

liberal societies: thoughts about how professional agendas and “needs assessments” can work to undermine the goals of citizen participation, about how commitment “to what Habermas calls ‘the fiction of the *one* public’” (p. 164) can lead predictably to ignoring the needs of socially disadvantaged groups, and about the dangers inherent in the adoption of market models of provision. All of these raise questions that are timely today, in the context of current social policy debates in Canada: around health care and education, around welfare, and around the “needs” of cities. Tillotson’s careful blend of readable social history and trenchant political analysis can offer food for thought for anyone professionally concerned with the future of the public services.

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**Nancy Christie. *Engendering the State: Family, Work, and Welfare in Canada*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2000. Pp. 459.**

Nancy Christie explores the rise of the welfare state in Canada between the start of twentieth century and the end of the Second World War. The book offers a cultural analysis, focusing on the discourse and ideological debates surrounding welfare legislation. Christie argues that welfare legislation was a response to concerns about family stability, and, most importantly, represented efforts by the government to enforce, encourage, and maintain the breadwinner ideal. While key social events (notably economic cycles and war) highlighted slightly different concerns and motivated different types of welfare legislation, policies enacted always aimed at regulating families. Throughout the book, Christie documents social debate about the family, gender, work and economic stability, and the

role of the state, and illustrates how such debate resulted in specific government policy.

Christie's book is very dense and well researched. She recounts in great detail the key groups and individuals contributing to the social discourse on the state, welfare, and the family, identifies their underlying principles and ideologies, and considers which groups or individuals seem to be most influential in shaping government policy. Her sources are wide-ranging, and include various official reports, religious discourse, media reports, materials from various welfare and charity agencies, women's groups, and labour groups. The sweeping scope of her research enables Christie to identify some fascinating connections between the concerns of groups with ostensibly very different interests. Thus, we learn that during the 1920s labour groups supported social assistance for widows and other female heads of households because they were concerned with keeping women out of the labour force in order to protect male wages; women's groups, by contrast, were concerned with protecting mothers and children from poverty, and yet ensuring that many should have to work, at least part time, to help solve the domestic labour shortage. These ideals combined with views holding that children needed to be raised to middle-class values such as a "hard day's work" (and the claim that these could be instilled through granting only limited assistance to widowed mothers so that they and their children would have to work outside the home) and concerns for national economic efficiency. The confluence of all of these interests encouraged the state to implement a system of mothers' allowances. The intersection of various gender, class, and religious beliefs within social debate and social policy is well brought out in Christie's analysis.

Christie also documents a shift in the type of welfare legislation pursued over the period, and a corresponding ideological shift. Christie argues that the welfare legislation of the 1920s, mothers' allowances for impoverished widows, was "maternalist" in that it was aimed at mothers and was based on the principle that women's work as mothers was socially valuable and integral to the family. During the 1930s and into

the 1940s, however, there was a shift away from the “maternalist” state towards a more economy-oriented state more explicitly concerned with national efficiency, the male breadwinner, and male citizenship. This shift was brought about by the Depression and the crisis of the male breadwinner (and the crisis of masculinity) that ensued. It had the effect of marginalizing the place of women in social policy and reaffirming their marginalization in the economy, the family, and society more generally.

This book is quite valuable because it touches on a topic that previously had not received a great deal of attention and because it does so in well-researched, exhaustive detail. In highlighting the centrality of gender and social debate to the rise of the welfare state, and by illustrating the extent to which social policy was generated by concerns over the family, Christie makes a real contribution to the field. Despite these strengths, I do have a number of criticisms of the work that stem less from the research presented than with the analysis of that research.

First, and perhaps least important, Christie argues that “the evolution of the Canadian state reflected gender rather than class imperatives” (p. 4). This privileging of gender over class is unnecessary and ultimately unconvincing. As her analysis shows, much of this legislation was aimed at ensuring that working-class men embraced the role of breadwinner, and protected their claim to that role. Social debate focused on skilled working-class men and impoverished families as social problems that required regulation. Class was thus central to this legislation, although it was fundamentally tied to gender concerns. Christie’s discussion actually illustrates the intersection of class and gender, and her analysis would have been improved if she acknowledged and explored this intersection more completely.

Second, Christie has set out to do a cultural analysis and, in general, this is a strength of her book; however, she devotes too little attention to other, more material factors. As noted, Christie explores the social debates that frame social legislation, but whether these debates actually motivated the government to pass legislation is not always clear. Did the groups mentioned really

influence policy-makers? Were not other, non-ideological factors also influential? For instance, Christie suggests that the passing of legislation in favour of mother's allowances, and the fact that this legislation was intended only to meet the needs of impoverished widows and not other female heads of households, was directly linked to the ideological views of gender, the family, and work held by women's groups and policy makers. The legislation passed, however, was the cheapest of all types being proposed, and one wonders whether it was cost more than ideological conceptions of the family that encouraged governments to choose this policy over others. Throughout her discussion, Christie pays insufficient attention to both the cost of the various policies proposed and government motivations outside of ideology, like cost and political goals. For instance, did the fact that women in most provinces had the vote by the 1920s influence governments' new desire to legislate for women? Christie's argument about the centrality of ideological debates over the family to welfare legislation would have been strengthened by a consideration of these other factors and the interplay between cultural and material concerns. At times, the reader wonders whether ideology shaped government decision-making or whether other factors were in fact more influential.

Third, while I accept Christie's general argument about the shift in government policy towards issues of male employment, her characterization of the state of the 1920s as "maternalist" seems a bit over-stated. Christie suggests that mothers' allowances were intended to provide limited funding to impoverished widows in order to encourage the ideal of the male breadwinner and a good work ethic. While in practice and in certain provinces other female household heads received some allowances as well, the fact that the policy was so limited, and that Christie documents many needy women who were not funded for one reason or another, hardly seems a ringing endorsement of women or motherhood. The state always seemed quite preoccupied with men, even when it was providing limited funding to some women, and this concern with men and their employment merely grew, spurred on by the crises of the Depression and the Second World War. The use of the word

“maternalist” to describe the state seems to exaggerate the extent of this shift. Moreover, her conclusion that the welfare state that emerged at the end of this period “eradicated the ideology of separate spheres according to which female and male functions were complementary” (p. 312) seems entirely unsupported.

Despite my disagreements with Christie in the interpretation of some of her material, the strength and breadth of the material presented ensures that this book makes a valuable contribution to our knowledge on the rise of the welfare state, gender, family, and work.

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**B. J. Rennie. *The Rise of Agrarian Democracy: The United Farmers and Farm Women of Alberta, 1909-1921*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2000. Pp. 282.**

*The Rise of Agrarian Democracy* is the story of how Alberta farmers built a movement that elected the longest lived experiment in farm populist government in North America—the United Farmers of Alberta (UFA) from 1921 to 1935.

B.J. Rennie’s aim is to tell and analyze how this mass mobilisation arose through the development of “a movement culture” in three steps: first, the formation of a movement between 1879 and 1909; second, its initial steps as the UFA between 1909 and 1913 and then its deepening and expansion as a result of World War One; and third, a turn to political action with a decision to enter politics in 1919 in the provincial and federal elections of 1921.

To explain this evolution, the author uses the movement culture methods of Marxist labour historians like Bryan Palmer. In the case of Alberta farmers this leads Rennie to examine a dozen elements, such as gender, religion, co-operation, education, the agrarian myth, and social ethics. The author