

Note de recherche — Research Note

The Necessity of Sacrifice for the Nation at War: Women's Labour Force Participation, 1939-1946

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Previous research regarding the reaction of the Canadian public to women's increased labour force participation during World War II (WWII) has emphasized public opposition to the participation of women in the armed forces and in war-related industry. In contrast, the present analysis of public opinion regarding women's labour force participation both in and out of uniform indicates (i) widespread public recognition of the need for women in the armed forces and in war industries; and (ii) popular support for, and endorsement of, policy initiatives designed to secure female labour to meet Canada's civil and military commitments. By emphasizing the positive side of public opinion, the findings argue for a more balanced interpretation of the historical evidence regarding public response to women's wartime labour force participation.

Les recherches antérieures au sujet des réactions du public canadien face à l'accroissement des effectifs féminins au sein de la population active au cours de la Seconde Guerre mondiale ont souligné l'opposition populaire à l'emploi des femmes dans les forces armées et dans les industries de guerre. Par ailleurs, les études récentes sur l'opinion publique relative à la présence des femmes au sein des forces armées — qu'elles portent ou non l'uniforme — et des industries de guerre indiquent (i) que la grande majorité l'estime nécessaire et (ii) qu'elle appuie sans réserve la politique de recrutement des femmes pour permettre au Canada d'honorer ses engagements en matières civiles et militaires. Ces constatations incitent à une interprétation mieux équilibrée des données historiques concernant les réactions du grand public à l'intégration des femmes dans la main-d'œuvre en temps de guerre.

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I — Introduction

World War II (WWII) witnessed unprecedented demands for “womanpower” both in the armed forces and in war-related industry.¹ Two issues are central to the analysis of the reaction of the Canadian public to these demands: (1) public recognition of the need for “womanpower” both in and out of uniform; and (2) the extent to which public opinion endorsed and/or supported government initiatives designed to secure female labour to meet the nation’s civil and military commitments.

Several studies have addressed the issue of public response to women’s increased labour force participation during WWII.² This research has tended to emphasize public opposition to the participation of women in the armed forces and in non-traditional war industries. Such opposition is analyzed in terms of Canadians’ commitment to traditional attitudes toward woman’s “feminine” nature and her proper sphere in Canadian society.

The present analysis does not negate the existence of public opposition to women’s recruitment into the women’s services of the armed forces and civilian war industries. By emphasizing the positive side of public opinion, it does, however, argue for a more balanced interpretation of the historical evidence regarding the public reaction. The analysis demonstrates that, despite any economic and ideological inconsistencies between wartime “womanpower” requirements and traditional attitudes toward women’s role in Canadian society, public opinion indicated widespread support for women in both the armed forces and in war-related industry. Public endorsement of Canadian women’s uniformed and civilian wartime service was based on a recognition by the majority of the Canadian population of the necessity of female labour for the successful prosecution of the war. While such popular support may have, at times, conflicted with traditional attitudes regarding women’s place in Canadian society, women’s civilian and uniformed service was deemed a “necessary sacrifice for the nation at war”.

1. Ruth Roach Pierson, “Women’s Emancipation and the Recruitment of Women into the Labour Force in World War II” in Susan Mann Trofimenkoff and Alison Prentice, eds., *The Neglected Majority: Essays in Canadian Women’s History*. Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1977, pp. 125-145.

2. Ruth Roach Pierson, “Ladies or Loose Women: The Canadian Women’s Army Corps in World War II”, *Atlantis: A Women’s Studies Journal*, IV, 2, Spring 1979-part II, CRIAW Issue, pp. 245-266; Ruth Roach Pierson, “They’re Still Women After All”: *The Second World War and Canadian Womanhood*. Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1986; R.E. Park, “Public Opinion and the Placement of Canadian Forces’ Servicewomen in Combat”, paper presented at the 20th International Applied Military Psychology Symposium, Brussels, Belgium, June 25-29, 1984.

II — Data

Data regarding public opinion³ toward the expansion of employment opportunities for women during WWII were obtained from responses to polls conducted by the Canadian Institute of Public Opinion (CIPO) (The Gallup Poll) from 1942 to 1945 published in the *Toronto Star*.⁴ Additional information regarding public attitudes toward women's enlistment in the armed forces (and in war industries) was obtained from a survey conducted by Elliott-Haynes Limited, a Montreal-based independent commercial research agency, on behalf of The Advertising Agencies of Canada and the Joint Committee on Combined Recruiting Promotion, Women's Services of the Three Armed Forces. The results of this survey were published in 1943 in a report entitled *An Enquiry into The Attitudes of the Canadian Civilian Public Towards the Women's Armed Forces*.⁵ The purpose of this survey was to "ascertain from the civilian public the reasons why more eligible women of Canada are not offering themselves for enlistment into the three armed forces."⁶ Specifically, the survey "aimed to determine: (a) public consciousness of need of women

3. The meaning of the term "public opinion" had been widely debated in the literature since the late 1930s. Floyd H. Allport, in the inaugural issue of *The Public Opinion Quarterly*, attempted to bring order out of the conceptual chaos by surveying the literature of the field and specifying several fallacious notions that had given rise to misconceptions. He contributed this definition: "The term public opinion is given its meaning with reference to a multi-individual situation in which individuals are expressing themselves, or can be called upon to express themselves, as favouring (or else disfavouring or opposing) some definite condition, person, or proposal of widespread importance in such a proportion of number, intensity and constancy as to give rise to the probability of affecting action, directly or indirectly, toward the object concerned" (Floyd H. Allport, "Toward a Science of Public Opinion", *The Public Opinion Quarterly*, vol. 1, n° 1, January, 1937, p. 23). Subsequent attempts to clarify the meaning of "public opinion" suggested that the term "public opinion" referred to "any collection of individual opinions designated" (Harwood L. Childs, "By Public Opinion, I Mean", *The Public Opinion Quarterly*, vol. 3, n° 2, April, 1939, p. 331. Lucien Warner offered a similar definition arguing that public opinion referred to "the sum total of all individual opinions" and that "tacitly, public opinion usually is meant to refer to the voting public" (Warner, "The Reliability of Public Opinion Surveys", *The Public Opinion Quarterly*, vol. 3, n° 3, July, 1939, pp. 377-388. Gallup and Rae suggested that "public opinion is compounded of the opinions of individuals in all walks of life". Implicit here is the notion of "adulthood" and, by inference, Warner's tacit assumption of "the voting public" (George Gallup and Saul Forbes Rae, *The Pulse of Democracy: The Public Opinion Poll and How It Works*. New York: Simon and Schuster, 1940, p. 245). The Elliott-Haynes Report used the term "public opinion" specifically to refer to the opinions of the "Canadian adult civilian population" (Elliott-Haynes Report, p. 3). Again, the tacit assumption of "voting public" is implied. For a review of the formation, measurement and impact of public opinion, see Susan Welch and John Comer, eds., *Public Opinion*. Palo Alto, California: Mayfield Publishing Co., 1975.

4. The polls of the Canadian Institute of Public Opinion (CIPO) were not available from the Institute for Social Research, York University, 4700 Keele Street, North York, Ontario, M3J 1P3, prior to May 1945. CIPO results reported here were obtained from selected issues of the *Toronto Star*.

5. Elliott-Haynes Limited, *An Enquiry into the Attitudes of the Canadian Civilian Public Towards the Women's Armed Forces*. Montreal and Toronto, 1943.

6. *Ibid.*, p. 3.

in the armed forces; (b) factors which the public felt would influence women to join the armed forces; and (c) factors which the public felt would influence women to avoid joining the armed forces.⁷ The study claimed to have randomly surveyed the opinions of “7,283 civilian adults”⁸ from “56 Canadian centres and their surrounding areas” and to have “covered both sexes, all races, all geographical regions, all age levels, all economic levels, all occupations and all classes of conjugal condition”⁹ of the Canadian adult civilian population.

A second study, prepared and conducted by the Directorate of Army Recruiting in collaboration with the Joint Committee on Combined Recruiting Promotion, Women’s Services of the Three Armed Forces, surveyed attitudes of members of the Canadian Women’s Army Corps (CWAC) toward uniformed service. The confidential report of this inquiry entitled *Canadian Women’s Army Corps: Why Women Join and How They Like It* was available for limited distribution in July 1943.¹⁰

In addition to the quantitative data, a survey of the *Toronto Star* (daily edition), from September 1939 to December 1945, provided important qualitative data regarding public reaction toward the rapid expansion of employment opportunities for women in the Canadian labour force.

III — Public opinion

The present analysis addresses two questions central to our understanding of public reaction to the participation of Canadian women in the armed forces and in war-related industry. First, to what extent did public opinion reflect Canadians’ cognizance of the “need” for female labour both in and out of uniform? Second, to what extent did the attitudes of the adult civilian population reflect public endorsement of support for government initiatives designed to secure female labour to meet the civil and military commitments necessary for the successful prosecution of the war?

7. *Ibid.*

8. *Ibid.*: respondents were selected by “random sample technique” and opinions obtained by means of “personal interviews conducted in the home by trained investigators who administered a questionnaire”. Warner, “The Reliability of Public Opinion Surveys”, 1939: The “new random sampling techniques” had been introduced to the field of public opinion polling in the wake of the inability of U.S. polls to accurately predict the outcome of the 1936 presidential election. By the 1940s, random sampling techniques were an integral part of public opinion survey methods. There would appear to be no reason, therefore, to suspect that the claims of randomness reported here were not legitimate.

