canada, Canadian Youth Commission Papers, MG 28 I, 11, volume 2, file 16h, Margaret Davis to Jessie Waters, Children's Aid Society, May 11, 1946. Hereafter references to this collection are cited as CYC.
- 2. The eleven volumes published by the Youth Commission are listed below. Except where indicated, the author was "Canadian Youth Commission" and the publisher, Ryerson Press, Toronto. *Youth and Health*, 1944; *The Years Ahead*, 1945 [joint publication with the YMCA]; *Youth and Jobs*, 1945; *Young Canada and Religion*, 1945; *Youth Challenges the Educators*, 1946; *Youth and Recreation*, 1946; *Youth Organizations in Canada*, 1946 [author: George Tuttle]; *Youth Figured Out* (published in Ottawa by the Canadian Youth Commission), 1947; *Youth Speaks Out on Citizenship*, 1948; *Youth, Marriage and the Family*, 1948; *Youth Speaks Its Mind*, 1948 [author: Blodwen Davies].
- 3. CYC, v. 20, f. 12, R.E.G. Davis to Mrs. Ryland New, May 17, 1945.
- 4. Murray Ross, *The YMCA in Canada: The Chronicle of a Century* (Toronto: Ryerson Press, 1951), 393-95.
- 5. Blodwen Davies, *Youth Speaks Its Mind* (Toronto: Ryerson Press, 1948), 9.
- 6. Alison Prentice, Paula Bourne, Gail Cuthbert Brandt, Beth Light, Wendy Mitchinson, and Naomi Black, *Canadian Women: A History* (Toronto: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1988), 13.

7. Ruth Roach Pierson, *"They're Still Women After All": The Second World War and Canadian Womanhood* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1986).
8. Prentice et al., *Canadian Women: A History*, 304.
9. Gail Cuthbert Brandt, "'Pigeon-Holed and Forgotten': The Work of the Subcommittee on the Post-War Problems of Women, 1943," *Histoire sociale/Social History* 15, 29 (mai-May 1982): 239-59.
10. CYC, v. 17, f. 4, R.E.G. Davis, "Considerations to guide in the selection of personnel for the Canadian Youth Commission," Nov. 1942.
11. Brandt, "Pigeon-Holed and Forgotten," 241-42.
12. CYC, v. 16, f. 4, R.E.G. Davis to Irene Baird, July 11, 1945.
13. CYC, v. 16, f. 4, Irene Baird to R.E.G. Davis, July 23 [1945]; and CYC, v. 16, f. 4, Paulette Smith-Roy to R.E.G. Davis, July 14, 1945.
14. Irene Baird, *Waste Heritage* (1939; reprinted Toronto: The Macmillan Company of Canada Ltd, 1974).
15. Brandt, "Pigeon-Holed and Forgotten," 244.
16. CYC, v. 25, f. 7e, Father George-Henri Levesque to R.E.G. Davis, Nov. 27, 1943.
17. CYC, v. 18, f. 10, Paulette Smith-Roy to R.E.G. Davis, July 14, 1945.
18. CYC, v. 25, f. 7e, R.E.G. Davis to Senator Leon-Mercier Gouin, Aug. 27, 1943.
19. "'Preparons l'avenir' Parallels Citizens' Forum," *Food for Thought* 6, 9 (May-June 1946): 25-27; and "Mexican Adults Crave Education," *Food for Thought* 8, 1 (Oct. 1947): 5-7.
20. Thelma Le Cocq, "Woman at Work: Mrs. G.V. Ferguson," *Chatelaine* 13, 5 (May 1940): 47.
21. Margaret Davis, interview with author, Aug. 4, 1989.
22. CYC, v. 16, f. 4, Irene Baird to R.E.G. Davis, "Sunday," n.d.; and R.E.G. Davis to Irene Baird, Oct. 15, 1944, June 23, 1943, and July 3, 1943.
23. CYC, v. 5, f. 39, George Davidson to R.E.G. Davis, Aug. 7, 1943.
24. CYC, v. 18, f. 11, R.E.G. Davis to Mrs. Ryland New, IODE, May 17, 1945.
25. CYC, v. 16, f. 4, Mary Ferguson to R.E.G. Davis, Feb. 27, 1945.
26. CYC, v. 16, f. 4, A. Vibert Douglas to R.E.G. Davis, May 14, 1943.
27. CYC, v. 16, f. 4, R.E.G. Davis to A. Vibert Douglas, May 25, 1943.
28. CYC, v. 16, f. 4, A. Vibert Douglas to R.E.G. Davis, Feb. 24, 1944 and Jan. 10, 1944.
29. CYC, v. 16, f. 4, R.E.G. Davis to Mrs. G.V. Ferguson, Dec. 7, 1944.
30. CYC, v. 55, f. 24, Clark on adult education, Minutes of CYC at University of Toronto, June 23-25, 1945, 10; Baird on youth unemployment, Minutes of CYC at Niagara Falls, May 30, 1943, 20; Margaret Davis on delinquency, Minutes of CYC at Niagara Falls, May 29, 1943, 2; Douglas on rural conditions, Minutes of CYC at University of Toronto, June 23-25, 1945, 13. Issues of gender surfaced even during the discussion of these general issues, as Margaret Davis pointed out the differences between the sexes in juvenile delinquency statistics. Vibert Douglas was involved in critiquing a report on rural youth which focused on male inheritance of family farms, and female migration from the farm due to lack of economic opportunity and low standard of living.
