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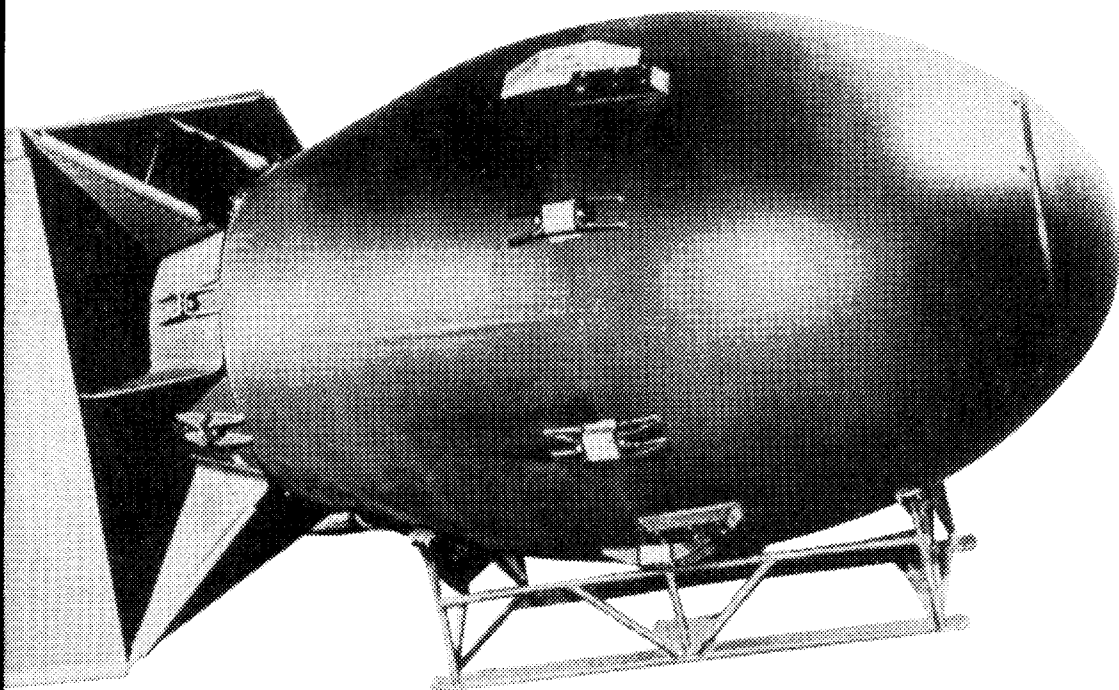
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# UNCERTAIN HORIZONS

Canadians and Their World in 1945



Edited by  
**Greg Donaghy**



UNCERTAIN HORIZONS  
CANADIANS AND THEIR WORLD IN 1945

EDITED BY  
GREG DONAGHY

CANADIAN COMMITTEE FOR THE HISTORY OF THE SECOND WORLD WAR  
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## Reconstruction Politics, the Canadian Welfare State and the Ambiguity of Children's Rights, 1940-1950

*Dominique Marshall*

The Second World War reintroduced human rights into western political and social discourse. The right to economic and social security was now added to the older list of civil, political and democratic rights proclaimed in the American Declaration of Independence, the United States Constitution and the French Declaration of the Rights of Man. In Canada, the international movement towards these new economic rights emphasized the universal rights of children to welfare and education. At the same time, some of the ideas about individual rights which were evolving in Canada were incorporated into the United Nations' conventions on human rights, which became a regular feature of postwar international relations. This paper on reconstruction politics underlines the relationship between international developments and social policy-making in Canada. Drawing upon government archives associated with the enactment and implementation of early universal welfare programs, it focuses on the external and internal aspects of "state formation" to show how advances in the rhetoric of universal rights were linked to a deeper transformation in Canada's political culture.<sup>1</sup>

*From the Atlantic Charter to a Children's Charter*

The Covenant of the League of Nations linked universal peace and social justice, but included nothing about the protection of individ-



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ual human rights. Rather, it sought to protect citizens by protecting their states.<sup>2</sup> The Second World War demonstrated how inadequate that protection was, and by the early 1940s: "a war that [had begun] as an old-style struggle over territory in Europe ... began to be seen as a crusade for basic rights and freedoms ... as it escalated, as the scale of Nazi atrocities became apparent and as American arms and manpower were drawn increasingly into the conflict."<sup>3</sup>

On 14 August 1941, at the conclusion of their meeting off the coast of Newfoundland, British Prime Minister Winston Churchill and American President Franklin Roosevelt issued an eight-point statement of "peace aims." Devised largely to counter the claims of American isolationists that the North Atlantic meeting committed the United States to entering the global conflict, the declaration promised a postwar world marked by liberalized trade and non-aggression. In effect, this Atlantic Charter (as it came to be called) constituted an "internationalization of the New Deal."<sup>4</sup> Indeed, the prime minister and the president announced that they:

desire[d] to bring about the fullest collaboration between all nations in the economic field with the object of securing, for all, improved labor standards, economic advancement and social security; [and], after the final destruction of the Nazi tyranny, they hope[d] to see established a peace which [would] afford all nations the means of dwelling in safety within their own boundaries, and which [would] afford assurance that all the men in all lands may live out their lives in freedom from fear and want.<sup>5</sup>

Canada had played no part in writing the Atlantic Charter. Prime Minister William Lyon Mackenzie King had been excluded from the secret meeting.<sup>6</sup> The language of the document was clearly Roosevelt's, whose annual state of the union address in January 1941 had promised Americans the "Four Freedoms: freedom of speech, expression, and worship and freedom from want and fear." Coming just a few months after his lend-lease policy had set the domestic war effort in motion, the joint statement with Churchill

was clearly part of Roosevelt's policy of assisting Americans had entered the Atlantic Charter, to win complete victory over their enemies and to secure for all independence and religious and justice, in their own lands.

Although the Atlantic Charter placed the emphasis on advancing these rights was placed on the Soviet Union and China to the Four Freedoms. At Dumbarton Oaks, the organization of the four great powers: the United Nations, which "reflects the security [and] contained or

In Canada, the success of social and economic rights schemes for social security construction. "The very need of [regulation] seems to have been policy."<sup>10</sup> As early as October 1941, Roosevelt's language as his creation of Labor convention after assured workers that they were being forwarded:

the work of repairing a not be enough ... Until [the] insufficiency] have been will not be won. The e as social security and hu cern of men and nation

Leonard Marshall, the Me

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was clearly part of Roosevelt's effort to "stir popular imagination ... to stamp [the Four Freedoms] in American hearts and identify them with the policy of assisting Great Britain."<sup>7</sup> In January 1942, after the Americans had entered the conflict, twenty-six allied nations signed the Atlantic Charter, to which they added the assertion that "complete victory over their enemies is essential to decent life, liberty, independence and religious freedom, and to preserve human rights and justice, in their own land as well as in other lands."<sup>8</sup>

Although the Atlantic Charter galvanized popular support for human rights and placed them firmly on the international agenda, advancing these rights was rarely easy. When they met with the Soviet Union and China to define the nature of the postwar world, Roosevelt and Churchill watered down their commitment to the Four Freedoms. At Dumbarton Oaks, in the fall of 1944, the leaders of the four great powers agreed to a set of proposals on postwar organization, which "reflected their current absorption with military security [and] contained only a general reference to human rights."<sup>9</sup>

In Canada, the successive international commitments to universal social and economic rights bolstered the plans for comprehensive schemes for social security already under way in the name of reconstruction. "The very need to ... mobilize [the] support [of the population] seems to have been a crucial component in wartime social policy."<sup>10</sup> As early as October 1942, Mackenzie King had adopted Roosevelt's language as his own. In an address to the American Federation of Labor convention in Toronto, the Canadian prime minister assured workers that their wartime efforts would not go unrewarded:

the work of repairing and restoring the ravages of war will not be enough ... Until these fears [of unemployment and insufficiency] have been eliminated ... the war for freedom will not be won. The era of freedom will be achieved only as social security and human welfare become the main concern of men and nations.<sup>11</sup>

Leonard Marsh, the McGill sociology professor who had, in ear-



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ly 1943, written the principal plan for postwar social policy in Canada for the federal Advisory Committee on Reconstruction, later commented that the Atlantic Charter gave his proposal impetus by signifying to his Canadian contemporaries that social and economic rights were "not only an avowed national aim but an international idea."<sup>12</sup>

This international development was not lost on the prime minister. In January 1943, as he contemplated the next general election, Mackenzie King wrote in his diary that "a postwar program of reform was to be 'the main subject of appeal'."<sup>13</sup> At the end of that month, the speech from the throne presented this reform program and wrapped it in the rhetoric of rights. The government promised that a "comprehensive national scheme of social insurance should be worked out at once which will constitute a charter of social security for the whole of Canada."<sup>14</sup> By 1944, as a senior civil servant later recalled, the government had come to believe that the population considered universal measures of social welfare their right:

We soon found an increasing resistance on the part of the public to the idea that any person, social worker or not, should presume to decide who is a deserving case and who isn't a deserving case. We got to the stage where people began to demand that legislation be written down in specific terms to provide as a matter of right certain benefits to people under clearly defined conditions that were prescribed in the law rather than left to the judgment of some individual.<sup>15</sup>

In reaching this conclusion, King and his colleagues were also helped by the threatening popularity of the Cooperative Commonwealth Federation (CCF) on their left and, on their right, by the exceptional readiness of entrepreneurial organizations to accept a measure of state economic regulation. More generally, Mackenzie King's government was compelled by the possibility of creating a national ideology that celebrated social policies to replace the anglo-centric patriotism that divided French and English Canada.<sup>16</sup>

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There was another way reconstruction politics helped in the birth of Canada's postwar social security programs. The Second World War had seen a dramatic increase in state activity. Large new social programs could suddenly be envisaged and created by simply converting the financial resources and human energies mobilized on the domestic front for the war effort into peacetime activities. Such transfers were numerous. For instance, hundreds of women who volunteered for wartime activities on behalf of the federal government were later asked to help put together the huge machinery for mailing the millions of family allowance payments. The accompanying leaflets, designed to educate parents about the new program, were created by many of the same experts who operated the formidable propaganda machine on the domestic front during the conflict.<sup>17</sup>

In his government's 1944 speech from the throne, Mackenzie King promised social security "from the cradle to the grave." Rather than adopting Roosevelt's "Four Freedoms," the prime minister now chose the words of the British advocate of comprehensive welfare, Lord Beveridge, who proposed a stronger commitment from the state towards social and economic rights.<sup>18</sup> Mackenzie King enacted a "Charter for Veteran's Rights," an array of programs aimed at demobilized soldiers, which was more generous than the measures established after the First World War and involved the state in a larger capacity. However, at the end of the war, the promises of universal social and economic rights were translated largely into programs directed at the next generation.<sup>19</sup>

Indeed, of all the ideas for new universal social and economic programs advocated by politicians, reformers, experts and welfare organizations, the prime minister chose to introduce only one — family allowances, the first universal social program in Canadian history.<sup>20</sup> Significantly, this selection reflected the bureaucracy's view, borrowed from Keynes, that family allowances were the best way "to pay for the war."<sup>21</sup> In the province of Quebec, the most important social reform of Adélard Godbout's liberal government, and the only significant universal public measure for many years to come, was the enactment of compulsory schooling in 1943. These two laws were more closely linked than one might assume: federal allowances

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would not be paid to children who did not obey provincial education regulations. Provincial and federal politicians alike invoked the rights of youngsters to a "minimum of welfare" and to a "minimum of education" in the various elections held during the final years of the war. Thus, they sought to distract voters from immediate social and economic issues, and to focus their attention on their children. The leaflet introducing family allowances, published not long before the June 1945 federal election, was pointedly entitled "A Children's Charter."<sup>22</sup> This successful electoral tactic was also used to sell Canada's new postwar social programs. The illustrators of the literature which accompanied the first family allowance cheques used many devices to convince parents to think of the country's younger citizens rather than the future of the country. For instance, one pamphlet showed a child with a key in his hands, walking through a keyhole towards a bright map of Canada.<sup>23</sup>

*The Ideological Role of Children's Rights in Domestic Social Policy Making*<sup>24</sup>  
Thus, a peculiar version of human rights informed postwar social policy-making in Canada. The focus on children had an impact on the material and ideological worlds of young Canadians of the postwar years, and on the formation of the Canadian state in ways that marked the political culture of the country. Furthermore, the expedient role that children's rights played in reconstruction politics created problems that later coloured the making of social policies for children, both domestically and internationally.

In Canada and in Quebec, the promotion of the rights of children aided governments by providing an ideological detour around the harsh debates about the welfare of adults.<sup>25</sup> To Quebec leaders, children's rights served as a justification for opposing the Catholic high clergy's view of the Church as the necessary guarantor of "parents' rights." Federal authorities also used the idea of children's rights to answer trade unions' demands for the "economic rights" of their members without having to raise the wage ceilings fixed by Ottawa's wartime legislation.<sup>26</sup> In these ways, children's rights were used to isolate adults from old solidarities.

In addition to weakening religious and professional solidarity,

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children's rights were used by the state to develop and promote a specific image of individual and universal parents. To fulfil the state's expectations that parents were best suited to oversee the social and economic rights of their offspring, fathers and mothers had to be "normal." Although those who failed to raise their children for reasons which the state decided were not valid remained a minority, officials now had the authority to question parents about their traditional prerogatives.

Political leaders and professional associations increased their potential for domination over individuals in still another fashion. Through the isolation, in early childhood, of a "core of consciousness and of will" in young Canadians, family allowances and compulsory schooling became part of a larger process involving the penetration of individualist notions into families; a world that had long been impervious to them.<sup>27</sup> By conferring onto children a "particularity," or a dose of independence, they undermined the idea that children should submit to their parents.

It would be wrong, however, to think that the rights enjoyed by children after the Second World War necessarily empowered them. As children obtained their political rights progressively during their youth, and as they rarely participated in associations through which they could convey their demands to public powers, it was easy for politicians and interested members of the public to pretend that children had consented to these developments. Moreover, children were not included in the elaboration of their rights and they could not monitor their application.<sup>28</sup> Children's lack of power in this new context could have important consequences, by giving them profound reasons to doubt the legitimacy of public institutions when they became adult citizens.<sup>29</sup>

The legislation on children's rights to minimum levels of welfare and education had other negative consequences for young people. Governments and social agencies often attached the realization of these rights to the purchase of consumer goods. This equation could reduce children's independence. For instance, the new models of consumerism encouraged by the state's educational literature on how to spend family allowances might incite a child to leave school

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early in order to earn money. More generally, by helping the individualist values linked to mass consumption enter households, the welfare state could diminish the significance that family members attached to their interdependency.

These ideological manoeuvres were facilitated by the fact that the poorer classes rarely participated in ethical discussions about the possibility of universal human rights to both enhance and weaken family autonomy. For the time being, the tradition of defending the integrity of families still belonged primarily to conservative elites.<sup>30</sup>

*Children's Rights and Democratic Traditions in Canada*

Mackenzie King and Adélard Godbout could count on a certain automatic legitimacy when dealing with children's rights. The idea belonged to an older democratic tradition that shaped discussion in Canada and in international welfare organizations. In the interwar period, Canadian social workers, lawyers, reformers and diplomats had crafted particular concepts of children's rights. Their work was inspired by internationalist and egalitarian movements, and by their ambitious desire to enhance their professional status and legitimacy.<sup>31</sup> Canadian reformers also played a significant role in drafting the League of Nations' first international agreements on child welfare.<sup>32</sup> Montreal Senator Raoul Dandurand, who pioneered the first federal juvenile delinquency legislation just after the turn of the century, served as president of the Assembly of the League of Nations in 1926. Similarly, