Juvenile delinquency, a key concern in the context of the Cold War and the 1950s, was integral to the overall ideologies of the revolutionary Communist Party of Canada (CP), the reformist Co-operative Commonwealth Federation (CCF), and the reactionary Social Credit Party (SC). Women in these political movements, in spite of their ideological differences on many issues, held similar ideas on the reasons behind delinquency, even if they differed on the solutions to the problem. For the left parties — the CP and the CCF — delinquency had material roots: if society could provide more and better public services, delinquency would decline. In contrast, the conservative SC Party believed that the problems of capitalist modernity — urbanization, secularization, and the increase in working women — led to youth crime; young people needed to return to “traditional” values based on the nuclear family and conservative Christianity as an antidote to the problems of modern society. All critiqued the nature of the capitalist state and suggested that “modernity” bore the responsibility for causing unrest among young people. Far from being largely a concern of psychiatrists, doctors, and psychologists, the perceived rise in young people’s problems was a worry among all sectors of society from different points along the political spectrum.

La délinquance juvénile, l’une des grandes préoccupations dans le contexte de la guerre froide et des années 1950, faisait partie intégrante de la plate-forme idéologique du Parti Communiste du Canada (PC), de tendance révolutionnaire, de la Fédération du commonwealth coopératif (FCC) et du Parti Crédit Social du Canada (CS), à penchant réactionnaire. Les femmes de ces mouvements politiques avaient, malgré leurs différences idéologiques sur de nombreuses questions, des idées semblables.

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WOMEN MEMBERS of the Communist Party of Canada (CP) held strong views on the issue of youth delinquency after the Second World War. So did female members of the social democratic Co-operative Commonwealth Federation (CCF) and the conservative Social Credit Party (SC). These three political movements, located at opposite ends of the political spectrum, differed in ideology and in their views as to what they considered healthy and worthwhile. Yet the issue of morality and immorality among young people was a concern integral to all three. These groups of women all supported providing youth with some version of “healthy activity and worthwhile ideas.” Left- and right-wing women shared surprisingly similar ideas about what constituted the “youth problem” in the period following World War II. In particular, all three groups argued that the characteristics of the 1950s were to blame for a decline in values and that something needed to be done to restore what they saw as “morality.” Ultimately, the discourse of juvenile delinquency served similar purposes for these different parties. All discussed youth crime as a moral problem that needed to be corrected. All suggested that their parent parties possessed the remedy for what ailed unruly youths, though they differed somewhat on the potential solutions for youth delinquency. CP, CCF, and SC women all used the issue of juvenile delinquency to further their own respective political agendas, each group arguing for its party’s solution to this issue as a way of increasing support for its respective ideology.

The dominant discourse around juvenile delinquency among Social Credit, CCF, and Communist women shows that, while these three parties...
had differing ideologies overall, they shared similar views on the issue of
delinquency, with some differences in approach. Discourses surrounding
juvenile delinquency flourished in Cold War and 1950s Canada, and the con-
cerns and solutions of these three groups were closely connected to the
context of the time. Aspects of the post-World-War-II period — rapid ur-
banization, industrialization, secularization, indeed modernity — all seemed to
pose new challenges for parents. Many observers worried that young people
were out of control and lacked the values that their elders possessed.
Conservatives argued that this made young people easy prey for communist
subversives to lure. The left held similar fears about American culture and
values corrupting working-class youth, turning them away from socialism
and toward nihilism and materialism. As well, this discussion provides an
antidote to studies that have discussed the notion of delinquency through
an overly narrow focus on “experts” like psychiatrists, psychologists, social
workers, and others in the medical and therapeutic professions. Here, I
join other scholars of Cold War ideology and juvenile delinquency in exploring
their influence on immigrants, students, and other sectors of Canadian
society. Though the women whose views are explored here were located
at extreme positions on the political spectrum, many were from working-
class and rural backgrounds. I argue that women in the CP, CCF, and SC
Party held perspectives on delinquency that often, though not always,
coincided with those of more elite individuals, even if their proposed sol-
sutions to the youth problem differed from those of experts.

**Juvenile Delinquency: A Concern over the Twentieth Century**

Worries about delinquency reached new heights in Canada during
the Cold War, but concerns over the problem of youth immorality were

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2 For my definition of “modernity,” I have been influenced by Christopher Dummitt, *The Manly
Modern: Masculinity in Postwar Canada* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 2007),
p. 12 and passim; James C. Scott, *Seeing Like a State: How Certain Conditions to Improve the
Human Condition Have Failed* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998), passim.

3 Works like Mary Louise Adams, *The Trouble with Normal: Postwar Youth and the Making of
Heterosexuality* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1997), and Mona Gleason, *Normalizing the
Ideal: Psychology, Schooling, and the Family in Postwar Canada* (Toronto: University of Toronto
Press, 1999), in spite of their many strengths, focus largely on perceptions of delinquency among
elite “experts.”

4 On immigrants and delinquency, see Franca Iacovetta, *Gatekeepers: Reshaping Immigrant Lives in
Cold War Canada* (Toronto: Between the Lines, 2006), pp. 187–201. On students and the Cold
War, see Steve Hewitt, *Spying 101: The RCMP’s Secret Activities at Canadian Universities, 1917–
1997* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2002), pp. 66–90. For an overview of Canadian
experiences in the Cold War, see Reg Whitaker and Steve Hewitt, *Canada and the Cold War
(Toronto: Lorimer, 2003); Reg Whitaker and Gary Marcuse, *Cold War Canada: The Making of A
National Insecurity State, 1945–1957* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1994). The works by
Hewitt, Whitaker and Hewitt, and Whitaker and Marcuse do not discuss the issue of delinquency.
not new. In the early twentieth century, middle-class amateurs and professionals like social workers and doctors sought to police wayward adolescents through laws and juvenile courts. As Joan Sangster has noted, the Juvenile Delinquents Act (JDA) of 1908 was indicative of early attempts to reform young offenders and, theoretically, to save them from a life of crime. Enforcement of the JDA reflected dominant mores of racism, sexism, and elitism, which led to the unjust punishment of young people, especially girls, from Aboriginal, working-class, and racial and ethnic minority backgrounds. Like most other earlier attempts to deal with youth crime, the JDA simply maintained traditional hierarchical categories rather than creating a progressive alternative to the dominant system.

Before and after World War II, young girls defined as “delinquent” had usually stepped beyond the boundary of what was considered acceptable in terms of contemporary sexual practices. As Carolyn Strange has noted, middle-class reformers divided single women into categories of “respectable” or “fallen” based on middle-class standards of propriety. A single working woman who lived a chaste life and searched for a husband might be defined as respectable. Reformers and elite experts, however, tended to view single working women in urban areas as a moral problem since these women were, at least temporarily, free of male control. This belief was held in particular by experts in the medical profession. Women who dated many men, or white women who dated racialized men, or women who turned to prostitution out of economic necessity were classified as “fallen” or “ruined” and faced harsh punishment. Girls might also end up in trouble with the law if they failed to obey a curfew or stayed out all night.

French-Canadian nationalists portrayed sexually delinquent girls as a threat to the survival of the French-Canadian nation. Young women needed to be at home, married, and having children to ensure that

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10 Ibid., pp. 53–88.
French-Canadian culture would survive. In English Canada, social reformers and the courts expressed similar views, although with less concern over the falling birth rate. During World War II, youth delinquency moved dramatically to the heart of popular consciousness. Juvenile arrests increased from 9,497 to 13,802 between 1939 and 1942, while press accounts of instances of youth crime more than doubled between the decade of the 1930s and the period from 1939 to 1946. Jeffrey Keshen has argued that the wartime situation increased many people’s anxiety surrounding the threat of youth delinquency. More young people were working for wages outside the home and were understood to have more freedom to commit offences. Fathers and husbands away fighting were unable to offer guidance to daughters and sons who might go astray. More people were relocating from the country to the city than in the previous decade, and this movement led to crowding and inadequate housing conditions. Panic about youth crime led numerous cities and smaller communities to establish curfews to govern unruly teenagers. As in previous decades, this wartime concern over delinquency had a strongly gendered aspect. Media commentators blamed sexually active girls for rising rates of venereal disease and illegitimate pregnancies. The wartime context contributed heavily to the hopes of conservatives that the postwar period would restore the gender order and family stability.

The end of World War II ushered in a different attitude toward delinquency. Elites and individuals in civil society alike argued that the family had broken down because of the deprivation of the 1930s and the exigencies of the war. Commentators suggested that the “traditional family,” consisting of the breadwinning father and dependent mother and children, required strengthening. Fathers worried about the undue influence of the state, whose powers increased during wartime, on the family and private life.

A conservative gender order largely regained its dominance in mainstream postwar Canadian society. The federal state used psychological and economic techniques to marginalize women within low-wage

14 Ibid., pp. 365–366
15 Ibid., p. 366.
16 Ibid., p. 366.
17 Ibid., p. 367.
19 Ibid., pp. 9–10.
20 Ibid., pp. 11, 13.
jobs or to move women completely out of the paid work force. Psychologists and physicians put forward an ideal of mental health and well-being that involved women and children being placed in subordinate positions within the nuclear, heterosexual family. Similarly, young women workers during and after the war were expected to refrain from engaging in liaisons with men on the job site; women needed to engage in heterosexual coupling to find a husband, but for no other reason. This concern about women’s postwar roles was connected to jitters about children’s problems. Conservatives argued that the breakdown of the traditional family led to the delinquency of children.

Fear over delinquency became a particularly important concern because of the context of the Cold War. Government officials presented the conflict between Soviet communism and Western capitalism in apocalyptic, Manichean terms. If everyone in Canadian society did not lead an acceptable, “moral” life, then Canada would be easy prey for a communist takeover. Anything that deviated from mainstream norms, most notably divorce, homosexuality, marital infidelity, and juvenile delinquency, was seen as suspect and almost traitorous.

Conservatives saw the new youth culture as part of this attack on traditional morality. A teenager who “went bad” represented an attack on the image of the 1950s as a tranquil, affluent time. Commentators portrayed youth delinquency as a particular problem because of teenagers’ increasing sexuality. Governments brought in laws and policies that tried to ameliorate delinquency; this trend was indicative of the increase in state intervention after World War II, an aspect of the time that conservatives deplored. This fear of youth crime represents an example of a “moral panic,” as defined by Mariana Valverde, within Canadian society.


22 Stephen, Pick One Intelligent Girl, p. 7. See also Gleason, Normalizing the Ideal.

23 Stephen, Pick One Intelligent Girl, p. 42.

24 For background on the Cold War, see Whitaker and Marcuse, Cold War Canada, chap. 2–4.


26 On this point, see ibid., pp. 51–69.

27 For one particular example of this kind of law in the Quebec context, see Marshall, The Social Origins of the Welfare State, pp. 140–155. The Quebec government legislated a series of measures that ultimately moved youths toward compulsory school attendance and away from paid work. The government’s viewpoint, presumably, was that young people should be learning and not earning money that might be spent on immoral pleasures. Exceptions were made for young people whose families needed the extra income.

28 The term “moral panic” refers to a situation in which some condition, person, or group of people comes to be seen as a threat to the dominant society and traditional values. In particular, moral panics often result from anxiety over class, race, and gender issues felt by elites and common people in society. In the context of the 1950s, many argued that communism threatened the
Right- and Left-Wing Women’s Groups: Historical and Ideological Contexts

Scholars have often portrayed the period from 1920 to 1960 as a barren time for feminist activism, though this view has come under increasing criticism. The numerous women’s groups formed during the late 1940s and 1950s cast doubt on this assumption. The three women’s groups discussed here were all active between the two waves of feminism. Their existence confirms that there was considerable activity among Canadian women across the political spectrum during the 1950s.

Many historians have argued that the 1950s was a conservative decade, and Social Credit women undeniably held conservative views. Their perspective was based on fundamentalist Protestant Christianity, admiration for Western-style capitalism, and their own white, Anglo-Canadian mores. SC women had few ideas that differed from those of their male colleagues in the party. Conservative women did, however, find space for their views within the Social Credit Women’s Auxiliaries (SCWA) and in other women-only groups connected to the SC Party. In this way, SC women represented the “female voice” within a male-dominated party; however, through their auxiliary organizations, they also had an independent voice and existence separate from the parent organization.

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31 On the social background of Socred women, see the information found in Public Archives of Alberta [hereafter PAA], Social Credit Women’s Auxiliaries [hereafter SCWA] Papers, Box 1, Files 1–22, as well as in Brian T. Thorn, “Visions of the New World Order: Women and Gender in Radical and Reactionary Movements in Post-World War II Western Canada” (PhD dissertation, Trent University, 2006), chap. 2.


Like Social Credit men, SC women endorsed a reactionary, largely anti-modern, perspective: for example, these women posited that society had to return to what they viewed as “traditional” values, especially Christianity and the nuclear family. SC women’s views sometimes deviated from those of their male counterparts on certain issues, in particular, in endorsing the increasing inclusion of women in public life and politics. SC men made no such statements regarding the role of women.  

SC women, like first-wave feminists, proposed that women needed to come into public life to “clean up” politics and save the public realm from men who had ruined it. While most Socreds supported a global war against the forces of communism and the Soviet Union, some SC women expressed anti-war views and suggested that war resulted from the actions of foolish men who did not know how to govern nations and deal properly with international relations. Bob Hesketh has suggested both that Social Credit’s female supporters were often the wives and relatives of men in the party, not important conservative activists in their own right, and that SC women’s work for the party became increasingly less important to the male hierarchy during the 1940s and 1950s. In fact, right-wing women played a crucial role in putting forward the SC agenda and platform, even during the 1950s. Indeed, these women successfully carved out space for women’s roles and voices in the context of a strongly conservative party establishment.

The Communist Party and the Co-operative Commonwealth Federation were both parties of the left, and their members endorsed the establishment of a socialist or social democratic society by various means. As with SC members, women on the left had separate voices in their respective parties, through the Women’s Auxiliaries to left-wing trade unions and in female-only organizations like the CCF Women’s Council. Neither of these parties could have functioned in any manner without the activism of women. Men in the CP and CCF, however, did not value women’s contributions to their parties and saw females as subordinate members. Still, historians like Joan Sangster and Linda Kealey have convincingly argued that women’s participation in left movements provided space for women’s voices and activism that did not exist within mainstream society. While women did gain opportunities within left movements,
male (and many female) socialists and communists saw a woman’s role as being secondary and dependent. Many on the left saw women’s paid labour as a threat to higher male wages; these leftists supported the breadwinner ideology, which stated that one male wage should be enough to support a dependent family.40

The notion of female dependency on male wages continued, in one form or another, through the period discussed here. Even in a union as radical as the United Electrical, Radio and Machine Workers Union (UE), male CP activists endorsed higher wage rates for women to protect their own wages.41 As Julie Guard has suggested, the UE male leaders, almost all of whom either held memberships in the CP or were in close sympathy with the party, did not view fighting gender discrimination as an end in itself.42 Indeed, male CP and CCF supporters saw women’s oppression as resulting from the effects of an unjust capitalist society. When socialism replaced capitalist wage relations, women’s oppression would automatically end with the onset of a new, egalitarian society.

CP members viewed any feminist activism that took place outside the party’s boundaries as suspect and connected to middle-class feminism. The party argued that issues like equal pay for women and birth control were the domain of “bourgeois” feminists such as those in the CCF or the Women’s International League for Peace and Freedom (WILPF).43 As Andréée Lévesque has shown, CP women often saw their role as workers in the class struggle, not separately as women.44 Communists stated that women workers had no interest separate from the mass of workers as a whole.45 CCF members, both male and female, also argued for this view; women’s oppression resulted from an unjust economic system, not from male dominance or patriarchy.46 Thus separate women’s
groups within both the CP and CCF were placed in subordinate positions, even if left-wing women played crucial roles in promoting the ideologies of these parties.

Women and Delinquency: Similarities of the Right and Left
Despite the many ideological differences among these three women’s groups, they shared similar views on the issue of delinquency, even if they differed on what needed to be done about the problem. Prominent female SC members expressed perspectives on the issue of youth morality, linking it to women’s paid work. SC cabinet minister Ethel Wilson connected gender with the new immorality among young people. Women, according to Wilson, should support policies that promoted conservative values and should enshrine women’s power in the home. SC women feared that females were not applying their powers in the correct way, and that this was damaging to society.47

In 1966, Wilson remarked that one-quarter of Canada’s work force consisted of women; there were also many thousands of women who elected to carry on “what we might well term our native location — homemaking.” Wilson called this “an honourable state indeed.”48 Being a full-time wife and mother demanded that a woman be part-time nurse, teacher, psychologist, accountant, cook, and general servant; of course, no special educational facilities were available for women to learn these roles. Given that it was difficult to combine homemaking with citizenship and work, Wilson posed the query: how could women meet “the challenge of a changing social order?”49 In women’s homes and on the airwaves or in printed pages came “reports of increasing juvenile delinquency, child beating, desertion of new born babies by parents” and “family desertion by one or more parents.”50 Like elites in the fields of psychiatry and psychology, Wilson blamed working women for the perceived problems of delinquent youth. Women’s changing roles were taking Canada away from traditional values. Reactionaries lamented these changes. SC women used the issue of delinquency to further their argument that Canada needed to return to an earlier time, when women did not engage in paid labour outside the home, and, by extension, children were not turning toward delinquency. Hence, right-wing women promoted the primacy of delinquency as a key issue because it served their ideological programme. SC women largely supported the conventional, conservative viewpoint, as defined by such scholars as Mary Louise Adams, Mona Gleason, and Jennifer Stephen, that

47 PAA, SCWA Papers, Box 1, File 22, CBC Provincial Affairs Telecast, the Hon. Ethel Wilson, June 29, 1966.
48 Ibid.
49 Ibid.
50 Ibid.
elites in Canadian society held toward women. SC members argued that women should be confined largely within the home, although they suggested that conservative women could be permitted to step outside this role to reform a society that had left behind traditional values.51

CCF women felt similarly, if for different reasons. Kay McKenzie, wife of prominent CCF member Frank McKenzie, told the story of 17-year-old John, one of many young offenders imprisoned in Oakalla jail in Burnaby. The court had convicted John on a break-and-enter charge. John’s father and mother had married when she was 18, when neither was ready for the responsibilities of parenthood on a small income. John’s father had abandoned the family, which also consisted of a younger girl and an older boy, when John was four.52 “John never knew the relationship of father and son,” McKenzie remarked, “nor did he learn from it what a man’s strengths and responsibilities can be.”53 John’s mother became a waitress when she was 24. The job meant that the family had more money, but her shifts “came at unsuitable hours and the children were in the main left to fend for themselves.”54

Reflecting an anxiety over working mothers’ supposed neglect of their familial responsibilities, a key issue for many people on different points of the political spectrum in the 1950s, McKenzie criticized the capitalist system. “When John wanted his mother, she was not there. He felt that he was not important to her and their relationship was broken.”55 Instead of simply blaming the absent mother for her son’s turn to delinquency, as an SC supporter might have done, McKenzie argued that this situation might not have materialized if the state had provided more support for working families in the form of better housing, supplementary economic assistance, adequate nursery schools, and kindergarten and family counselling. She concluded, “We must build a society better suited to the growth of a stable family life.”56 McKenzie’s remarks tell us much about CCF women’s views on a number of issues. Many CCF members posited that the activist state could provide services for the people, especially the poor and working class. The election of social democratic governments at all levels, they argued, would result in a better society. This marked a clear difference from SC women, who, at least

51 Ibid. For descriptions of what the dominant society thought a woman’s traditional role should be, see, for example, Adams, The Trouble with Normal; Gleason, Normalizing the Ideal; Stephen, Pick One Intelligent Girl.
54 Ibid.
55 Ibid.
56 Ibid.
rhetorically, disdained the state and wanted to push toward “smaller government.” Like SC women, however, CCF members suggested that working mothers needed to be at home to counsel their children, thus ensuring that young people did not turn toward delinquent pursuits. Many mainstream and elite commentators also suggested that working women presented a problem for conventional morality in postwar society. Those on the left of the political spectrum argued that men needed to receive higher wages so that they could “keep” a family without having women work outside the home, offering another endorsement of the breadwinner ideology.57

In many ways, the CCF viewpoints on working women reflected those of more conservative, elite groups. Kay McKenzie’s remarks suggest both a condescending attitude toward working families and an unwarranted faith in the state to solve the problems of capitalism: it is unclear, for example, where the “support” that McKenzie mentions will come from. Her remarks also represent an implied endorsement of the nuclear family in her invocation of the need for a father figure for John. A man’s role was heavily connected to his status as a breadwinner for the family; this wage-earning status represented a crucial aspect of a father’s and husband’s masculine identity.58 If a father did not fulfil his role as a breadwinner, society portrayed him as less of a man. Society expected men to work and to provide for all of the family’s material needs; this conservative gender order further dictated that women should be at home, caring for children. McKenzie’s remarks offered implicit support for this ideology.

Communist Party women similarly linked delinquency with poor housing conditions and urban poverty; they argued that housing in some Canadian cities was “not fit for animals.”59 Members of the Communist-led “5000 Homes Now” committee had a special interest in juvenile delinquency and housing and presented radical solutions to this problem. Prominent CP supporters John Stanton and Harold Pritchett were members of this committee; Doris Hartley acted as the committee’s

57 This reflects an argument made by earlier North American socialists as well. See Newton, The Feminist Challenge to the Canadian Left; Parr, The Gender of Breadwinners.


secretary. In a pamphlet written shortly after the end of World War II, when housing for returning veterans was a concern, the committee’s remarks offered evidence of the gendered aspects of housing and their link to delinquency. “A mother and her four small sons are living in a two-room attic,” noted the pamphlet. “Not long ago there was a murder in the house. The mother has collapsed as a result of worry and anxiety about her boys whom she is trying to bring up as good citizens of Vancouver.”60 Appended to this statement was an item written by the Vancouver Council of Social Agencies, arguing, “juvenile delinquency is a rather loosely-used phrase which suggests crimes, misdemeanors and immoral conduct by boys and girls under the age of eighteen.”61 Poor housing conditions, which made normal life impossible for thousands of families, numbered among the key causes of delinquency. The CP concluded, “bad housing also undermines the family’s sense of pride and decency leading to a general lowering of standards.”62

Implicit in the “5000 homes” statement is a moral critique of absent fathers. This was also a class issue for the CP, which connected youth delinquency to men’s inability to make a living. The party used ideas that often took on a conservative and elitist tone to critique capitalism on moral and material grounds. Left movements had done this before. As Janice Newton has noted, early Canadian socialists suggested that women working outside the home represented a moral problem that needed attention; working women were a consequence of an immoral, acquisitive society that did not value human needs.63 Leftists used this argument to challenge capitalism; in a socialist society, men would make a large enough salary to “keep” women at home. Socialists argued that this was a key aspect of a morally just society. Left-wing men similarly stated that being able to protect a wife and family against powerful capitalists, even when on strike, represented a major part of a working-class man’s masculine identity.64 When arguing and striking for higher wages and better working conditions, left-wing males stated that they were doing this for their wives and children and to prove that they were true

60 UBCSC, Trade Union Research Bureau [hereafter TURB] Papers, Box 54, File 23a, Pamphlet, “The 5000 Homes Now Committee,” n.d.
61 Ibid.
62 Ibid. The pamphlet notes that “our veterans and the people must have homes!” and makes reference to the last days of World War II. Because of this, I assume that the pamphlet was written during the immediate aftermath of World War II. The pamphlet acknowledges the help of CCF member Grace MacInnis and of Tilly Rolston. Rolston later became a cabinet minister in W. A. C. Bennett’s Social Credit government.
63 Newton, The Feminist Challenge to the Canadian Left, chap. 2 and 5.
working-class men.65 As Franca Iacovetta has suggested, left-wing men portrayed working-class women as subordinate and dependent individuals.66 While they criticized capitalists, left-wing men continued to articulate a kind of working-class masculinity that subordinated working women.

In suggesting that single-parent families were abnormal and that children should not be consuming alcohol, having sexual relations, or reading crime or sex comics, the CP presented an argument used by proponents of censorship. Antonio Gramsci’s theory of hegemony helps us to understand why the CP accepted some views shared by conservatives, especially regarding gender. Many communists held “puritanical” views on sexual relations and criticized capitalism as fostering sex perversion, lewdness, and homosexuality, which the CP portrayed as pathological. Conversely, communists tried to portray their party as one of sobriety and morality, thus supporting conventional aspects of sexuality — such as monogamy and opposition to premarital sex — even if they held much more radical ideas on other issues. In their private lives, communists, especially men, were not always so conventional. As a number of autobiographies and biographies of Canadian and American communists show, CP men supported the dominant notion that non-monogamous relationships were appropriate for men but not for women, thus enforcing traditional gender hierarchies.67

The link between delinquency and absent parents had become an accepted part of the dominant discourse in all sectors of society during this period. Even individuals who held radical views had trouble escaping the paranoid atmosphere of the 1950s. Many mainstream commentators saw the Cold War as a Manichean struggle between the righteous capitalist west and the evil Soviet empire.68 Even those under attack — the CP in this case — did not always go beyond the accepted values of the time. Like the

65 On this point, see ibid., pp. 211–222; Newton, The Feminist Challenge to the Canadian Left, passim.
SC Party, and especially the CCF, communists aspired to turn youths into “good citizens.” In promoting the idea of increased youth delinquency, both groups of left-wing women, like those of the SC, furthered their own political agendas. The CCF and CP women supported increased state intervention, in the form of new and more generous welfare and recreation programmes, to assist poor and working-class youth. Delinquency thus served as a strong justification for their support for increased state activism.69 All three groups of women also endorsed the notion that women’s sexuality needed to be contained within nuclear, heterosexual families, an argument that reflected those of experts, particularly in the medical profession.70 The ideology of “containment” in reference to women’s sexuality, as expressed by Elaine Tyler May, existed across the ideological spectrum and found expression among more elite groups as well as among political women.71

A criticism of new forms of mass media, notably comic books, was a theme common to all three women’s groups. This reflected their concern with the degeneracy of “modern times.” Offering an explicit connection between the undermining of the family and delinquency and “mass media,” a Social Credit supporter remarked: “the sly propaganda of mass publications of comic books and ‘popular’ magazines of book clubs and motion pictures, radio and ‘uplift’ organizations — all is designed to lower the moral standards of the individuals comprising our families, and thus assist in breaking down the great family tradition.”72 This criticism of media, particularly comic books, was common in publications of various political stripes during this period. For SC supporters, this concern related to their argument that media attacked the traditional values of family and Christianity that the party supported. North American society was becoming more urban, atomized, sophisticated, and, arguably, secular during this time. This new society represented a challenge to SC values, and supporters reacted strongly against it. They saw the nation and society as being a kind of family in macrocosm. Women working outside the home during and after World War II, along with new forms of media, represented a clear threat to the SC vision of the family. They identified individual responsibility, conservative Christianity, and anti-statism as solutions to the problems of post-World-War-II Canada.73

69 On this point see Dummitt, The Manly Modern, introduction.
70 Strange, Toronto’s Girl Problem, pp. 204–208 and passim.
72 Canadian Social Crediter [hereafter CSC], vol. 2, no. 18, September 5, 1951.
73 Ibid. For the information in this section on the media, I have drawn on Noam Chomsky and Edward Herman, Manufacturing Consent: Thought Control in a Democratic Society (Boston: Beacon Press,
Social Crediters believed that society was witnessing a decline of morality and the growth of “sadistic” pleasure-seeking, which culminated in murders and other crimes. Like the left parties, Social Credit wanted to end the incentive “to peddle evil for profit.”

One of the manifestos of the SC movement stated that “we must attack” the “filth” in postwar Canadian society. Scholars like Mary Louise Adams have argued that more elite commentators in the media and in the medical profession expressed concern about the moral effects that comic books had on young people. SC supporters similarly weighed in against violent and sexualized media that were, in their view, responsible for youth turning toward crime and sex. After crime comics, the party argued, “let us tackle anew the abolition of those other crimes against decency, integrity and Christianity which afflict humanity today.”

Unlike elite discourses on this issue, Social Credit policy aimed to turn back the clock to an imaginary time when delinquency did not exist. Opposition to a materialism that had “run riot” reflected the party’s reactionary viewpoint. The Socred perception of morality held that the material within comic books was “filth” that needed to be censored lest it afflict the minds of impressionable Christian youth.

Communist Party women were also concerned about the impact of new forms of media, notably “crime comics,” on young people. CP women’s discourse on this issue brought together elements of the views of both CCF and SC women. Like SC supporters, communist women believed that post-World-War-II life was corrupting young people; in this sense, they saw delinquency as a moral issue. Like CCF women, although unlike those of Social Credit Party, communists believed that delinquency had economic roots as well. CP women sometimes agreed with conservative and elite commentators’ writings and statements concerning delinquency. Auxiliary members of CP-led trade unions used ideas surrounding delinquency to decry the corruption of children during the 1950s. At the 1955 convention of the International Union of Mine, Mill, and Smelter Workers’ Auxiliaries, a resolution was passed stating, “it is generally admitted that indecent literature, such as crime, horror, sex, and war comics, is very harmful to the character education of the children.

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74 CSC, vol. 5, no. 21, October 20, 1954.
75 Ibid.
76 Adams, The Trouble with Normal, pp. 142–158.
77 CSC, vol. 5, no. 21, October 20, 1954.
78 Ibid. For a discussion of comic books and their association with immorality during the Cold War, see Tom Engelhardt, The End of Victory Culture: Cold War America and the Disillusioning of a Generation (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1995), pp. 96–98, 137–139.
who read them.”79 This kind of material was in easy reach of children, and
the convention resolved to take a firm stand in urging “both the federal
and provincial governments to enforce legislation, that is now on the
statute books, aimed at removing indecent literature from the newsstands,
by making the distribution of same a severely punishable offence.” Not
unlike conservative women, communist women proposed to censor mat-
erial that they argued was harmful for young people. People on different
points on the political spectrum all suggested that postwar media had a
negative impact on youth.80

At their convention the previous year, the Mine-Mill Auxiliaries had
outlined a step that CP women, in Canada and internationally, were
taking to turn children’s minds in a more wholesome direction. Women’s
Auxiliaries in Canada, they noted, had been “speaking out against crime
comics, salacious literature and war and gangster movies, all of which
are contributing to the delinquency of many children.”81 In conjunction
with the Congress of Canadian Women, a CP-led group, Mine-Mill suppor-
ters urged children to compete in a contest entitled “Friendship Among
Children Throughout the World.” All entries in the contest were later
shown in other countries through the cooperation of the Women’s
International Democratic Federation, a communist-supported organiza-
tion for women from various nations. The extent of participation by
Canadian children remained unspecified.

The language of delinquency made its way into the CP press, where it was
used to buttress anti-capitalist arguments. In a 1951 Pacific Tribune article,
prominent Communist Party member Betty Griffin presented a strong cri-
tique of American media, particularly comic books. She remarked, “the
comic book violates every standard of good literature. In the majority of
cases they misrepresent reality, and in specific cases, such as Little Orphan
Annie, Joe Palooka and Steve Canyon, are used for definite purposes of
propaganda suggesting racial superiority and intolerance.”82

In a later article, Griffin again spoke out against comic books, arguing
that they should be banned in Canada. She quoted approvingly the
work of Dr. Fredric Wertham, author of the highly conservative tract
The Seduction of the Innocent and a rabid anti-communist, who had
offered a critique of comic books as undermining the moral values of
American youth.83 As part of his research, Wertham had interviewed a

79 UBCSC, Mine-Mill Papers, Box 17, File 2. Resolution 13, passed at the 7th Annual Convention of
Ladies’ Auxiliaries to the Union of Mine, Mill, and Smelter Workers, Canada, Rossland, BC, July
18, 1955.
80 Ibid.
81 UBCSC, Mine-Mill Papers, Box 17, File 5, Report to the Sixth Annual Convention of the Auxiliaries
to the Officers and Members of the IUMM&SW, 1954.
82 Pacific Tribune, September 7, 1951.
83 Wertham is mentioned in Adams, The Trouble with Normal, pp. 150–156.
20-year-old man who had killed another person during a robbery. Griffin and Wertham attributed the young man’s mental state to his “being conditioned to violence by a steady diet of comic books.” 84 Thus left-wing women used ideas endorsed by more conservative experts like Wertham. To her credit, Griffin used the comic book controversy to challenge racism and capitalism, furthering the more radical aspects of the CP’s agenda. The CP’s use of the delinquency issue was two-sided. It did, in many ways, advance the party’s left-wing agenda; however, it did so in such a way that did not challenge elite views of delinquency.

Other CP women supported Griffin’s view. As part of a letter to the editor, Cora Phillips, president of the Women’s Auxiliary to the Vancouver Civic Employees Union, presented a slightly more nuanced view of comic books. Her Auxiliary had undertaken a discussion of comic books and their effects and had concluded that, while there were some good comic books printed for children, most were not in this category. “Most of our members are mothers or grandmothers,” she noted. To that end, “we are shocked when we see the horrible front covers on these comics ... the contents from an artistic and literary standpoint, lead you to believe that most comics are written by madmen and dope fiends.” 85 Using an anti-capitalist perspective, Phillips stated that comic book publishers wanted to “make as much profit as they can as quickly as they can, without any thought to the ultimate social consequences to these young readers.” 86 Presenting an argument with which Social Credit women would have been comfortable, she noted that her Auxiliary members hoped “that more publishers will bring out the kind of comic books that will be entertaining, instructive, and will tend to raise the moral and ethical standards of young people.” 87 The combination of an anti-capitalist, economic critique of comic book writers and publishers with a moral critique reflects the two-sided nature of leftist women’s views on morality and society. The negative beliefs that many held toward comic books were not simply elite or conservative views; indeed, many in society subscribed to these ideas. 88

85 Pacific Tribune, April 17, 1953. The mention of “dope fiends” is interesting and indicative of the concern that young people were becoming increasingly involved with drugs during this period. See Catherine Carstairs, Jailed for Possession: Illegal Drug Use, Regulation and Power in Canada, 1920–1961 (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2006), passim.
86 Pacific Tribune, April 17, 1953.
87 Ibid.
CCF women did not focus on the issue of crime comics and their perceived impact on young people to the extent that SC and CP women did. CCF supporters like Laura Jamieson were, however, concerned about the impact of “modern times” on youth and expressed the view that young people needed to be transformed into good citizens. Jamieson offered a critique of those in power who had failed to solve the problem of delinquency. The voluntary sector attempted to ameliorate the situation: school boards gave night school lectures on marriage and family problems, while the Young Men’s and Young Women’s Christian Associations (YMCA and YWCA) held discussion groups on this topic. Nonetheless, Jamieson argued that these remedies were inadequate “compared to what could be done by society if our men in authority were determined to prevent delinquency instead of always talking about it and dealing with it after it has happened.”

She praised parents who established groups to talk about issues related to child-rearing; some parents also set up cooperative playgrounds. However, the government gave them no financial help in establishing or maintaining these groups. Similarly, there were no courses available to teach parents how to set up such groups. With this in mind, Jamieson argued, “no department of government, provincial or local, gives them any help; yet I believe they are doing by far the most important work that is being done anywhere to prevent delinquency and [develop] citizens with well-adjusted emotional capacities so that they can give leadership instead of being a drag on society.”

Jamieson’s concern was thus with making “good citizens” and with helping children who were in trouble.

Jamieson’s faith in expert knowledge to solve the issues associated with delinquency was perhaps misplaced. Mona Gleason has argued that social workers often supported the idea that young people were turning to delinquency because of a lack of morals. Social workers, too, endorsed conservative perceptions of why delinquency was occurring and what needed to be done about the problem. Further, as Christopher Dummitt has convincingly argued, social work and other expert knowledge was explicitly gendered as male. Expert knowledge, reflecting Progressive Era values, was associated with efficiency, rationality, and containing risks taken by young people and others. Although it was not explicitly stated, Jamieson and others who advocated expert advice as part of the solution to the

90 Ibid.
91 Gleason, Normalizing the Ideal, chap. 2 and 3.
92 BCARS, Laura Jamieson Papers, Box 2, File 15, “Broadcast – Town Meeting,” March 27, 1952; Gleason, Normalizing the Ideal, chap. 2 and 3.
93 Dummitt, The Manly Modern, chap. 5.
94 Ibid., pp. 23–24, chap. 4 and 5.
problem of youth delinquency supported a male-centred approach to dealing with this issue.

Jamieson also speculated on the root causes of the problem, in that “society is responsible for delinquency in allowing itself to deteriorate and become corrupt,” showing the critique of postwar modernity that the other women’s groups also expressed. Social control broke down, Jamieson argued, because young people no longer respected authority, a view that the SC Party also supported. Offering an argument typical of many CCF members, she continued, “we are at the end of an era, of a society based upon profit and greed for profit.” In a strong critique of the dominant system, Jamieson stated that capitalism created delinquency. Presenting an argument congruent with the social work backgrounds of many CCF women, she remarked: “the pity is that [youth] rebellion takes the destructive form of delinquency, instead of the constructive form of working for a new social order.”

This statement suggested that delinquency would disappear when capitalism did, reflecting a common left-wing argument. When capitalism fell, all of the problems that came with a capitalist society — misogyny, racism, and delinquency among them — would cease to exist. This moral critique of modern capitalism was a crucial element of the CCF’s ideology. Unlike the SC Party, the CCF did not want a return to older values but rather a move toward more state governance and state-run programmes to combat delinquency and poverty. In this sense, the CCF’s approach to delinquency was typically modern. Materialism, selfishness, and violence, exacerbated by the Soviet threat and the possibility of nuclear war, dominated the period following World War II. To solve these problems, society needed a kind of “ethical democratic socialism,” not only to establish welfare state programmes to help poor and working-class people, but also to effect more democracy in Canada, a point that the CCF emphasized to distinguish itself from the CP.

96 Ibid.
97 Ibid. See also Jamieson’s statements on girls’ education in her unpublished manuscript, “The Girls’ Co-op Houses,” n.d., found in BCARS, Laura Jamieson Papers, Box 2, File 15. I assume that the latter statement was written during the 1940s since Jamieson notes that she and some friends had established the first co-op house in 1941.
Women and Delinquency: Differences Between Right and Left

While these three groups of women agreed that the period following World War II produced delinquency, they differed as to what needed to be done to ameliorate the problem. Social Credit women, given their evangelical Protestant leanings, proposed that a return to biblical values presented the answer to youth social problems. An unsigned article in the SC newspaper, the *Canadian Social Crediter*, offers evidence of the SC viewpoint on the family. The item, entitled “The Family and Democracy,” argued that the “home is the cradle of society and the foundation of democracy.” Exalting the home in a way typical of right-wingers, the article commented that it represented “the haven of the family, and the family is the basic unit of society. If then, the home goes into the discard, so does the family and so does the kind of society which we ostensibly maintain. Our very democracy is threatened.”

Modern society, according to the SC Party, needed to adhere to “the moral law,” referring to the Bible and Christianity. This idea had a gendered aspect: “the biological fact is that without a society of man and women, humanity would fail to exist.” From the statement that “the community, and in turn the nation, is no more than a family of families,” the article arrived at an apparently predestined conclusion: “hence it is no problem to ascertain why the family is despised in the totalitarian states: — it is sabotaged, hampered, and diverted from its God-ordained purpose.” The reactionary view of the SC Party, with its suggestion that a return to older, biblical values was necessary, is evident here. The CP and the CCF also exalted the family; however, neither supported the return to an imagined, older period.

SC men supported a kind of “Christian masculinity,” which upheld the breadwinner ideology above all else, but also emphasized that men should follow strict biblical teachings surrounding gender. The SC understanding of gender was thus fundamentally reactionary. Christopher Dummitt has argued that those who believed in “modern” manhood emphasized male rationality, efficiency, belief in progress, and also risk management through regulation and expert advice and knowledge. The SC Party rejected this vision of masculinity and instead harkened back to an older form of Christian manhood, which emphasized men’s responsibility to

99 *CSC*, vol. 2, no. 18, September 5, 1951. The *CSC* was, theoretically, the organ of all Canadian Social Crediters, including British Columbians. In practice, however, much of the material focused on the Alberta party.
100 *CSC*, vol. 2, no. 18, September 5, 1951.
101 Ibid.
102 Ibid.
103 Ibid. On masculinity, see Rutherdale, “Fatherhood and the Social Construction of Memory.”
protect the home and family from external threats, notably communism and other leftist movements.

SC women supported their party’s conservative perception of gender. These women argued that delinquency was part of a mysterious outside force that threatened the traditional family. Grace Gough, provincial president of the Ontario Social Credit Women’s Auxiliary and second vice-president of the National SCWA, as well as an SC candidate for federal parliament in Kingston, Ontario, wrote in 1964 that “teenage tyranny is not new, but is vastly more prevalent than it used to be.”105 Young people, she argued, were the linchpin of society, and the idea of what was considered young had changed. Before the 1950s, “youth” referred only to teenagers; however, that decade saw the term expanded to people in their twenties as well. While admittedly only one opinion, Gough’s remarks offer evidence that the 1950s and 1960s saw the development of an increasingly visible “youth culture,” not only in the United States and Europe but in Canada as well, as scholars such as Doug Owram have suggested.106 Young people were supposed to be the hope of a future society, but youth culture had begun to turn toward immorality, sexual and otherwise, in the 1950s. This only increased anxiety among conservatives like Grace Gough over the potential that young people were turning away from Christian values.107 Thus SC views on youth immorality coincided with those of conservatives elsewhere in North America and the Western world.

Like SC supporters in Western Canada, Grace Gough argued that a threat existed to traditional values: the constant disregard of biblical laws “with our ever following the god of Mammon — in the folly of thinking money means security — has brought us the horrors of wars, famines, and pestilence.”108 In this way, Gough borrowed from the anti-war discourse of the left to attack the materialism of the postwar world. Unlike the “social gospel” tradition of the left, which was strong in the CCF,
Gough rejected the idea that any sort of redistribution of wealth should accompany moral reforms. SC women held a negative view of human society, in contrast with the left parties, whose members argued that humanity could change and improve with better access to measures introduced by the welfare state. Gough argued that humans had created class warfare, disregarded truth and honesty, and, perhaps most importantly, left behind spiritual pursuits for purely material concerns. This was a key aspect of SC rhetoric surrounding their suspicion of the post-World-War-II years.

Gough applied to the perceived problem of juvenile delinquency the standard SC view that modern people had moved away from the Bible and traditional Christian belief. As part of this viewpoint, taxation was considered an evil since it had been used “for the upkeep of crime costs,” reflecting SC supporters’ opposition to “big government.” Unemployment, the welfare state, and mental homes and hospitals created a situation in which “this wonderful body God created for us has become abused.”

Gough outlined a possible solution to the problems of society; using strongly gendered language, she endorsed the sexual division of labour, remarking that only sons should work.

Many commentators, both professional experts and such unofficial “experts” as newspaper columnists and church leaders, expressed concern that the traditional family might fall by the wayside in the aftermath of World War II. To re-establish the traditional family, governments at the federal and provincial levels offered welfare provisions to families only, not to single women. Conservatives portrayed delinquency as a major threat to the establishment of the conventional family and presented solutions to the youth problem in large part to re-establish the family. SC women thus used the issue of delinquency to further their gendered political programme. Unlike leftist women, they expressed no sense of a more progressive “social feminism,” which argued that female virtues might remake the public sphere for the better.

109 The “social gospel” refers to the idea, prevalent among many liberal-minded Christians, that religious people had a responsibility to bring God’s kingdom to earth in the “here and now.” This implied a responsibility to help the poor, the working class, and immigrants. See Valverde, *The Age of Light, Soap, and Water*, passim.


111 Ibid.

112 Ibid.


The SC world view was very similar to that of American conservatives from the same period. Right-wingers feared modernity, secularism, and the gains that women and the labour movement had made during the 1930s and World War II. During the 1950s, they tried to turn back these advances, with no inconsiderable success. In the United States, as in Canada to a lesser extent, “Cold War Warriors” successfully demonized communists, socialists, social democrats, and even liberal critics of American capitalism and imperialism. Being accused of communist or leftist sympathies potentially meant losing one’s job, public ostracism, or even death, as in the case of Herbert Norman and Julius and Ethel Rosenberg. Right-wing women in Canada were part of this conservative tidal wave.

The pronouncements of Alberta’s Social Credit cabinet minister Ethel Wilson on the issue of delinquency were indicative of the general SC viewpoint. Wilson commented on a supposed increase in incidents of suicide, attempted and successful, among young people, without citing any statistics on the subject. “Could it be that we, as adults, have failed to live what we say we believe? Or have we failed to equip them to withstand the stress and strain of the space age?” she asked. Wilson remarked that adults had a responsibility to provide youths with security: “we must have confidence in our ability to meet the challenge of the future.” She hoped that government initiatives like the Women’s Information

116 Herbert Norman was a scholar of Japanese history and, later, a close associate of General Douglas McArthur in the reconstruction of postwar Japan. As Canada’s ambassador to Egypt, he played a key role in brokering a peaceful solution to the Suez Crisis in 1956–1957. Because of his ties to communists at Cambridge in the 1930s and his use of a Marxist approach to Japanese history, the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) and anti-communists in the United States wanted Norman to be prosecuted. The constant scrutiny of his personal life led Norman to commit suicide by jumping off a roof in Cairo in 1957. On Norman, see Roger Bowen, Innocence Is Not Enough: The Life and Death of Herbert Norman (Vancouver: Douglas and McIntyre, 1986); Whitaker and Marcuse, Cold War Canada, pp. 402–425. Julius Rosenberg had worked on the development of the atomic bomb during World War II. In 1950, the United States government discovered a British-American spy ring that had given secrets regarding the development of the bomb. This led to the arrest of Julius and his wife Ethel on charges of espionage. The United States government executed the Rosenbergs in 1953, the only two Americans to be executed for espionage during the Cold War. On the Rosenberg case, see especially Robert and Michael Meeropol, We Are Your Sons: The Legacy of Ethel and Julius Rosenberg, 2nd ed. (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1986); Ronald Radosh, Rosenberg File: With a New Introduction Containing Revelations from National Security Agency and Soviet Sources, 2nd ed. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1997).


118 PAA, SCWA Papers, Box 1, File 22, CBC Provincial Affairs Telecast, the Hon. Ethel Wilson, June 29, 1966.
and Cultural Bureau would fill a need “for all those who wish to become more familiar with the responsibility of good citizenship.” The Alberta Women’s Bureau was an organization established to help new immigrants “integrate” into Canadian society. Wilson believed that SC women could assist in helping European women “become Canadian.” The SC Party suggested that conservative women had a role to play in making Canada into a better nation by fostering values favouring capitalist democracy as practised in Western nations like Canada and conservative gender roles. Like their counterparts on the left, Socreds were “social engineers” of sorts in their belief that humans and human society could be changed to reflect certain values.

The SC Party placed much emphasis on youth as the hope of the future, as other political parties did. Among SC supporters, however, the fear that communism and modernity would corrupt youth influenced policy decisions. Thus the Alberta SC Party resolved to teach youth the benefits of “good citizenship,” meaning opposition to such pernicious societal elements as communism, crime and sex comics, and vulgar movies. Ethel Wilson made this viewpoint more explicit in another address, this time to the Alberta legislature. According to Wilson, “the large majority of our youth are leading normal, law-abiding lives.” Young people wanted “the challenge of patriotism and the integrity of discipline.” Paralleling Grace Gough’s arguments, Wilson argued that youth wanted to learn from “new lessons built on old truths.” She placed the blame for juvenile delinquency and youth crime on the fact that governments were spending too much time and effort destroying these timeless truths. In another invocation of conservative religious beliefs, she remarked that it was “an historical fact that high moral and social standards, based on firm religious convictions, are an absolute essential in the preservation of democracy.”

Wilson’s statement offers evidence of the SC fear of moral decay in capitalist society and the hope that youth could overcome these problems and continue with, or return to, strong Christian convictions. The notion of providing “security with freedom” was a key SC idea; it took on a particular

119 Ibid.
120 On the attempts to “integrate/assimilate” immigrants into Anglo-Canadian culture, see Iacovetta, Gatekeepers, passim.
121 PAA, SCWA Papers, Box 1, File 22, CBC Provincial Affairs Telecast, the Hon. Ethel Wilson, June 29, 1966. Although this material is from the 1960s, I believe that it accurately reflects Socred attitudes toward delinquency during the 1950s as well. On Wilson and the establishment of the Women’s Bureau, see Finkel, The Social Credit Phenomenon in Alberta, pp. 96–98, 166.
122 PAA, Floyd Baker Fonds, Box 1, Item 73, Address to the Alberta Legislature by the Hon. Ethel S. Wilson, March 4, 1966.
123 Ibid.
124 Ibid.
resonance during the 1950s, with the Cold War emphasis on security/insecurity. As part of the ideology of “security with freedom,” SC emphasized anti-statism; in practice, this meant using the state in particular ways, notably to assist the wealthy, big business, and private property and to sanction and censor material that it found objectionable. The presence of free-market, capitalist values meant “freedom” for Canadian and other societies, while the SC definition of “security” meant defending Canada against the communist threat. This represented a clear difference from the left-wing parties, which argued for increased state intervention to improve the lives of young, working-class people, thus assisting in eliminating the problem of delinquency. Some SC supporters held an ambivalent viewpoint toward capitalism. Most revered capitalist democracy, seeing it as a bulwark against Soviet expansionism and the creeping menace of the federal state. Conversely, other party members saw modernity, a stage of capitalism, as being negative for Christian youth. Conservatives deplored sex perversion, comic books, rock and roll music, and illicit drugs, all elements that led to delinquency, resulting from capitalist modernity. SC supporters reconciled this contradiction by emphasizing the positive aspects of technology, which helped to effect economic prosperity and security against communism, while expressing highly reactionary views on issues like women working outside the home, sexual freedom, and delinquency. In this way, Socreds were right-wing technocrats, given their focus on technological progress but social conservatism. All three parties were critical of capitalism, albeit in very different ways.¹²⁵

Delinquency received far less coverage among CCF members than did other concerns like peace and international development. Whereas the more extreme groups — SC and the CP — saw this issue as one of vital import and treated youth crime as an almost apocalyptic problem, the CCF, with its belief in evolutionary change, saw the problem as one that could be solved through gradual means. For the CCF, the delinquency issue served to further the party’s social democratic agenda. Laura Jamieson’s views on delinquency provide a capsule version of the general social democratic viewpoint on this topic. Jamieson had a particular interest in juvenile crime because of her background in social work. Her position as a juvenile court judge in Burnaby also gave her a unique perspective on youth issues. At a public meeting in 1952, Jamieson presented her views on the problems of youth. “Parents and the family provide the foundation of character in children,” she noted. “Unless children have parents with both the desire and knowledge to

train them properly, modern conditions, imposed by society, make it very difficult for children to escape delinquency.”126 To that end, teachers, social workers, and probation officers were important people in a child’s development.

Jamieson also argued that parents bore the ultimate responsibility for raising children, a viewpoint that all three groups of women supported. Any two people could become parents. In part because of this, Jamieson stated that many parents of families were “ignorant of the first principles of child-guidance, and many of their children become delinquents.”127

After setting the stage, Jamieson went to the heart of her talk: what was to be done about the problem of juvenile delinquency? A psychiatrist’s involvement often came too late, since a child’s character had already been formed before going to school. Thus CCF women supported expert intervention and knowledge as part of the solution to youth problems. Professionals like social workers and teachers could provide their therapeutic skills to young people to assist them in getting on the correct path and away from bad influences. The views of CCF women were similar to more centrist arguments about what needed to be done about this issue.

This concern with improving humanity in the context of the Cold War extended to helping “delinquent” girls. In a British Columbia CCF Women’s Council column, Laura Jamieson and other CCF women offered a criticism of Social Credit MLA Buda Brown, a cabinet minister who had spoken out against the “glamorous surroundings” in the new Girls’ Industrial School.128 Dorothy Shepherd, secretary of the Provincial CCF Women’s Council, wrote Brown to say that “pleasant” surroundings were necessary to rehabilitate delinquent girls. Jamieson, then president of the council, argued in a newspaper interview that beauty in the surroundings was “quite necessary.” At the same time, this beauty had to be coupled with “enlightened treatment” of the girls, if they were to be returned to society as “useful citizens.”129 These examples demonstrate Jamieson’s concerns and those of other CCF women with “rehabilitating” female criminals. They also contrast the CCF’s approach to the more traditional “law and order” view of right-wing women. No doubt Jamieson and other social democrats genuinely wanted to help young women in conflict with the law. Unfortunately, reformers’ attempts at helping others were not always useful or successful. As Joan Sangster has argued, many industrial schools, or “training schools” as they were sometimes called, were abusive, racist, and misogynist institutions that denied girls’ sexuality,

127 Ibid.
129 Ibid.
mistreated young, often Native, women, and rendered girls worse off than they had been when admitted. The reformers’ view that these young women had to be changed into “useful citizens” also spoke to the condescending attitude that middle-class people held toward girls from poorer backgrounds.130

CCF women’s ideas reflected a viewpoint that came from Progressive Era ideology and could be succinctly summed up in this manner: “prevention is better than committing and treating is better than keeping.” Laura Jamieson’s arguments supported this ideal. Social democrats were typically “progressive” in placing the emphasis on environmental factors over biology in determining a person’s mental outlook.131 CCF women endorsed the modern viewpoint of reforming and changing humans through state intervention and the assistance of professional, “expert” advice.132 This faith in expert knowledge as an antidote to the concerns of poor, unemployed women and Native peoples had a strongly paternalistic side, since people like Jamieson assumed that educated, usually white, people had the solutions to complex problems such as poverty, racism, and delinquency. As scholars such as Mona Gleason have noted, almost every sector of society became concerned with issues of mental illness, psychiatry, and “deviant” behaviour during the 1950s.133 This reflected the atmosphere of the time period, particularly paranoia over the Soviet threat and the possibility of nuclear war. In the American context especially, elites portrayed those who deviated from traditional mores as communist subversives.

North American society was becoming more urban and impersonal. Similarly, science and technology were beginning to take more of a role in individual lives.134 These events frightened many people at both poles on the political spectrum, who began to believe that the supposed rise of youth crime was one of the changes resulting from increased urbanization and atomization in society. Both experts and members of civil society looked for solutions to the problems of modernity, and people on the social democratic left were hardly immune to this trend.135

130 Sangster, Girl Trouble, pp. 103–143.
131 The quotation is from CCF News, February 27, 1957.
133 See Dummitt, The Manly Modern, passim.
134 Gleason, Normalizing the Ideal, passim.
135 Indeed, there was a rise in drug use among young people, especially from working-class and poor backgrounds, during this period. Some commentators linked this to a rise in delinquency. This was particularly the case in British Columbia. See Carstairs, Jailed for Possession, pp. 11, 66–91, 152.
136 Much has been written on the context of post-World-War-II Canada. Two standard texts are Robert Bothwell, Ian Drummond, and John English, Canada Since 1945: Power, Politics, and Provincialism, revised ed. (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1989); Owram, Born at the Right Time.
The discourse of juvenile delinquency was also part of communist women’s vocabulary. CP writers linked the issue of juvenile delinquency to their anti-Americanism. Hostility to American culture, as representing the highest stage of capitalism, was the main reason behind the CP’s support of Canadian nationalism in the postwar period. Canadian communists were not nationalists out of a sincere belief in the cause, but rather because Canadian nationalism represented a challenge to the infiltration of American culture into Canada. This represents a clear difference between Canadian communists and their SC and CCF counterparts. Neither of the latter two parties focused on the issue of Canadian nationalism; indeed, the Social Credit Party expressed support for the United States in its battle with the Soviet Union, as did many elites in the Canadian government and military.137

In one particular case, CP member Mark Frank quoted a number of church and cultural leaders who stated that the business of producing “smut” and “filth” resulted from a “spill-over from powerful U.S. muckraking concerns that make millions by skirting the law. This is one form of American cultural imperialism that should be stopped at the border.”138 The early 1960s was a time of rising Canadian nationalism in some sectors of society, and even Conservative Prime Minister John Diefenbaker spoke out in small ways against the encroachment of American culture into Canada. The CP’s views reflected this context in its focus on the American-produced nature of much of the literature that its members, and others, saw as corrupting Canadian youth. In a later example, Frank made explicit the link that he saw between American capitalism and pornography. He quoted “Mrs. George Davis,” a member of the Catholic Women’s League and a strong anti-communist, as expressing support for the idea that communism and pornography were linked. Frank took issue with this notion, arguing to the contrary that the increase in the number of films and printed material that emphasized sex and violence resulted from the “capitalist program and the inner crisis of a system, which is driving to nuclear war.”139 For CP supporters, this was linked to the United States: “it finds its most advanced representative in the United States of America and its most acute expression in the mass of poisonous ideology spread by its printing plants, its movies and its TV industry.”140

Frank quoted Paul Neimark, an editor for The Men’s Digest, a “pornographic best-seller,” as saying that sex and socialism “don’t mix.” “Sex is

137 On this point, see Whitaker and Hewitt, Canada and the Cold War, passim.
139 Ibid.
140 Ibid.
for your own pleasure,” Neimark argued, while “socialism is being made to sacrifice your happiness for other people’s pleasures. Capitalism-sex is the only logical duet. Both pivot on the happiness and freedom of the individual man.”

In contrast, the CP tried to present itself as a party of sobriety and respectability, in opposition to a Western, especially American, capitalism that fostered licentiousness, violence, racism, and hostility to unions and socialism. Like CP women’s views on “crime comics,” this showed the almost conservative ideology of Canadian communists toward sex and sexuality. Conversely, capitalists like Playboy publisher Hugh Hefner linked their ideology of sexual freedom and material gain to the fight against communism, which they saw as limiting human freedom and individualism. The idea that Western capitalism and the free market led automatically to political and civil liberties played a huge role in American anti-communism during the Cold War, and this idea found its expression in Canada as well. Many leftists in Canada attacked the United States because of its racism, imperialist foreign policy, and supposed decadence. The arguments that Mark Frank supported dovetailed with those of CP women attacking crime comics. This was also connected to the CP’s dislike of both the “Beatnik” movement of the 1950s and the “New Left” of the 1960s. The “Old Left” of the CP saw these movements as frivolous, middle-class, and unwilling to deal with the real issues resulting from capitalism. Thus the CP opposed “bohemian sex radicalism.”

Anti-Americanism was a key part of the left’s attack on post-World-War-II media. The CCF and, especially, the CP critiqued the perceived hedonism of the 1950s, with the rise of affluence and its influence on men who turned away from the breadwinner ideal and toward self-gratification and narcissism. Leftists associated postwar affluence and

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141 Ibid.


143 This rhetoric can also be found in other CP publications. See, for example, Andrew Lamorie, How They Sold Our Canada to the U.S.A. (Gravenhurst, ON: Northern Book House, 1963), pp. 63–64 and passim.; Norman Penner, Soldiers or Citizens? (National Federation of Labor Youth, 1948), pp. 4–10. See also Brown and Faue, “Social Bonds, Sexual Politics, and Political Community on the U.S. Left.”

the rising culture of narcissism among white, middle-class men with American culture, which was corrupting Canadian workers with a new consumerist and capitalist ideology of freedom from marriage and bread-winning and a turn toward drinking, frivolity, and non-monogamous sex.\textsuperscript{145} This kind of Americanization represented a new conception of masculinity that presented a counter-trend to the older view of a man’s role in society — a conception that scholars like Bill Osgerby and Barbara Ehrenreich have discussed in their works on the 1950s.\textsuperscript{146} All of these groups of women, in theory if not in practice, opposed this new culture of masculinity, seeing it as indicative of the crassness of modern, consumer society. These earlier commentaries predate the surge in anti-Americanism on the left from the later 1960s and early 1970s.\textsuperscript{147}

Conclusion: Everywhere Delinquency
The discourse of juvenile delinquency was an integral part of the overall ideologies of these three political movements. SC, CCF, and CP women supported similar notions of delinquency. All expressed concern about a lack of morality among young people and in society in general. This was related to the context of the Cold War world: the uncertainty of the time, with the possibility of a nuclear holocaust looming large, as well as increased urbanization, sophistication, and atomization in society, led to a “moral panic” over youth delinquency. This fear had a gendered aspect, since people in all sectors of society, and at various points on the political spectrum, argued that women moving outside the home meant an end to traditional familial roles. Women in the three parties proposed different remedies for the problem of youth delinquency. SC women contended that a return to Christianity and the home offered the solution to youth immorality; the Social Credit movement possessed an almost messianic sense of itself as a saviour of civilization. Not unlike politically active evangelical Christians today, Socreds saw it as their mission to bring society back to the family and church and away from secularism, communism, and urbanity.

\textsuperscript{145} Osgerby, \textit{Playboys in Paradise}, pp. 4–5; Ehrenreich, \textit{The Hearts of Men}, introduction. As we have seen, there was another conception of modern masculinity — one that emphasized rationality, efficiency, and state intervention — that some on the left, particularly in the CCF, did embrace. See Dummitt, \textit{The Manly Modern}, introduction and passim.


Women on the left presented a differing view. CCF women also represented the postwar world as increasingly immoral because capitalist society, especially in its postwar guise, encouraged selfish individualism, a lack of respect for fellow citizens, and, consequently, youth delinquency. CCF supporters advocated evolutionary social and economic change to do away with immorality. They presented an ethical critique of capitalism to argue that the state needed to intervene much more in public life to provide social services; they believed that CCF governments at all levels could achieve these ends. Conversely, the Communist Party used conservative rhetoric to make a radical point: delinquency resulted from the immorality of the capitalist state. Communists suggested that North American society, and capitalism in general, ultimately needed a socialist revolution, modelled on that of the Soviet Union, before youth could be rescued. In the short term, however, the state could be used to foster recreation programmes, public parks, and peace initiatives targeting working-class and unemployed youth. These measures would give potential delinquents a source of distraction, which would prevent them from succumbing to temptation. In these ways, the three groups of women used the perceived problem of delinquency to forward the political goals of their parent parties. These women similarly used delinquency to insert issues that they supported into the respective agendas of their parties. Political women, then, did have a strong impact on the overall ideologies of left- and right-wing parties in certain areas. 148

This discourse of juvenile delinquency permeated all sectors of Canadian society. Elites in the medical profession and the church were concerned about the problems of youth, but so too were women on the more extreme ends of the political spectrum. Concerns about delinquency crossed ideological lines. As we have seen, the Social Credit Party was a right-wing organization that saw post-World-War-II Canadian society as corrupt and debased. Many on the left subscribed to similar ideas surrounding the immorality of postwar society. Some Communist Party supporters believed that, since capitalism had marketed everything, it had commercialized popular culture so much that it had debased “real” or “high” culture. 149 The CP criticized comic books, rock and roll, and what its members saw as the general drift toward hedonism that characterized post-World-War-II society. The Cooperative Commonwealth Federation presented similar arguments, even if it focused less on the delinquency issue and suggested that it could be improved through expert advice and gradual intervention of the welfare state. The right presented a critique

of postwar mass culture, but turned it into an attack on communism and the left as well, which it saw as part of a new era of godlessness and materialism.

In their analysis of the delinquency problem, these groups of women largely reflected more elite views of this issue; however, in their prescriptions for solving the youth problem, they presented ideas that were rather different from elite views. SC members were more conservative than many elites in the federal government and in the medical profession, favouring a return to biblical values. The CP, notwithstanding the party’s puritanical views on sexuality, was far more radical than elites in the push for a socialist revolution in Canada. The CCF, with its support for expert advice as part of the solution to the problems of youth, perhaps reflected mainstream attitudes toward delinquency more than the CP or SC Party, but even here social democrats argued for more state intervention and a gradual transition to a socialist state, a vision of society that centrist elites did not favour.

Left- and right-wing women saw “healthy activity and worthwhile ideas” as key solutions to the problem of delinquency, though they had different conceptions of what constituted helpful activities and worthwhile ideas for youth. Above all, these three groups suggested that they could somehow change young people into better citizens. Each argued that changing the human character, whether in reactionary, evolutionary, or revolutionary ways, was possible. In this sense, these three political parties expressed radical solutions to the problems of their time. In today’s political climate — where the mainstream “left” movement constantly argues that it can only work within a market society to improve it in gradual ways and does not support any sort of revolutionary change — it is perhaps worth returning to that aspect of 1950s politics that espoused more radical ideas.