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Politics on the Boundaries: Restructuring And The Canadian Women's Movement

For my Father - Glenn Campbell Brodie

Restructuring: The Falling Apart

Canada, similar to all western democracies, is currently experiencing a profound shift in state form and governing practices. It is now widely recognized, both by the friends and foes of the Keynesian Welfare State (KWS), that its formative pillars have not survived the combined forces of prolonged economic crisis, the so-called "globalization" of production and neo-liberal governing practices. The broad consensus, which grounded the KWS and structured the post-war pattern of politics, has given way to a very different set of assumptions about the role of government and the rights of citizens.

The early 1990s have been a period of fundamental change, which is far more encompassing and transformative than perhaps many of us have yet to fully appreciate. Contrary to the rhetoric of Bay Street analysts or the assurances of neo-liberal politicians, restructuring has not been limited to the market or to the imperatives of new international trading arrangements. Instead, we are embedded in a process of renegotiating foundational political conventions and cultural forms – among them, our shared common sense understandings of the appropriate boundaries between the international and the national, the state and the economy, and the so-called "public" and "private." I argue in this lecture that the decline of the KWS and the radical redrawing of the boundaries among the public sphere, the market, and the home are eroding the very political identities and public spaces that empowered the second wave of Canadian feminism and distinguished it from its turn-of-the-century counterpart.

Keynesianism has incrementally, but surely, given way to a new governing orthodoxy which suggests that changing international realities put roughly the same demands on all governments: to maximize exports, reduce social spending, curtail state economic regulation, and empower capital to reorganize national economies as parts of transnational trading blocs (Friedman, 1991:35). These new tenets of governance have guided pronounced shifts in public policy priorities, regulatory regimes, and institutional forms. Governments are abandoning as futile the goals of full employment and an inclusive social safety net in order to achieve the elusive and abstract states of flexibility, efficiency, and competitiveness. As Robert Cox has argued, governments have shifted their activities away from their post-war role of promoting domestic welfare and protecting national economies from disruptive and predatory international forces. Instead, they are now actively engaged in redesigning national environments to correspond to the perceived requisites of globalization (Cox, 1991: 337). As the 1993 federal election vividly demonstrated, the post-war pattern of politics has been pushed aside, revealing in stark relief the uncertain and contested political space we are now occupying.

Canada is not alone in this experience of disruption and ambiguity. During the last decade, most western liberal democracies have been forced to re-examine many of their governing assumptions and practices, moving from what the regulation theorists have termed a familiar "Fordist" past to an unknown "Post-Fordist" future. According to these theorists, after World War Two the economies and politics of western liberal democracies were organized around a "Fordist mode of regulation." By this they mean that there was widespread consensus that national governments should take an active role in managing national economies through Keynesian demand management techniques; the labour process was organized around the assembly-line and mass production, and redistribution was accomplished through social welfare programs and collective bargaining (Lipietz, 1987).

The post-war years brought new shared understandings about state intervention in the economy, an elaboration of bureaucratic institutions and governing instruments and an expansion of the meaning of citizenship itself. The Keynesian state asserted the primacy

of the public over the "invisible hand" of the market and engendered expectations that the state was responsible for meeting the basic social needs of its citizens.

Fordism was a whole package of relations, institutions, and arrangements which linked a logic of economic development during a particular historical period (the regime of accumulation) with an equally particular and complementary set of norms, habits, laws, regulations, and representations of reality (the mode of regulation) (Harvey, 1989: 121-123). Its passing, then, represents much more than a series of strategic responses to a changing international political economy. It signals a paradigm shift in governing practices - an historic alteration in state form which enacts simultaneous changes in cultural assumptions, political identities and the very terrain of political struggle. Restructuring represents a prolonged and conflict-ridden political process through which old assumptions and shared understandings are questioned and eventually rejected while social forces struggle to achieve a new consensus. It is a simultaneous "combination of falling apart and building up again," conveying as Soja explains, "the notion of a 'brake,' if not a break, in secular trends, and a shift toward a significantly different order and configuration of social, economic, and political life" (Soja, 1989: 159).

Restructuring Discourse: The Building Up Again

The current process of restructuring in Canada has been guided by what I term "restructuring discourse." It has been championed by different political forums since it was first heard in the early 1980s, but the Macdonald Commission (The Royal Commission on the Economic Union and Development Prospects for Canada) which reported in 1985, was instrumental in telegraphing the key components of the emerging new order. It successfully advanced the position that free trade with the United States was the only viable economic development strategy left to Canada. Canadians were told to close their eyes and take "a leap of faith" because the globalization train had already left the station. Moreover, it advised all governments, federal and provincial, to adopt a market-oriented industrial policy, to facilitate adjustment, and to create new opportunities for private sector growth (Brodie, 1990: 218-223).

This neo-liberal worldview came to dominate the Mulroney government's front benches, especially after its re-election in 1988 and the implementation of the Canada-U.S. Free Trade Agreement (FTA) in 1989. Throughout the late 1980s, the federal government had used mounting federal deficits as a rationale for eroding on the welfare state. By the early 1990s, however, budget cutting was more directly linked to making Canada more competitive" primarily by forfeiting the economic terrain to the private sector (Abele, 1992: 1). In its 1992 Budget Speech, for example, the federal government announced that its primary legislative priority was to promote greater "reliance on the private sector and market forces." Ranked below this were the related goals of deficit reduction, inflation control, free trade, and developing a new consensus about the role of government. For the federal Conservatives, a restructured government would only provide public services that were "affordable" and didn't interfere with Canadian "competitiveness" (McQuaig, 1992).

Historians may very well judge the Mulroney government as one of the most radical and overtly ideological in Canadian history. It certainly had a stormy relationship with the Canadian electorate. After granting it two impressive majorities in 1984 and 1988, Canadian voters roundly rejected the federal Conservative Party in 1993. They struck a deathblow to the Conservatives for betraying their trust, eroding their social safety net and forcing family members into the ranks of the unemployed - all in the name of "efficiency" and "competitiveness." But the neo-liberals had achieved their mission, nonetheless. The electorate gave a landslide victory to the federal Liberal Party, which promised little more than to be a more compassionate manager of the economic transition.

Since the election, the new government has charted the same course with very similar governing instruments. It ratified the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), prioritized the deficit over employment and infrastructure development, and continued to erode the social welfare system that had been built-up piecemeal in the post-war years. The new Minister of Finance, Paul Martin, may have worn work boots instead of Bay Street brogues to deliver his first budget on 22 February 1994. This change in customary footwear, however, did not signal that the federal Liberal Party was preparing to roll up its collective sleeves and repair Canada's fraying social safety net. Instead, Martin told Parliament that, "For years, governments have been promising more than they can deliver, and delivering more than they can afford. That has to end. We are ending it" (*Toronto Star*, 23 February 1994: A1). The Keynesian state, in other words, is no more.