9. *Ibid.*: responses to the survey questions were broken down by sex, geographic regions, occupational groupings (*e.g.*, war workers, civilian workers, farm workers), type of persons (*e.g.*, parents, young men, young women) and national representation groups (*e.g.*, Anglophone, Francophone).

10. Directorate of Army Recruiting, *Canadian Women’s Army Corps: Why Women Join and How They Like It*. Ottawa: Directorate of History, Department of National Defence, April-May, 1943, 113.3A 2009 (D1).

Previous research has focussed on the perceived need to overcome the substantial opposition to women's uniformed service, which the Elliott-Haynes survey of public opinion and the investigation of CWAC opinion revealed.¹¹ Ruth Roach Pierson bases her analysis of public opinion upon two items contained in the 1943 public opinion survey. These items reveal both the low priority accorded women's uniformed service as a way for women to contribute to the successful prosecution of the war and the "widespread disapproval" among friends and relatives of young eligible women to their enlistment in the armed forces. The adverse impact of such disapproval on recruitment into the women's services was evident in the survey of CWAC opinion.¹²

A re-examination of these items, however, suggests that Pierson may have overstated public opposition to women's recruitment into the armed forces. One factor which may have resulted in a more negative interpretation of the data than may be warranted concerns conclusions drawn in the CWAC Report that could be seen to be derived from rather dubious methodological procedures. One item contained in the Elliott-Haynes survey upon which Pierson bases her analysis focussed on the extent to which parents, husbands, boyfriends and brothers approved of female friends and relatives joining the armed forces. Forty-three percent of those surveyed approved of their "daughters, wives, girlfriends and sisters" joining the armed forces, 39 percent disapproved, and 18 percent did not know.¹³ Clearly, friends and relatives' approval/disapproval of young eligible women joining the armed forces was divided. Pierson, however, interprets the extraneous "don't know" category as "indifference or neutrality", concluding that "a more negative construction could be put on the data."¹⁴ Such an interpretation was evident in the CWAC Report: "When pressed with the question, 57 percent of the public stated that they would not give open approval to their friends and relatives enrolling in the women's forces."¹⁵ Interestingly, however, the Elliott-Haynes survey, upon which this item is based, drew no such negative conclusion. If extraneous categories are to be used to support a particular ideological position, a more positive construction might just as easily be put on the data. Thus, we might conclude that 61 percent would not openly **disapprove** of friends and relatives joining the forces. But clearly, this is not the rationale underlying inclusion of extraneous categories in survey research. On the basis of responses to this item, the only appropriate interpretation that can be given to the data is that parents, male friends and relatives were divided in the extent to which they approved of their female friends and relatives joining the forces.

11. Ruth Roach Pierson, "Ladies or Loose Women", pp. 247-248; *"They're Still Women..."*, pp. 135-137.

12. *Ibid.*

13. Elliott-Haynes, p. 12.

14. Ruth Roach Pierson, *"They're Still Women..."*, p. 136.

15. CWAC Report, p. 28, cited in Pierson, *"They're Still Women..."*, p. 136.

Moreover, if we exclude the responses of French-speaking Canadians, we find that the majority of English-speaking Canadians (52 percent) approved of female friends and relatives' enlistment in the armed forces.¹⁶ The greater resistance among Francophones to women's uniformed services is reflected in the fact that only 22 percent of respondents approved of the enlistment of female friends and relatives in the armed forces. While no doubt, adherence to traditional attitudes toward femininity and women's proper sphere in Canadian society influenced Francophone (and Anglophone) attitudes toward women's labour force participation during WWII, the greater opposition to women's uniformed services evident among French-speaking Canadians here may be seen as part of a more general rejection of government defence policies and initiatives. For example, results of an April 27, 1942 plebiscite on conscription of men for overseas service indicated that 72 percent of adults in the Province of Quebec were opposed to such a measure, while only 28 percent voted in favour of conscription.¹⁷ Comparable figures for the other eight provinces indicated that 80 percent of Canadians voted in favour of the conscription issue, while 20 percent rejected compulsory overseas service for Canadian men. Figures for the nation as a whole similarly indicated that the majority (64 percent) of Canadians supported a wartime policy of conscription for overseas service, while 36 percent voted against the conscription issue.¹⁸

Locating the discussion of Francophone reaction to women's military participation within the broader historical context argues against a simplistic division of French Canadians' attitudes into "womanpower" requirements versus "maintaining homelife". A more holistic interpretation of the historical evidence which places the analysis of Francophone response to women's uniformed and civilian wartime service within the broader political, economic and social context is required.

A second item, contained in the Elliott-Haynes survey and upon which Pierson bases her analysis of public opposition to women's enlistment in the armed forces, is the question "How can women best serve Canada's war effort?" Seven percent of the civilian public answered "joining the women's forces."¹⁹ Five other categories took precedence. "Maintaining home life" ranked first in importance (26 percent); followed by "doing war work in factories" (23 percent); "part-time voluntary relief work" (13 percent); "conserving food, rationing" (11 percent); and "buying war bonds, stamps"

16. Elliott-Haynes, p. 13.

17. Donald Creighton, *Canada's First Century*. Toronto: The MacMillan Company of Canada Ltd., 1970, p. 256.

18. *Ibid.*

19. Elliott-Haynes, p. 8.

(8 percent).²⁰ Pierson argues that since "part-time voluntary relief work", "conserving food, rationing" and "buying war bonds, stamps" were all compatible with "maintaining home life", "the inescapable conclusion is that an overwhelming majority of Canadians, in 1942, saw women's place to be in the home, wartime or not."²¹ This conclusion, however, raises an important conceptual and analytical problem related to the implicit assumption that categories considered to be compatible with "maintaining home life" were necessarily incompatible with other less-traditional wartime contributions. There is no evidence, however, to suggest that "doing war work in factories" and "buying war bonds, stamps", or "conserving food, rationing" constituted mutually exclusive categories. The construction of a uniformed/civilian wartime employment versus maintaining homelife distinction may result in a more negative interpretation of public reaction to women's labour force participation than is warranted. At the same time, it is clear that women's uniformed service was not accorded high priority as a means for women to contribute to the national war effort.

Other items contained in the Elliott-Haynes and CIPO surveys of public opinion, which are not included in Pierson's or Park's analyses, reveal a more positive side of public opinion regarding women's wartime labour force participation both in and out of uniform. For example, Park argues that public opinion regarding women's labour force participation during WWII was "unable to reflect the wartime need for female labour in either the military or civilian sector"²² of the Canadian economy. Indeed, Park suggests that policy initiatives to secure a supply of female labour were taken despite a lack of public consensus/encouragement for such initiatives.²³ This interpretation is not supported by the responses to public opinion polls conducted during WWII.

20. *Ibid.*, the rankings of these categories remained the same when Francophone responses were analyzed separately, although the proportions changed with 40 percent of French Canadians ranking "maintaining homelife" as the most important contribution women could make to the war effort. Eighteen percent cited war work in factories, while only 3 percent cited "joining women's forces". That a greater proportion of Francophone respondents than their Anglophone counterparts (20 percent) felt women's greatest contribution to the war effort lay in maintaining homelife may again reflect their more general resistance to Canada's wartime role as a whole. Already opposed to the loss of sons to conscripted overseas service, it is perhaps not surprising that they objected more strongly to the possible loss of female friends and relatives from the family circle. Indeed, announcement of the national compulsory registration of women, in August 1942, "aroused unfavourable comment in Quebec". Employment of Women and Day Care of Children (completed sometime before August 24, 1950), part I, "History of the Wartime Activities of the Department of Labour", Public Archives of Canada (PAC), RG 35, series F, vol. 20, file 10, p. 80.

21. Ruth Roach Pierson, *They're Still Women...*, p. 136.

22. R.E. Park, "Public Opinion", p. 6.

23. *Ibid.*, p. 3.

Data regarding the extent to which women were needed in the armed forces and in war industry are particularly important in determining the degree to which public opinion reflected wartime "womanpower" requirements. Responses to an item contained in the Elliott-Haynes survey indicate widespread public recognition of the need for women both in war industry and in the armed forces. Specifically, 84 percent of those surveyed felt that women were needed in war industry, while 66 percent of respondents recognized the need for women in the armed forces.²⁴ Francophone respondents were less likely, however, to view women's military service as essential for the successful prosecution of the war. While 78 percent of Anglophone respondents recognized the need for women in the armed forces, only 40 percent of French Canadians felt women were needed for uniformed service.²⁵ Less recognition of the need for women in the armed forces among French Canadians was, no doubt, influenced by the fact that Francophone respondents were less likely to be aware of the existence of the women's services. When asked if they had even heard of the three divisions of the women's services, nearly all the Anglophones surveyed responded that they had. Ninety-nine percent had heard of the C.W.A.C. and R.C.A.F. (W.D.), while 98 percent recognized the W.R.C.N.S. by name. In contrast, only 77 percent of Francophone respondents had heard of the C.W.A.C.; 58 percent recognized the R.C.A.F. (W.D.) by name and less than half (41 percent) indicated that they had ever heard of the W.R.C.N.S.²⁶ While less awareness regarding the existence of the women's services on the part of Francophones may have influenced their recognition of the need for women's uniformed service, French-speaking Canadians' relative failure to perceive a need for women in the armed forces also reflected their more general resistance to Canada's wartime role as a whole.

This interpretation is consistent with responses to questions regarding women's reasons for joining the armed forces or taking jobs in war industries. Thus, while 65 percent of English Canadians cited patriotic factors underlying women's decisions to enroll in the women's services, only 36 percent of Francophone respondents attributed women's wartime uniformed service to such factors.²⁷ Forty percent of English Canadians compared to 24 percent of Francophones cited "DO THEIR BIT" as a factor underlying women's decisions to enroll in the armed forces. Thirteen percent of Anglophones versus 9 percent of Francophones indicated "Prestige (uniform)", while 12 percent of English-speaking respondents compared to only 3 percent of French-speaking respondents cited "Release manpower" as reasons why women joined the forces.²⁸ When asked why women took jobs in war industry, 57 percent of Anglophones versus 23 percent of Francophones cited patriotic factors. Thirty-nine percent of Anglophones compared to 19 percent of Francophones

24. Elliott-Haynes, p. 10.

25. *Ibid.*, p. 11.

26. *Ibid.*

27. Elliott-Haynes, p. 17.

28. *Ibid.*

cited "DO THEIR BIT", while 18 percent of English-speaking Canadians versus 4 percent of French Canadians indicated "Release manpower".²⁹

Moreover, the apparently greater conservatism among French Canadians toward the employment of women in the newly expanding war industries was seen, in part, as a reaction to the perceived threat that the drift toward industrial centres posed to "the traditional culture of French Canada, centered in homes and villages."³⁰ Thus, the Report on the Employment of Women attested to "the close-knit family unit revolving around the parish for its religious inspiration, social activities and cultural life" as an "outstanding characteristic" of agrarian-based French-Canadian society.³¹ The lure of higher wages in war industries attracted many young Francophone women, "whose parents saw the advantage of allowing their children to work away from home temporarily",³² from rural Quebec to the industrial centres of Montreal and Quebec City. Given the relatively poor pay conditions accorded service in the Women's Division of the armed forces, women's military service represented a decidedly unattractive option. Finally, despite the apparent resistance among French Canadians to women's wartime industrial employment, the Report on the Employment of Women concluded: "It must not be assumed...that Quebec women had not carried their share of work in essential services and war production, since the percentage of women at work and in war industries was proportionately as high as in the other areas."³³

One factor which may have contributed to differences in the perceived need for women in the armed forces and war industries was the severe competition for female labour between these two segments of the wartime economy. Indeed, recognition of the severity of the competition for uniformed and civilian "woman power" had led some to advocate the conscription of Canadian women to better serve the war effort.³⁴

Although no legislation establishing a system of compulsory selective service for Canadian women was proposed, analysis of responses of a random sample of Canadians to a CIPO poll conducted in 1942 indicated popular support for government initiatives regarding the drafting of single women between 21 and 35 years of age for wartime (civilian) job training. The survey revealed that 54 percent of those surveyed favoured the implementation of a system of selective service for Canadian women. Thirty-eight percent of those surveyed were opposed to the conscription of women for war-work, while 8 percent were undecided.³⁵

29. *Ibid.*

30. "Employment of Women", p. 31.

31. *Ibid.*, p. 30.

32. *Ibid.*, p. 34.

33. *Ibid.*

34. *Toronto Star*, August 23, 1943, p. 6.

35. *Toronto Star*, January 21, 1942, p. 3.

If one measure of public recognition of the need for increased female labour to meet Canada's wartime commitments was the support accorded a system of national selective service, another indication of widespread public support for the expansion of employment opportunities for women in the Canadian labour force was the endorsement of the principle of equal pay for working women. A survey of Canadian attitudes conducted in the fall of 1942 by the CIPO revealed that 79 percent of the Canadians interviewed supported the principle of equal pay for women in industry.³⁶ Sixteen percent were opposed to the principle of equal pay, while 5 percent were undecided.³⁷ Canadians' endorsement of equal pay for women was largely based on the belief that women were just as capable as the men they had replaced and that they should receive the same pay as men for doing a similar job.³⁸

If advocacy of equal-pay principles was to some extent motivated by egalitarian ideals, evidence suggests that support of such principles was also motivated by economic interest. Thus, for example, the "rate for the job" was largely advocated in an attempt to protect the economic interests of veterans in the post-war economy: "Women should not be permitted to lower the wage rates on jobs where they have replaced men, or in industries which formerly employed men only. ...Men leaving to go into the armed forces must be able to feel that women who carry on in their places are not being forced to undercut established wage standards."³⁹

The issue of the "wage rate" had particularly important implications for the recruitment of volunteers into the Women's Division of the armed forces. Thus, for example, it was suggested that the campaign to enrol 100,000 volunteers in the Women's Division of the armed forces "will be considerably aided when the conditions of pay for women in the services are improved."⁴⁰ Indeed, a survey conducted in July and August of 1942 claimed that "the greatest deterrent to enlistment appears to be the smallness of the basic and trades pay given to C.W.A.C. volunteers."⁴¹ Similarly, in response to a question in the CWAC survey regarding the reasons why eligible civilian friends of servicewomen hesitated to enroll in the women's forces, the largest proportion (27 percent) of respondents cited "poor pay and allowances".⁴² As well, in the Elliott-Haynes Report, while 54 percent of Canadians cited "make good money" as the major reason for women taking jobs in war industry, this factor was not even mentioned as a motive underlying women's enrollment in the

36. *Toronto Star*, February 19, 1943, p. 6.

37. *Ibid.*, p. 17.

38. *Ibid.*, p. 6.

39. *Toronto Star*, January 6, 1945, p. 4.

40. *Toronto Star*, January 5, 1943, p. 6.

41. Memo of August 19, 1942, to A.G. from Lt.-Col. J.E. McKenna. PAC, RG 24, Reel n° C-5301, file H.Q.S. 8984, quoted in Ruth Roach Pierson, "Jill Canuck: CWAC of All Trades, But No 'Pistol Packing Momma'." *Historical Papers/Communications historiques*, 1978, p. 109.

42. CWAC Report, p. 26.

armed forces.⁴³ French Canadians were more likely (62 percent) than their Anglophone counterparts (51 percent) to cite "make good money" as women's primary motive for working in a war industry.⁴⁴ In light of historical evidence which suggests that the primary motive of the majority of women entering the labour force during WWII was economic necessity, the attractiveness of uniformed service would have substantially diminished. Indeed, as the Elliott-Haynes Report indicated, "increase pay" was the single most important factor cited by those surveyed to make enlistment in the armed forces more attractive to Canadian women.⁴⁵

On July 24, 1943, the wage rate paid to women in the armed forces was raised from two thirds to four fifths that of men in the Canadian Army, increasing servicewomen's basic daily pay from \$0.90 to \$1.05 with a \$0.15 per day increase at the end of six months service.⁴⁶ The financial benefits accorded servicewomen at this time included trades pay, "according to their grouping on the same basis and at the same rates" as servicemen, and provision of dependent's (separation) allowance provided the servicewoman's total income, including the allowance, did not exceed \$2,100 annually.⁴⁷ The impact of the improved pay conditions and benefits for women in the armed forces on recruiting was evident.⁴⁸

Despite government attempts to improve pay conditions and benefits for women in the armed forces, the 16 percent increase introduced in the summer of 1943 did not appease public opinion which continued to advocate equalization of pay rates for servicemen and women. The results of a CIPO poll conducted the following year indicated that despite the pay raise, the majority of the Canadian public did not consider the increase sufficient. Fifty-seven percent of those surveyed continued to advocate complete equalization of pay rates for servicemen and women. Thirty-four percent opposed equalization of pay rates for service personnel, while 9 percent were undecided.⁴⁹ Several factors may account for the greater public endorsement of the principle of equal pay for women in industry, reflected in responses to the 1942 CIPO survey, than the support accorded equalization of pay rates for service personnel evident here. First, differences in public support for equal pay principles within the civilian and military sectors of the Canadian economy may reflect differential recognition of the need for womanpower in war-related industry and the armed forces. Second, greater support for the principle of equal pay

43. Elliott-Haynes, p. 16.

44. *Ibid.*, p. 17.

45. *Ibid.*, p. 21.

46. *Toronto Star*, July 24, 1943, p. 1; "Canadian Forces — Increases of Pay for Women's Services", July 24, 1943, *Dominion of Canada Official Report of Debates: House of Commons*, vol. V, 1943. Ottawa: The King's Printer, 1944, pp. 5,357-5,358. Also cited in Pierson, "Jill Canuck", p. 123.

47. *Ibid.*, p. 1; *ibid.*, pp. 5357-5358; *ibid.*, p. 123.

48. *Toronto Star*, November 18, 1943, p. 25.

49. *Toronto Star*, May 31, 1944, p. 20.

for working (civilian) women may reflect, in part, attempts to protect the economic interests of veterans in the post-war reconstruction economy. To the extent that protection of post-war economic interests was irrelevant to the issue of pay rates within the wartime military, responses to the 1944 CIPO survey may be a more accurate indicator of the extent to which advocacy of equal pay principles was motivated by egalitarian ideals. Third, less public support for equalization of pay rates for service men and women may reflect, in part, differential perceptions of wartime conditions of service for military personnel (e.g., risk of injury or loss of life for combat (male) personnel) and, consequently, differential perceptions regarding equalization of pay rates. Finally, the discrepancy evident in public support for equal pay principles between 1942 and 1944 CIPO surveys may reflect, in part, the cyclical pattern of response to crisis, on the one hand, and economic exigencies, on the other, that characterized women's wartime labour force participation.

Widespread support for conscription of women for essential war industries and endorsement of equal pay for civilian and uniformed women were indicative of Canadians' recognition of the wartime demands for "womanpower" necessary for the successful prosecution of the war. However, while wartime exigencies had necessitated the progressive recruitment of single, then childless married women for full-time employment and, finally, the recruitment of mothers with home responsibilities for part-time employment to meet the increasing demands for female labour,⁵⁰ public pressure to restrict employment opportunities for women in the post-war economy mounted as the national crisis drew to an end. If the dilemma of the early war years had been to recruit sufficient numbers of women to "free men to fight", the dilemma in the latter stages of the war effort was how to persuade women to return to their homes to "free jobs for men".⁵¹

The ideological and economic bases of public pressure to restrict women's participation in the post-war reconstruction of industry were evident. Not only did the employment of married women with home responsibilities have deleterious consequences for domestic relations and for the health and welfare of the nation's "child life", but women's continued employment constituted a serious threat to returning veterans in the post-war scramble for jobs.

While recruitment propaganda for women throughout the war had emphasized patriotic duty and the necessity of sacrifice for the nation at war, it had become transparently obvious early in the war effort that the primary motivation of the majority of women entering the labour force was economic

50. For an excellent review of federal government initiatives to recruit women into the labour force after 1942, see Ruth Roach Pierson, "Women's Emancipation and the Recruitment of Women into the Labour Force in World War II" in *The Neglected Majority: Essays in Canadian Women's History*, edited by Susan Mann Trofimenkoff and Alison Prentice. Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1977, pp. 125-145.

51. *Toronto Star*, March 6, 1945, p. 18.

necessity. The results of a survey of married applicants over 35 years of age, conducted in March 1943 by the Women's Division of the Toronto Employment and Selective Service Office, revealed that 59 percent of respondents cited "desire to supplement family income" as their primary objective in securing employment. Another 32 percent indicated "personal needs", while only 9 percent cited patriotic motives.⁵² Results of a similar survey conducted by the Quebec Jeunesse Ouvrière Catholique (Jocistes) were reported in the May 1943 issue of *Relations*. The investigation disclosed that almost one third (31.4 percent) of the sample of 700 gainfully employed female members cited "economic necessity — no other source of revenue" as their reason for working.⁵³

With the national crisis drawing to an end and the wartime demand for womanpower passed, the problem facing Canadian society became one of how to persuade female workers to relinquish their newly acquired economic and social independence. The problem was acute. If it was clear that the majority of women had secured employment for economic reasons, it was equally clear that the vast number of female workers were unwilling to relinquish their improved economic and social status. If Canadians, as a nation, assumed that women would "give back" men's jobs, working women did not share the majority opinion. A survey of women employed in Ontario war industries disclosed that more than 86 percent wished to continue working after the war. Eight-four percent of the married women surveyed wanted post-war employment: 95 percent of single workers, 100 percent of widows and 75 percent of female employees with spouses in the armed forces indicated their desire to remain at work in the post-war reconstruction economy.⁵⁴ The apparent determination of Canadian women not to relinquish the economic and social gains made during the war is reflected in headlines such as "Girls Invade Man's World and Intend to Stay There"⁵⁵ and "V-E Day Brings Boys Home But Girls Stick to Jobs."⁵⁶

Responses to a question in a 1943 CIPO poll regarding equal opportunity for women in the post-war era indicated that 72 percent of Canadians felt that men should be given the first chance for employment in the reconstruction economy. Twenty-four percent thought women should be given equal opportunity to compete with men for jobs in industry, while 4 percent were undecided.⁵⁷ In 1945, an almost identical question elicited a similar response with 69 percent of respondents favouring a "men first" policy in the post-war economy. Twenty percent of those surveyed thought women should have

52. Letter of April 8, 1943, from B.J. Sullivan to Mrs. Rex Eaton. PAC, RG 27, vol. 605, file n^o 6-24-1, vol. 1.

53. Memo of May 11, 1943, from Percy A. Robert, Montreal, to Mrs. Rex Eaton and Mr. Goulet. PAC, RG 27, vol. 605, file n^o 6-24-1, vol. 1.

54. *Toronto Star*, July 4, 1944, p. 18.

55. *Toronto Star*, November 1, 1944, p. 15.

56. *Toronto Star*, May 19, 1945, p. 18.

57. *Toronto Star*, April 21, 1943, p. 5.

equal opportunity with men, 8 percent responded with a “qualified” answer⁵⁸ and 3 percent were undecided.⁵⁹ Although some quarters argued for the inclusion of female employees in plans for the post-war reconversion of industry,⁶⁰ the majority of Canadians anticipated working women’s return to the home, whether voluntary or enforced.⁶¹ As one government official remarked: “...we’ll have trouble with women after the war, but we’ll just have to squeeze them out of jobs until they go back into their homes.”⁶²

Not surprisingly, with the national crisis drawing to a close and Canadian society faced with the task of “squeezing” women out of men’s jobs, the tenor of newspaper reporting of women in men’s jobs underwent a drastic transformation. Far from the reliable, efficient women who had donned the bandanas and smocks of industry in response to the national crisis, women war workers were coming to be viewed as a liability, no longer physically or mentally able to cope with the demands of production. The changing temper of the times was heralded in headlines such as “Women Can’t Take It As Well As Men In War Work”⁶³ and in articles which attested to lower female productivity.⁶⁴

Despite such arguments, no verifiable evidence of gender-differences in wartime industrial productivity is available. Moreover, the fact that employers were reluctant to lose a trained labour force⁶⁵ and that substantial circumstantial evidence exists which suggests that women war workers were at least as efficient as their male counterparts⁶⁶ argues against the contention of lowered female productivity. That such arguments came into prominence during the later stages of the war is understandable in light of government initiatives which sought to facilitate the return of married women to the home and to channel single war workers out of “men’s jobs” into traditionally female occupations: domestic service, nursing and teaching.⁶⁷

In summary, women’s labour force participation during WWII (both to meet Canada’s military and civil commitments) reflected a cyclical pattern of response to crisis on the one hand, and economic exigencies on the other. While efficient prosecution of the war had necessitated the recruitment of

58. Among the qualified answers, according to the CIPO, “by far the most frequent was to the effect that the breadwinner of a family, regardless of sex, should get the first chance at a job.” *Toronto Star*, October 17, 1945, p. 9.

59. *Toronto Star*, October 17, 1945, p. 9.

60. Such arguments represented both a response to women’s raised socio-economic aspirations and economic motivations as well as recognition of the fact that employers would be loathe to lose a trained labour force. *Toronto Star*, January 26, 1945, p. 6.

61. *Toronto Star*, June 9, 1943, p. 6.

62. *Ibid.*, p. 6.

63. *Toronto Star*, January 17, 1945, p. 19.

64. *Ibid.*, p. 19.

65. *Toronto Star*, January 26, 1945, p. 6.

66. See, for example, *Toronto Star*, November 23, 1942, p. 6; March 9, 1944, p. 22; February 17, 1943, 2nd section, p. 1.

67. For a discussion of post-war government policy, see Ruth Roach Pierson, “Women’s Emancipation”, pp. 125-145.

women into the armed forces and war industry, women's continued employment threatened to exacerbate the problem of post-war unemployment.

IV — Conclusion

During WWII, the majority of the Canadian civilian adult population recognized the wartime requirement for female labour both in the Women's Division of the armed forces and in war industries. The greater opposition among French-speaking Canadians toward women's uniformed service may have reflected French-speaking Canadians' opposition to the issue of conscription (of men) for overseas service, in particular; and a more general rejection of government defence policies and initiatives as a whole. Moreover, the apparently greater resistance among Francophones toward women's war-related industrial employment may have reflected a perceived threat to the traditional cultural and social life of agrarian-based Quebec society posed by the expansion of war-related employment opportunities for women in the industrial centres of the province. The economic advantages associated with women's wartime industrial employment made their temporary absence from the rural community acceptable. Failure to place the analysis of French Canadians' response to women's wartime labour force participation within the broader economic and social historical context may result in a more negative interpretation of Francophone (and Anglophone) opinion regarding the wartime participation of women both in and out of uniform. This is not to suggest that Canadians did not remain committed to traditional attitudes regarding women's femininity and proper sphere in society. What the historical evidence does demonstrate is that despite such traditional attitudes, Canadian public opinion was unequivocal in its recognition of wartime "womanpower" requirements and its support for initiatives to secure the supply of female labour necessary for the successful prosecution of the war.

The analysis indicates widespread popular support for endorsement of initiatives designed to secure the necessary "womanpower" required to meet Canada's civil and military commitments in support of the national war effort. The results of CIPO polls conducted in 1942 and 1944 indicate that the majority of Canadians supported the implementation of a system of national selective service for Canadian women and the principle of equal pay for women in both the civilian and military sectors of the Canadian economy. As well, analysis of responses regarding the extent to which parents, husbands, boyfriends and brothers would approve of the entry of female friends and relatives into the armed forces and war-related industrial employment suggests public approval of the employment of women both in and out of uniform. Moreover, if we exclude Francophone responses from the analysis of this item as it pertains to women's military service, the inescapable conclusion is that the majority of English-speaking Canadians (52 percent) approved of women's enlistment in the armed forces. Recognition of the existence of this substantial support has been long overdue.