31. CYC, v. 55, f. 24, [Mr.] Bussiere, Minutes of the CYC at Niagara Falls, May 31, 1943, 6.
32. *Ibid.* The remarks of Keenleyside, Norris and Bussiere are all recorded in response to the points which Ferguson raised.
33. CYC, v. 55, f. 24, Minutes of CYC at Niagara Falls, May 31, 1943, 29.
34. *Youth and Jobs*, 179.

35. Ibid., 181.
36. Canadian Youth Commission, *Youth Challenges the Educators* (Toronto: Ryerson Press, 1946), 126.
37. CYC, v. 55, f. 3, Minutes of CYC at Montreal, Feb. 18, 1944, 7.
38. Ruth Pierson, "'Home Aide': A Solution to Women's Unemployment After World War II," *Atlantis* 2, 2, Pt.2 (Spring 1977): 85-86. Pierson cites the example of Lester and Maryon Pearson and their difficulty in finding a maid, as typical of "large, well-to-do households."
39. CYC, v. 55, f. 3, Minutes of the CYC at Montreal, Feb. 19-20, 1944, 7. This opinion, expressed by Harold C. Hudson (the Supervisor of Special Placement Operations for the Unemployment Insurance Commission [of Canada]), who was a guest at the commission meeting, was quickly dismissed by Irene Baird and Mary Ferguson.
40. *Youth and Jobs*, 185. For the complete set of ideas see "Some Special Problems of Household Workers," 181-86; also for specific recommendations on household workers, 209-10.
41. Pierson acknowledged the CYC's recommendations as more radical than most on this point: "Home Aide," 90.
42. CYC, v. 18, f. 11, Eleanor Ruth Long to Mrs. R.E.G. Davis, Nov. 29, 1946.
43. CYC, v. 18, f. 10, Jean Morrison to R.E.G. Davis, Jan. 16, 1947. Jean Morrison's husband, Neil Morrison, was a member of the Commission and employed as Programme Director for the CBC. Jean was actively involved in the Canadian Association for Adult Education in the 1940s, to the extent that she became Acting Director during 1944 in the absence of E.A. Corbett. CYC, v. 1, f. 7, R.E.G. Davis to Mrs. Jean Hunter Morrison, June 16, 1944.
44. CYC, v. 4, f. 27, R.E.G. Davis to Dr. Sidney Smith, Jan. 27, 1947.
45. CYC, v. 7, f. 61, R.E.G. Davis to Jack Pavey, Jan. 4, 1947: "Miss Davies, by the way, has now taken up temporary residence in Ottawa where she and my wife are struggling away on the final report"; and CYC, v. 29, f. 1, Sidney E. Smith to R.E.G. Davis, Jan. 29, 1947: "I am delighted to know that your good wife is helping you in steering Miss Davies."
46. See for example, CYC, v. 55, f. 3, and f. 24, Minutes from the meetings of the Administrative Committee of the Canadian Youth Commission, Oct. 14, 1944; Mar. 10, 1945; and Dec. 15, 1945.
47. George Tuttle, interview with author, Waterloo, Oct. 12, 1989.
48. Canadian Youth Commission, *Youth, Marriage and the Family* (Toronto: Ryerson Press, 1948), iii-iv.
49. Margaret Davis, interview with author, Ottawa, Aug. 4, 1989.
50. Judith Fingard, "Gender and Inequality at Dalhousie: Faculty Women Before 1950," *Dalhousie Review* 64 (Winter 1984/85): 690-91.
51. CYC, v. 29, f. 7, "Income and Comparison of Budget with Expenditures to Oct. 31, 1947." Margaret Davis was paid \$5,150 from CYC funds, as shown in a budget statement where this amount appears under the category "Associate Director—Messrs. [sic] Tuttle & Hugg, \$7277.78, Mrs. R.E.G. Davis, \$5150.00." This was a very substantial amount of money, given that Dick Davis's salary was \$9,000 for two years of work for the commission.
52. CYC, v. 16, f. 4, R.E.G. Davis to Dr. G.F. McNally, July 5, 1946.
53. Margaret Davis interview, Aug. 4, 1989.
54. See for example, Doris French, "Canadian Youth Has Its Opinions Measured," *Saturday Night* 62 (May 17, 1947): 12-13, where Davis is described as the "able