Shrinking the Public: Expanding the Private

Martin's budget speech was a typical example of restructuring discourse. It seeks to renegotiate and recode the public and private by radically shrinking the realm of political negotiation and expanding the autonomy of the market and the family. The central metaphor underlying this new cultural understanding is that of the survival-of-the-fittest: globalization takes no prisoners. There is simply no escaping "adjustment" which is a code word for reducing fiscal and regulatory burdens on industry and lowering expectations about the role of the state in terms of either protecting domestic industries from global pressures or providing a comprehensive social welfare system. In effect, this discourse attempts to decentre and displace the KWS with "hyper-liberal" impositional claims about self-regulating and competitive market forces and about the primacy of the market in generating a new social order (Cox, 1992:342; Drache and Gertler, 1992: 7). In the process, it elevates economics over political claims; accounting's bottom line takes precedence over Canada's unemployment line.

a) International Trading Agreements

While restructuring discourse seeks to depoliticize the economic by representing market-driven adjustment as self-regulating and inevitable, the shrinkage of the public and political spaces of the KWS has been achieved through a combination of mechanisms, perhaps most irreversibly through international trading agreements. These agreements are completely saturated with neo-liberal assumptions and solutions, which effectively erode

national sovereignty, and the state's capacity to implement politically negotiated solutions. As Stephen Gill has recently argued, changes in the regulation of international capitalism through the GATT and regional treaties such as the FTA, NAFTA, and the Single European Act effectively represent a new constitutionalism which defines and guarantees new rights to transnational capital (Gill, 1992). This process of creating new rights for capital and of imposing very real limits on the power of national governments represents a paradigm shift as significant for the constitution of new political and cultural forms as were the early laissez-faire state's guarantees of the rights of contract and property (Panitch, 1993: 12).

The Canada-U.S. Free Trade Agreement (FTA) specifically limits the terrain of the political by prohibiting governments from either favouring domestic producers or subsidizing national industry. The North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) goes even further by effectively capping the domain of the state. A profoundly anti-public service document, NAFTA refers to the public sector as "non-conforming" measures, limits the use of public corporations, and requires that those remaining must operate according to proper commercial operations and considerations (Cohen, 1993b). Moreover, it stipulates that all levels of government must declare those things, which exclusively rest with the public sector within two years after the implementation of the agreement. Those services not named will be deemed "tradeable" or opened to private sector (multinational) competition and provision. Meanwhile, explicit exclusions such as health care will be reviewed in 1998, the same year that federal funds for medicare are to be phased out in several provinces (Woman to Woman, 1993). NAFTA, in other words, attempts to draw a new boundary between the public and private by reducing the public sector and pre-empting any new growth. Implicit in these restrictions is the clear message that we have reached, indeed overstepped, the appropriate boundary between the public and the private and that the new world order demands retreat and attrition.

b) Reprivatization

In addition to international trading agreements, which effectively legislate a new balance between the public and private, restructuring discourse also prescribes the reconstitution of the private in both its market and domestic forms. This reprivatization has been enforced through two other "re's" - the "re-commodification" of claims and the "re-constitution" of domestic enclaves. Recommodification rests on the unverifiable assertion that services and assets once deemed to be public are better delivered and maintained through market mechanisms. In the process, they are removed from the realm of political negotiation and subjected to market-oriented rather than political evaluative criteria (Yeatman, 1990: 173). In the words of public choice theory, these services and assets are transformed from public to private goods.

The reconstitution of the domestic rests on impositional claims about the role and value of the family as a fundamental building block in society. The valorization of the family is particularly stark in neo-conservative rhetoric, which blames both the welfare state and feminism for the breakdown of the family and of the social fabric, more generally. On a broader level, there is a growing consensus that families should look after

their own and state policies should make sure that they do (Abbott and Wallace, 1992: 2). Feminists sometimes unintentionally participate in this process of shifting collective responsibility onto individuals in the domestic sphere. Provincial governments, for example, have been quick to appropriate feminist demands to hold "deadbeat dads" accountable through increasingly strict enforcement of child support payments. The message here is that the primary responsibility for the well being of children is biological and heteropatriarchal. More often, however, the reconstitution of the domestic is accomplished by fiat rather than regulation. Privatization and the erosion of the welfare state often simply mean that health care, child care and elder care are forced back onto traditional family forms, and the unpaid work of women.

Reprivatization, however, involves much more than simply removing things from the public basket and placing them on the market or in the domestic sphere. The things moved are themselves transformed into something different - a lesson we ignore only at great peril. As things are shifted from the public to the private they become differently encoded, constructed, and regulated. Citizens with a right to health care or just plain sick people, for example, become consumers of alternative medical delivery systems. Meanwhile, health care providers and treatments are evaluated in terms of cost-effectiveness, efficiency, and marketability. Similarly, the realm of family responsibility is magnified but, at the same time, family relations become subject to increasing surveillance ("decentralized social guidance strategies"). Governments become central to "regulated self-regulation" in the form of anti-smoking campaigns, generous tax incentives for retirement savings, cash payments for mothers who breast-feed (a recent Quebec initiative) or new representations of family relations through concepts such as child, wife, or elder abuse (Jessop, 1993: 10). Whether through market-oriented discourse or some other disciplinary practice, the underside of reprivatization is reregulation.

c) A Hollowing Out" the Welfare State

The reconstitution of the private has been accompanied by a progressive "hollowing out" of the KWS and, in particular, universal social welfare programs (Jessop, 1993). The object of the neo-liberals attack, however, is less the actual size of the KWS than its underlying ideals (Yeatman, 1990). During the past decade, "hardly a single federal government social program has not been reduced or altered" (National Forum on Family Security, 1993: 8). Governments, however, have been less than forthcoming with the electorate in their relentless attempts to dismantle the KWS. The Mulroney government, for example, promised that it would guard Canada's social welfare system as "a sacred trust" but, then, fundamentally altered and diminished it through sustained budget cuts.

Critics now refer to this process of dismantling the welfare state through budget cuts as "the politics of stealth" or "social policy by stealth" (Cohen, 1993a: 267). This politics, which was perfected by the Mulroney government and subsequently adopted by the federal Liberals and most provincial governments, enables governments to enact significant changes in social policy incrementally and largely without much public awareness or participation by means of complex changes in regulations and repeated funding cuts. The federal Conservatives used the politics of stealth to put an end to the

principle of universality by "clawing back" Old Age Security and Family Allowance benefits. They also wrote new limitations and exclusions into the Unemployment Insurance legislation, a practice repeated by the federal Liberals in their 1994 budget. Most significantly, however, the Mulroney government unilaterally rewrote the terms of the federal government's funding of provincial welfare programs, health care, and post-secondary education - again a practice that the new Liberal government continued. This strategy effectively off-loads the debt crisis onto the provinces which, faced with increasing need and decreasing resources, have been forced to exact even deeper cuts in social assistance.

d) Redefining Citizenship

The current era of restructuring involves a complex displacement of the state power and the political terrain once occupied by the welfare state. While the emerging state form maintains all the trappings of sovereignty and executive authority, it, nonetheless, rests on impositional claims, which valorize the private over the public (Jessop, 1993: 22). In the process, it nurtures new-shared understandings of what it means to be a citizen. Although varying considerably among themselves, post-war welfare states rested on a broad but fragile consensus about the rights of citizenship. The Keynesian notion of social citizenship conveyed the idea that poverty was not always an individual's fault and that all citizens had the right to a basic standard of living. The general consensus underlying the creation and maintenance of the KWS was that Canadians did not have to repeat the harsh lessons in public administration dealt out by Depression. The public could enforce limits on the market, people were not forced to engage in market activities that denied them their dignity, and the national community was responsible for the basic well being of individual citizens.

These are the ideals, which are currently contested by the new vision of citizenship. As the Canadian experience demonstrates, there has been a decided shift away from the idea of universal publicly provided services. What goes unstated is that, when governments cut a benefit or a service, those disentitled are required to make appropriate private provision or to go without (Yeatman, 1990: 122, 131). The rights and securities guaranteed to all citizens of the KWS are no longer rights, universal or secure. The new ideal of the common good rests on market-oriented values such as self-reliance, efficiency and competition. The new good citizen is one who recognizes the limits and liabilities of state provision and embraces her obligation to work longer and harder in order to become more self-reliant (Drache, 1992: 221). The disappearance of universal social programs and the erosion of the social safety net obviously gives less substance to the Fordist construction of citizenship. More than this, however, it has reintroduced into political discourse concepts such as the "deserving and undeserving" poor and "genuine" versus "non-genuine" poverty (Yeatman, 1990: 122). The Mulroney government, for example, established a parliamentary committee, which the opposition parties boycotted, to redefine poverty. More important, the Chretien government has announced a total redrawing of Canada's social welfare system by 1996 - an undertaking that Finance Minister Martin has called "the most comprehensive reform of government policy in decades" (Canada, 1994). At the same time, cash-strapped provincial governments

desperately seek new ways to reduce expenditures by "reforming" social welfare policy. The forthcoming reforms in Canada's post-war social welfare regime as well as those in fiscal federalism represent nothing less than a 'constitu-(tive)-tional' change in cultural understandings.

The fine print of this new order has yet to be written, but many of its contours are already discernible. The first foundational shift is from what the newspeak terms a "passive" to an "active" welfare model. It is difficult to ignore the obvious valorization of the new order encoded in these terms. It signals a change in the philosophy of welfare provision away from the protection of people who are either temporarily or permanently displaced by the wage economy to a new regime where retraining or participation in the job market is a condition for social assistance. The idea here is that all able-bodied people, and youth in particular, are effectively "undeserving" of social assistance if they either do not endeavour to retrain to better compete in the job market or take some form of work to "top-up" their social assistance incomes, and thus, reduce the burden they impose on the state. In New Brunswick, for example, an experimental program now ties social assistance to retraining while, in both British Columbia and Newfoundland, welfare recipients are given bonuses to take low-paying jobs. In the meantime, the new Liberal government has announced its preference for workfare and social assistance plans which act as a "launching pad into the job market" (Lloyd Axworthy: *Globe and Mail*, 17 December 1993: A1).

The new federal government has also indicated that it will keep its campaign promise of creating a job corps for Canada's unemployed youth. The idea that youth are particularly "undeserving" of social assistance has been increasingly advanced by conservatives such as Judith Maxwell, former head of the Economic Council of Canada. She has suggested that "no Canadian under 25 should be eligible for unemployment insurance" because "it would be a tragedy to let these young people be scarred by long spells of unemployment" (York, 1993: A1, A4). What she and others of this school assume, but do not articulate, is that unemployed youth remain the responsibility of the family until they themselves amass credits in the social welfare system.

More broadly, the new thinking about social welfare signals a number of important cultural transformations. First, the social welfare system is being redesigned to make it more restrictive, especially for those deemed to be "employable" and to force them back into the job market even if the only jobs available are non-standard" - i.e., insecure, part-time and poorly paid (Yeatman, 1990: 130). It is no coincidence that these are precisely the kinds of jobs, which are being created, in Canada's restructured economy. Second, "active" social welfare programs serve to rediscipline the work force both by making the poor dependent on some form of employment to supplement their social assistance and by constructing an image of the "undeserving" poor as those who do not participate in some way in the job market. Third, all of these factors serve to negate systemic thinking about poverty and unemployment. We are encouraged to think of poverty in terms of undeserving or wrongly skilled individuals instead of Canada's "restructured" political economy and its seeming incapacity to provide employment for an unacceptably high and

ever growing number of Canadians. The gaze of policy makers is directed away from structural factors (which go unchallenged) to the micro-individual self-help solutions.

Gender, The State and Restructuring

The boundary shifting between the public and private, reprivatization discourse, the commodification of the public, the reconstitution of the domestic, the delegitimization of social citizenship claims, and the individualization of unemployment and poverty are all symptoms of the breakdown of "the post-war compromise." These elements of the new order have appeared without much reference to gender or to the changing gender order although clearly there is a pronounced gender subtext underlying these changes in state and cultural form. In fact, feminists generally have been slow to appreciate the broad dimensions of the "falling apart" or the transformative implications of the "building up again" (Brodie, 1994). To be sure, feminist academics and the organized women's movement have protested some of the gendered symptoms of the current transformation. Indeed, evidence everywhere indicates that restructuring has been enacted precisely on the field of gender. It has intensified poverty, especially among single mothers and elderly women. Women also have been directly affected by cuts in social welfare programs and spending both as welfare clients and as state workers. The rolling back of the welfare state often simply means that vital social services are shifted from the paid to the unpaid work of women (Elson, 1992). Finally, findings suggest that the gendered impacts of restructuring are highly uneven exacting the heaviest costs from women of colour and working class women.

At the same time, feminist theorists have written very little about the cultural dimensions of the emerging new state form -what is often termed "the Post-Fordist State" - or its implications for women and the organized women's movement. In past decades, feminist theorists have engaged in numerous protracted debates about the state. Among other things, there is a substantial literature, which explores the historical intersection in state forms of capitalism and patriarchy as well as the character of the welfare state as a source of women's empowerment and subordination. Feminist theorists also have attempted to create their own (liberal-, radical-, socialist-, or marxist-) theories of the state. All of these projects, however, have been largely abandoned in recent years. Indeed, many leading feminist scholars now consider that the idea of a creating a "grand theory" of the state is an impossible and wasted effort (Pringle and Watson: 1990). Australian theorist Judith Allen, for example, suggests that the state is "a category of abstraction that is too aggregative, too unitary and too unspecific to be of much use in addressing the disaggregated, diverse and specific (or local) sites that must be of most pressing concern to feminists." She goes on to suggest that the state is not an "indigenous category" of feminist theory (Allen, 1990: 22).

Allen's contention that feminists should restrict their vision only to those things which are deemed naturally or inherently "theirs" obviously reinforces rather than challenges patriarchal assumptions about the gendered division of intellectual labour and political power. It also reflects a longstanding anti-statist tradition within feminist theory and practice. Underlying this criticism is the notion that feminists need not sully their hands

in the male world of the abstract public and, instead, should get on with the particular and everyday problems that confront women. But do feminists risk too much when we choose to ignore or dismiss, in theory or practice, the relevance of the state, especially during a period of fundamental transition when all the rules are being changed? Or, as Grosz asks, are the only choices left to feminist theory either strict adherence to totalizing doctrines, or the dissolution of feminist struggles into localized, regional and specific struggles (Grosz, 1990:341)?

Rather than discarding the state as a conceptual tool, feminists might be better advised to ask what is it about our thinking about the state that fails to capture our contemporary experience? What's wrong with thinking about the state, for example: as a thing, as sovereign, as some place where power is centred, as situated above and acting on society, as an agent of domination for a unity of interests which exist independently of it, or as acting coherently and instrumentally - always, primarily or "in the last instance" - in order to reproduce the hegemony of a singular interest, be it capital or patriarchy? What is it about these assumptions that render the state and transformative shifts in state form too unspecific and too futile for feminists to study?

Traditional feminist thinking about the state perhaps obscures as much as it reveals about the complex and historical interaction among state form, the gender order and gendered political subjectivities. Despite the temptation to equate the state with a thing that can be captured and possessed, it may be more appropriately thought of as an historical package of shared understandings, as Brown argues, "an unbounded terrain of powers and techniques, an ensemble of discourses, rules, and practices," which share a tension-ridden and often contradictory historical space (Brown, 1992: 12).

State As Gendered Cultural Form

The idea that particular state forms can be scrutinized through a discursive lens is central to the work of Corrigan and Sayer, who insist that we "grasp state forms culturally" (Corrigan and Sayer, 1985: 3). According to their provocative thesis, the concept of the "state" as a coherent unity positioned instrumentally above society is "in large part an ideological construct, a fiction." While the institutions of government are real enough, the state-society relation is less hierarchical and directive than coterminous and discursive embedded in shared understandings of what is natural, neutral, and universal. Corrigan and Sayer view these shared understandings as "impositional claims" which are both historical and productive, constituting the cultural foundations for particular state forms and political identities. In turn, the state weaves these claims/meanings into the everyday. Among other things, they are enshrined in law, embedded in institutions, and enforced through regulation and sanction (Corrigan and Sayer, 1985: 2-7). States, as Corrigan and Sayer explain, "state":

They define, in great detail, acceptable forms and images of social activity and individual and collective identity; they regulate, in empirically

specifiable ways... social life. In this sense, 'the State' never stops talking (Corrigan and Sayer, 1985:3).

Among the most critical impositional claims that the liberal democratic state has stated and restated throughout its long history relates to the appropriate boundaries among the public, the market, and the domestic spheres. This particular state form was initially conceived and has been repeatedly restructured thereafter through, what Walzer appropriately terms, "the art of separation." The early liberal theorists took the old feudal order, which was grounded in impositional claims about natural hierarchies, interdependence and the organic whole, and recast it as a "world of walls." "They drew lines, marked off different realms, and created the sociopolitical map" with which, although many times altered, we still live (Walzer, 1984:315; passim).

Classic liberal discourse prescribed and then materialized in the reorganization of metaphorical, economic, and political space. At its heart was a new set of impositional claims about what was natural and universal, what was on and off the political terrain, and the rules and practices which were uniquely applicable to the public world of the state, the private sphere of the economy and the domestic realm of the family. As important, it pronounced a "natural" isomorphism or coincidence between sites and practices as well as institutions and functions. Each sphere was governed by different rules, hierarchies, and distributive practices (Bowles and Gintis, 1986: 98-101). The church was separated from the state so that the latter could be governed according to the principles of liberalism and later liberal democracy. The state was separated from the market, which operated under the rules of laissez-faire capitalism, creating a profoundly unequal and oppressive class system. Finally, a line was drawn between the public and private or domestic which was subject to the rule of individual men. The family was, in custom and law, sacred ground upon which the state could not tread: a man's home was, indeed, "his castle" (Pateman, 1988: 192).

Feminists have long argued that liberalism's public-private partition is neither fixed nor natural nor obvious, but instead a critical mechanism in the reproduction of an oppressive gender order and the subordination of women (Bowles and Gintis, 1986: 66). This powerful social convention imposed a perfect coincidence among function, institution, and gender identity, thereby saturating cultural forms with a sexual division of labour and the valorization of the masculine. Classic liberalism posited an artificial and politically negotiated public world, resting on the natural world of the family which, if left undisturbed, would satisfy society's social reproductive needs. In turn, patriarchal discourse constructed women as 'naturally' suited for the family, the reproductive work of women as 'natural,' [and] the family as a 'natural' entity. As Brown puts it, "everywhere nature greets nature" (Brown, 1992: 17). The family and the *polis* were cast as different, autonomous, and inescapably gendered. Neither women nor most aspects of their daily lives had a legitimate place in politics.

Of course, the definition of the public-private divide and its designation as natural were and are profoundly political acts which the state constantly rearranges and reinforces through its rules and practices (Nicholson, 1992:38). The realm of the private is

constituted as such by a battery of impositional claims, public policies, and practices: it is imbued with political codings that call it private. The idea of the separation of the public and the private familial sphere, then, is both true and false (Pateman, 1992: 226). It is true to the extent that this space and its inhabitants are constructed as being outside of the terrain of the political and false to the extent that this boundary can only be enforced by making it an object of public policy (Phillips, 1991:87, 95). The public-private divide is not, as liberal ideology would have it, a point separating different worlds, but instead, a historically shifting and contested discursive form which is laden with political codings and gendered meanings. The state does not simply address private needs, but instead, configures, administers, and produces them (Brown, 1992:30). States, in other words, do not simply reflect gender identities and inequalities, but instead, play an important role in constituting them.

Calling Women into Politics

Historically, specific state forms consist, as Foucault argues, "in the codification of a whole number of power relations," among them gender relations (Quoted in Held, et al., 1983, 312). These cultural and discursive messages call women into politics in historically specific ways, open to them particular political spaces, and close off others. I would like to borrow somewhat from Althusser's conception of interpellation to argue that women are called into politics in different ways at different times in accordance with the dominant cultural construction of the public and private (Althusser, 1971: 160-170). While unconcerned with the constitution of gendered subjectivities, Althusser argued that a dominant ideology serves to interpellate or hail individuals into politics on its own terms and, thereby, confers on them a particular political identity. The state calls out, "Hey, you there!" (e.g., ... woman, voter, mother) and by responding we effectively are conferred with that identity in the public realm (Macdonell, 1986:37-38). Typically the state hails women in multiple and often-contradictory ways: for example interpellating them as mother, worker, welfare client, taxpayer, wife, and citizen (Fraser, 1989: 134). The point to be emphasized is that whatever these historical interpellations, they give content to women's political identities, organization, and to what they consider as their interests or stakes in politics (Pringle and Watson, 1990).

The idea of discursive construction is critical to my thinking about the changing relationships among state form, gender relations and the historical preoccupations of the Canadian women's movement. The following account of these relationships is necessarily schematic and is not intended to minimize either the diversity among women at any conjuncture or their political agency. Rather, in emphasizing these linkages, I want to argue that women and the women's movement are both producers and products of their political culture. The *laissez-faire* state, for example, made women the objects of policy long before they were officially recognized in law as legitimate political subjects (Phillips, 1991: 87). It inscribed the private sphere with a particular construction of gender and gender relations which, in time, provided the basis for women's interpellation into the formal sphere of the political. Women were contained in the private sphere by denying them legal personhood and citizenship rights while their dependence on men was ensured through a series of restrictions on education, employment, and ownership. The

construction of all women as private and dependent was rigidly inscribed in law yet, paradoxically, these conditions were widely understood as part of the natural order of things. In fact, women who were not dependent on men were judged to be decidedly unfeminine.

The public-private partition was imbued with gender codings in its conception and it left lasting inscriptions on women as political actors. Initially, only men could become citizens and claim the liberal rights of freedom and equality in the public sphere while women were deemed the natural subjects of men in the private sphere. For most of its reign, the laissez-faire state constructed women as "pre-political" subjects - a public excluded from "the public" (Chapman, 1993). The rigid boundary between the public and private served to constrain and limit the terrain of politics, enclaving, and shielding gender issues and relations from political contestation and negotiation (Fraser, 1989). Women's political condition was naturalized. More than this, terms which were deemed appropriate in the public such as equality, liberty, and democracy were treated as incompatible, indeed, threats to the very workings of the family and the market.

Women's enfranchisement and the winning of the Person's Case are sometimes recounted as historic mileposts for Canadian women in their long march toward gender equality. This perspective, however, largely misrepresents the nature of the Canadian women's movement during the period and how women were initially called into the public sphere. Canadian women were not called into the public on the same basis as men, i.e., as members of a gender-neutral community of citizens. A small proportion of the early feminists did struggle for the equal treatment of the sexes in all spheres of life, but these women were marginalized both within the Canadian women's movement and the turn-of-the-century social reform movement. Maternal feminists were the dominant current in the early Canadian women's movement and they embraced rather than challenged prevailing patriarchal family forms and representations of women (Ursel, 1992: 80-82). These early feminists, as well as their opponents, shared the same cultural understandings about women's subjectivity and the appropriate gender order. Women belonged in the home and it was from there that all good women - daughters, wives, and especially mothers - exercised their inherent moral superiority.

Constructed as the moral guardians of the private, women soon became the obvious allies of the Victorian social reform movement. This powerful coalition of social reformers sought protection for the family through state regulation of work hours and conditions for women and children, housing standards, and public sanitation. The early feminists gained political currency precisely because they wanted things previously encoded as the ideal "private" - for example, temperance, sanitation, the nurturing of children, the protection of women - to be "a model for the public" (Jenson, 1990a: 12). As historian Susan Mann (Trofimenkoff) recounts of the first wave of Canadian feminism, "When [feminists] took on public tasks beyond the home, they did so to protect the home. They were merely enlarging their maternal sphere for the benefit of society" (Trofimenkoff, 1983:199).

Canadian women were eventually granted formal citizenship rights and the KWS came to occupy many of the spaces that laissez-faire liberalism previously had declared as unalterably and universally private. The emergence of the welfare state was another instance of restructuring, which fundamentally realigned the boundaries between the economy and state and the public and the domestic. It realized a radical expansion of the public through regulation and direct intervention in the economy, and by subjecting the family and other aspects of private life to new forms of state scrutiny and assistance (Andrew, 1984, 667; Abbott and Wallace, 1992: 17). This new state form was grounded on different shared understandings of the role of the state and the rights of citizens. Jane Ursel calls this new understanding "welfare ideology" and argues that it was "an achievement of public consensus equal in significance, but substantially different to the Victorian Social Reform Movement" (Ursel, 1992: 205). It also altered the constitution of the gender order and of women's place within it. The new order, as McDowell's insightful analysis of Fordism and the British welfare state shows, rested on a very particular model of the workplace and the home. It presumed a stable working class, a nuclear family supported by a male breadwinner, a dependent wife and children and unpaid women's domestic labour -- all cultural forms supported and reinforced by the Keynesian welfare state (McDowell, 1991:400-402).

If the KWS reinforced a particular family form, it also hailed women into politics, at least initially, in a complementary way. Instead of "calling" women into politics as the moral force of politics, the KWS largely spoke to women as mothers framed within the context of a nuclear family headed by a male wage earner. After the war, women were actively encouraged (sometimes coerced) to leave the workforce and return home. Feminist state theorists are quite correct in identifying the discourses around welfare and its provisions as central to the construction of the gender order and women's subordination during the post-war years (Pringle and Watson, 1990: 235). The welfare ideology shifted the emphasis of state discourse and practice from regulation to provision, from the protection of women and children to the administration of income and social services for the family. The Family Allowance Act (1944, i.e., mother's allowance), for example, was one of Canada's first universal social welfare programs and somewhat unique among social security measures considering that its major beneficiaries never asked for it (Ursel, 1992: 205, 190). Designed to shore up the family wage, this welfare provision hailed women as mothers and homemakers. The KWS readily transferred money from working women who did not fit the dominant cultural model to women -- mothers -- who did (Pringle and Watson, 1990, 236). In a very real sense, welfare policy was less directed at women as a social category than through mothers so as to reinforce a particular family form and a specific organization of the labour market.

The family was differently constituted under the welfare state which opened up for policy consideration and political negotiation many aspects of the everyday, which previously had been coded, as private. In the process, new public spaces for women were opened, but these spaces often rested on impositional claims that "women's interests" and "family interests" were one and the same. This political space, nonetheless, enabled women to organize, to make political claims, to lobby the state for better services for the family, and, eventually, to demand state action to improve the condition of women in all

aspects of social life. These projects gave rise to a myriad of women's organizations, often state-financed, that shaped a collective identity and increasingly drew the overtly political arm of the women's movement into a new state-centred "progressive" coalition. As Fraser puts it, the welfare state brought new forms of social control and new forms of conflict, new social movements, and new conflict zones (Fraser, 1989: 132).

The constitution of women's interests and the women's movement by and through the welfare state is perhaps best exemplified by the Royal Commission on the Status of Women (1970). The mothers of the "second wave" of the Canadian women's movement, many already active in middle-class English Canadian organizations such as the Voice of Women, had campaigned vigorously for a public inquiry into how the state could improve the condition of women in the public sector, the domestic sphere and the economy. Its report set the political agenda for much of the Canadian women's movement and provided the impetus for the very formation of its frontline organization - the National Action Committee on the Status of Women (NAC) - as well as key monitoring agencies inside the federal state such as the Canadian Advisory Council on the Status of Women (CACSW).

During these early days, NAC and other women's organizations repeatedly lobbied state actors to expand the social welfare system and make it more responsive to their conception of women's needs. The dominant current of the movement was decidedly pro-statist. Most Canadian feminists, as Vickers describes, saw "the state more as a provider of services, including the service of regulation, than as a reinforcer of patriarchal norms, and most seem[ed] to believe that services, whether child care or medicare, [would] help" (Vickers, 1992: 45).

Throughout the seventies and early eighties, the organized women's movement was increasingly recognized as a legitimate lobby group which was entitled to consultation in the policymaking process and to special platforms and leadership debates on "women's issues" during federal election campaigns. In other words, women were hailed into politics as a social category with a corporate interest in the welfare state. The legitimacy of women's organizations such as NAC, however, was restricted to social welfare policy. As Majorie Cohen, a feminist economist long active in NAC recounts, by "the 1980s government and employers had accepted women's intervention in issues like equal pay, maternity leave, and the movement of women out of traditional occupations. They also accepted our right to speak on day care, reproductive choice, pornography - anything that could be seen as a women's issue (Cohen, 1992: 217). When the women's movement began to discuss issues lying outside of a narrow definition of social policy such as macro-economic policy, however, their interventions were interpreted as "take-aways." Cohen observes that women's contributions to these broader debates were always treated "as a discussion of welfare policy not economic policy" (Cohen, 1992: 218). By the late 1980s, when, she continues,

... we began to talk about economic issues like the budget, trade policy, privatization, deregulation, and the general structure of the Canadian economy, we were going too far. These were not women's issues: women

were not experts and therefore our criticism had little credibility (Cohen, 1992: 218-219).

So long as the welfare state remained unchallenged, the organized women's movement could and did expand its sphere of influence, particularly inside the state itself. The current round of restructuring with its attendant shifts in discourse and state form, however, is eroding the very political spaces within which the contemporary women's movement found much of its cohesion and empowerment. Social welfarism is rapidly being displaced by an, as yet, unfinished discursive struggle about the very meaning of the public and private.

Restructuring And The Women's Movement

The Canadian women's movement has not been passive in its political responses to the emerging new order. From the beginning, it clearly recognized that feminism's equity agenda conflicted with neo-liberalism's vision of a minimalist state and an unfettered market. The second wave of Canadian feminism consistently linked the achievement of gender equality with state activism and intervention whether through the elaboration of the social safety net or through the regulation of the private sector. Key feminist policy demands such as universal and affordable childcare, income security for single mothers and elderly women, affirmative action and pay equity all call for more not less government (Gotell and Brodie, 1991: 62). It is hardly surprising then that, after the election of the federal Progressive Conservative Party in 1984, NAC and other frontline feminist organizations expended ever increasing quantities of their political currency defending the welfare state from neo-liberal assaults. Women's organizations challenged the so-called "Tory agenda" and campaigned against the FTA as well as the Meech Lake and Charlottetown Accords. The women's movement, however, did not enter the constitutional fray, as it had in the early 1980s, to secure equality guarantees for women. Instead, they contested the Mulroney government's constitutional initiatives primarily on the grounds that they threatened the viability of the welfare state and the power of future federal governments to establish new national social welfare programs.

This political strategy, while inescapable, left the women's movement in the paradoxical position of having to defend the same welfare state that it had previously criticized for being inadequate, patriarchal, classist and racist (Abbott and Wallace, 1992: 22), and that the neo-liberals were blaming for being responsible for the economic crisis. These political interventions as well as the women's movement's alliance with the popular sector (a loose alliance of groups opposed to free trade and neo-liberal governing practices), however, signalled a watershed in the women's movement experience of post-war politics. Organized groups such as NAC were forced to shift their public presence from a recognized lobby group with special access to federal decision-makers to part of a broad-based coalition, which was fundamentally opposed to the new development strategy and the emerging state form. This shift was not without immediate political consequences, particularly during the national referendum on the Charlottetown Accord. NAC was accused of being part of a self-interested coalition of special interests groups which "threatened Canadian consensus," indeed, "were enemies of Canada" (This

Magazine, January 1993: 9). The then NAC President, Judy Rebick, concluded that the governing elite "responded so viciously to NAC taking a high profile NO position because we were breaking a taboo . . . we were taking a strong position on something that wasn't traditionally considered our issue" (quoted in Gottlieb, 1993, 382).

The hostility directed at women's organizations during the Referendum campaign was only part of a broader concerted attack on - some would say a backlash against - feminism and the Canadian women's movement, especially during the Mulroney government's second mandate. This administration, for example, broke a longstanding tradition of meeting with NAC officials annually to discuss their policy concerns and the status of women. It also used deficit reduction as a pretext to cut its support for NAC and to dismantle some of the women's movement's key strategic resources such as women's centres, women's journals, and the Court Challenges Program.

It would be a strategic mistake, however, to interpret these cuts merely as a financial "slap on the wrist" wielded by a vindictive neo-conservative government, or, for that matter, part of its failed efforts at deficit reduction. The 1993 federal election was decidedly silent on so-called "women's issues" and both the federal Conservative and Liberal leaders refused to participate in a NAC-sponsored leadership debate on women's issues. Moreover, since the election of the new Liberal government, there has been no obvious attempt to come to a new understanding with women's groups. In fact, the Chretien government demoted the minister responsible for women to the junior ranks of the cabinet and has continued to cut funding for women's groups. All of these changes are symptoms of redefinition and displacement of the women's movement as we have come to know it in the post-war years.

Politics On The Boundaries

Restructuring discourse, as Anna Yeatman concludes from observing the Australian experience, attempts to marginalize and deconstruct emancipatory movements, such as the women's movement, in at least two critical ways. One form of marginalization is to deny the movement's universal significance, making it appear instead as a sectoral and self-interested lobby group. The other form is to constitute particular members of the women's movement as lying on the outer limits of the norm: they become disadvantaged groups for whom special provision is to be made (Yeatman, 1990: 130).

These marginalizing moves obviously echo the Canadian experience. It has become increasingly successful to argue that feminist organizations such as NAC do not represent the mainstream of Canadian women. This sentiment was first expressed by REAL (Realistic, Equal and Active for Life) women to try to gain federal funding made available for groups that "promote the advancement of women." The federal Conservatives judged that REAL women met this standard even though the organization actively opposes, among other things, equal-pay-for-work-of-equal-value, reproductive choice, and greater constitutional protection for women's rights. Later, P.C. leadership candidate, Kim Campbell, vowed that when she became Prime Minister she would stop giving money to "advocacy groups" such as NAC arguing that they should be funded by

their private constituencies (Globe and Mail, 13 June 1993: A6). This sentiment was revisited in the Liberal government's first budget of 22 February 1994 which reduced group funding by 5% and promised to consider whether the federal government should get out of the business of funding "lobby groups" altogether.

Although the women's movement is broad-based, inclusive and emancipatory, restructuring discourse attempts to label it and other new social movements as "special" and by implication unrepresentative and self-interested. More than this, restructuring discourse attempts to cast social movements, which seek to empower the marginalized as threats to democracy itself. It is argued that they threaten to hijack the political agenda and disrupt the political process (Phillips, 1993: 6). Barbara McDougall, a former minister in the Mulroney cabinet, suggested the problem was that "so many single or limited interest groups have established their presence on the national political scene that it is virtually impossible for any government to undertake a comprehensive policy platform" (Quoted in Phillips, 1993, 12).

Restructuring discourse, however, goes further than denying the legitimacy of organized voices in democratic politics. It attempts to minimize the relevance of gender itself. Increasingly, the social category "women," which found some unity, however misleading, in the welfare state and post-war feminist discourse, is being deconstructed. Women, it is argued, do not have similar interests. At the same time, some women are being redefined as members of specially disadvantaged groups which require "targeted" social programs to address their unique needs (Yeatman, 1990: 134). The idea of targeting is entirely consistent with the hollowing out of the welfare state. Its overt rationale is that, in an era of fiscal restraint, scarce resources are best targeted at those who need them the most. Thus, universal entitlements, such as family allowance which constructed mothers as gendered citizens, are transformed into a child tax credit available only for those defined as needy. Similarly, initiatives designed to combat violence against women are structured to target what are deemed to be high risk groups such as, for example, aboriginal women, women of colour, and women with disabilities. Women's different experiences of oppression and the effects of race and class cannot be denied or ignored. Targeting, however, may have the effect of pathologizing difference instead of exposing the structural links among race, gender, poverty and violence. It disassembles and diffuses the collective claims of the women's movement, recasting it as a "ghetto of disadvantaged groups" (Yeatman, 1990:134). The women's movement, a historical-moral-political concept, with an evolving vision of political inclusion and equality is deconstructed into a series of disconnected statistical and administrative categories which require some sort of therapeutic intervention to produce self-sufficient individuals.

Restructuring discourse seeks to disempower and dislocate women and the women's movement by contrasting them with the favourite son of the emerging order "the ordinary Canadian." The designation of the women's movement as a "special interest group," for example, implies that its demands are not in the general interest. "Special interest groups" don't speak for the ordinary Canadian, but instead, demand privileges, which are unearned and violate the new norms of citizenship. Similarly, defining "special" need

groups and targeting them for intensive state intervention casts them outside the community of ordinary citizens who presumably are able to attend to their own needs.

The "ordinary Canadian" in his current manifestation has appeared only recently on the Canadian political stage. He was hailed by the Spicer Commission as the source of Canadian values and the holder of the key to national unity: he was invited along with experts to attend the Mulroney government's constitutional forums prior to the referendum on the Charlottetown Accord; and he became a regular on the CBC's 1993 "townhall meetings" election coverage. The ordinary Canadian also figures prominently in the rhetoric of the Reform Party and was cast as the star, indeed, the only one invited to the Liberals' pre-budget consultation meetings that were held in five cities in early 1994. Although he is increasingly evoked in political rhetoric, his identity is elusive, defined primarily by the things he is not. The ordinary Canadian is disinterested, seeking neither special status nor special treatment from the state. He is neither raced, nor sexed nor classed; he transcends difference. But how do we interpret the ordinary Canadian's rapid ascendancy to the centre of the political stage - a stage which the political elite suggests is congested with organized special interest groups which threaten to hijack the political agenda and pervert the common good (Leger and Rebick, 1993: 95)?

Clearly, the "ordinary Canadian" is a metaphor for something. None of us is ordinary or, put differently; all of us are special in some way or another. So what does it mean for us to defer to the voice of the ordinary Canadian? For one thing, this dichotomy between the "ordinary" and the "special" sends the clear message that regular people don't require state assistance and protection. As Iris Marion Young suggests, contemporary politics increasingly grants political legitimacy to persons "on the condition that they do not claim special rights or needs, or call attention to their particular history or culture" (Young, 1990a, 109). This discursive move effectively reinforces privilege by silencing those deemed to be different. As Young explains,

In a society where some groups are privileged while others are oppressed, insisting that as citizens persons should leave behind their particular affiliations and experiences to adopt a general point of view serves only to reinforce that privilege ... (Young, 1989: 257).

Toward A Feminist Politics of Restructuring

Although restructuring discourse attempts to hail women into the public either as non-citizens with special needs or a gender-less citizens, the restructuring process is, needless to say, neither gender- nor race-neutral (Haraway, 1991: 166) Indeed, its effects are already painfully obvious in the everyday lives of most Canadian women. The Fordist world of a stable nuclear working-middle class family - with a single male provider, where families could save and "get ahead," and mom stayed at home - has disappeared. Full-time jobs increasingly are being replaced with part-time precarious employment, while the number of paid hours required to support an average Canadian household has almost doubled in the past twenty years - 45 hours per week in 1970 compared to 65-80 hours per week in 1991 (NAC, 1992). The vast majority of Canadian women work, albeit

often in part-time jobs, and the number of female-headed families, the vast majority of which live in poverty, grows annually. At the same time, the state has backed away from supporting women workers and their families (McDowell, 1991: 400-402). Cutbacks in employment and pay equity, education and retraining programs are threatening to reverse many of the gains that women have made in the past twenty years. This is especially so for immigrant women who have been disproportionately affected by free trade and the collapse of the textile and manufacturing sectors. Finally, cutbacks in social welfare are forcing many women back into traditional family forms to provide unpaid care for other family members.

Restructuring has disadvantaged most women on both sides of the public-private divide leading some to argue that the emerging new order can only result in a crisis in the provision of basic social needs. Reprivatization depends on the continuing functioning of the patriarchal nuclear family and, indeed, everywhere we see cultural markings which valorize this "ideal family form" (Ursel, 1992: 295). The new gender order, it is argued, is inherently unstable both because this family form is no longer dominant or even viable and because it anticipates an increase in women's labour both in the economy and the home (Brodie, 1994; Fraser, 1989; McDowell, 1991; Ursel, 1992). It would be a mistake, however, to argue that the current redrawing of the public-private divide is doomed to failure merely because the state can no longer enforce the Fordist family form. Instead, restructuring entails a "restating" family form and the domain of the private.

By way of example, the Ontario Law Reform Commission recently recommended that it was time for the government to recognize "the diversity of family forms" by requiring common law and same sex couples to register with the province. Under this plan, these non-conforming couples would be given all the rights and obligations of married heterosexual couples including support, property and possession rights (Globe and Mail, 18 November 1993: A1). There is nothing inherent in the logic of reprivatization that requires a legally married heterosexual woman to be a home caregiver; a common law spouse or gay partner can as easily perform the role. As is perhaps more often the case, homemaking functions have simply been commodified allowing some women to buy cleaning or caring work from other women, especially poor women, immigrant women and women of colour. Intercede, for example, has reported that, in Canada, the demand now far exceeds supply for domestic workers, especially for live-ins who are effectively available to their employers all of the time (Gabriel and Macdonald, 1993). The trend toward commodifying domestic labour has been growing in recent years, but reprivatization suggests further intensification and racialization of this process. The new gender order, in other words, is not doomed to self-destruct. It does not necessarily require the maintenance of the patriarchal family but, instead, will encode and regulate different family forms. Families, in other words, are part of the complex matrix that shifts and transforms during periods of fundamental restructuring.

Haraway has drawn the link between specific family forms, stages in the historic organization of capital (commercial/early industrial, monopoly, and multinational) and political and cultural forms. "Although lived problematically and unequally," she writes, ideal forms of these families might be schematized as the patriarchal nuclear family of

commercial/early industrial capitalism. This family was structured by the dichotomy between public and private and accompanied by the white bourgeois ideology of separate spheres. The phase of monopoly capital was associated with the modern family form which, in turn, was mediated (or enforced) by the welfare state and institutions like the family wage. Finally, the present period of multinational capital, she suggests, is creating "the 'family' of the homework economy with its oxymoronic structure of women-headed households and its explosion of feminisms and the paradoxical intensification and erosion of gender" (Haraway, 1991: 167).

Haraway is not alone in insisting that the present era is premised on the simultaneous intensification and erosion of gender both literally and metaphorically. Privatization puts renewed emphasis on the so-called feminine sphere of the home and the feminine qualities of childrearing, nurturing and caregiving. Meanwhile work itself is said to be increasingly "feminized." Stable full-time high paying jobs are rapidly being replaced by part-time and precarious employment the kind of work that marked the gendered division of labour and political power in the post-war years. When work is feminized, it is extremely vulnerable: it can easily be disassembled and reassembled as a reserve labour force and workers are seen less as workers than as servers. While women and people of colour are all too familiar with this kind of work, what is different about the current era is that often these are the only jobs available for the previously privileged workers of the Fordist order – white men (Haraway, 1991: 166-168).

Increasing evidence of the feminization of work, as well as growing disparities among women themselves, has led some feminists to argue that gender is an eroding base for political organizing. In a sense, gender is everywhere and nowhere as McDowell suggests when she writes, "perhaps we are all becoming women workers regardless of biological sex" (McDowell, 1991: 418). More explicitly, British socialist feminist Elizabeth Wilson argues that this sea change demands a recentring of class-based political action. Women should turn from feminist organizing and regroup within the trade union movement. As a result of restructuring, Wilson argues, the interests of low-paid workers of both sexes are drawing closer together. She suggests that restructuring has made it "increasingly difficult to create a unity of 'all women,' although there will continue to be areas such as health care and violence where their interests are more likely to coincide. But, in general, the vulnerable position of the vast majority of women in the labour force should be reason to support trade unionism" (Wilson, 1988: 199).

It is one thing to argue that we can no longer assume that all women share the same gender determined condition, if we ever could, but quite another to suggest that evidence of difference among women disrupts the feminist project. Women have always been divided by class and by race. Does recognizing the importance of these divisions require women to prioritize their class over their gender or race and reorganize on that basis? The rationale for this argument is not immediately obvious. In fact, the traditional left's conception of a more fundamental and morally superior politics which revolves around a singular (male) class-identified revolutionary subject has lost much of its previous persuasive force (Haraway, 1991: 176). Moreover, Yeatman argues that the current crisis of the traditional left and trade unions is due precisely to the fact that these institutions

have been largely impervious to new social movements such as the women's movement. At best, she suggests feminists acquired the role of a "cutting edge" in relation to what is taken to be an "indivisible given" the traditional institutions of the labour movement (Yeatman, 1990: 136).

A feminist politics of restructuring necessarily entails broad-based alliances across gender, race and class, but the foundations for these coalitions defy an *a priori* determination. One perspective, which has gained some currency in feminist theory and practice, suggests that the globalization of capital requires a similar global organization of the women's movement. Although it is clear that the terrain of politics has shifted, it is less obvious that it has shifted away from the state to some stateless global space. For one thing, those arguing for a globalization of oppositional politics may misdiagnose the problem when they accept this depiction of the new order. Restructuring discourse stresses the necessity and inevitability of globalized production and a borderless world but this is not the world, in fact, that restructuring has created. Instead, there have been a variety of different state responses to the changing international order, principal among them, the formation of highly protectionist regional trading blocs such as the North American bloc and a Single Europe. In other words, the global metaphor may be inappropriate.

As important is the idea that the "Sisterhood is Global" rests on universalizing and homogenizing assumptions which minimize the very real and different stakes that women, particularly in the North and the South, have in the restructuring process (Gabriel and Macdonald, 1993). While the spectre of a global sisterhood may feel empowering, it assumes that all of the oppressive strands of the restructuring "add up in the same direction." However, if current feminist theory has taught us anything, it is that there is no single or universal emancipatory subject and that it is impossible for a single social movement "to stand in for and represent all the various and distinct interests in emancipation." This, and the realization that western women can be at one and the same time both the victims and beneficiaries of restructuring, has forced feminism to lose its innocence (Yeatman, 1993: 228). Feminist politics necessarily has become one of "negotiating a path between always impure positions" and accepting that our theories are always implicated in political struggles (Grosz, 1990:342).

So to borrow a question, which continues to elude a permanent answer: what is to be done? I have argued that social movements are part of the complex matrix of cultural forms, which are transformed during an era of restructuring. Oppositional movements that ignore or deny the shifting discursive terrain, indeed, that fail to explore their own discursive origins and potential transformation are destined to become part of the history that they cling to. The passing of the welfare state has displaced many of the sites and objects of political struggle for the Canadian women's movement. At the same time, perhaps we have been too quick to accept the determinism and unrestrained economism of restructuring discourse. We have not sufficiently challenged its impositional claims as "impositional" - that is, as invested interpretations of reality, which should be subjected to political contestation and moral evaluation. We are living through a period of profound adjustment. On this we can all agree. But it is an impositional claim to suggest that this

adjustment MUST occur on the terrain of social policy and it is an impositional claim to suggest that societies must restructure according to market criteria.

Our collective failure to contest and deconstruct the discourse of restructuring has exacted a heavy if unintended political price. For one thing, our silence implicitly endorses its capacity to delegitimize political, cultural, and moral claims (Yeatman, 1990: 102). For another, it obscures the potential alliances and strategic responses available to us. Familiar political spaces have disappeared but this does not mean, as restructuring discourse would have it, that political space itself has disappeared.

The current era provides the women's movement with a fundamental challenge - to interrogate restructuring discourse and to understand the new cultural and political forms that it under-writes. As Haraway argues, we must learn how to read the webs of power created by restructuring in order to understand the political potential of new couplings and new coalitions (Haraway, 1991: 170). Most fundamentally, the women's movement must begin the long process of reclaiming the public and recovering the political (Benhabib, 1993, 111). In a very real sense, the women's movement must begin to "re-public-ize" political spaces and build a new social consensus about the boundaries and content of the public and private. We are not only responsible for these boundaries but, in a very real sense, "we are they" (Haraway, 1991: 180).

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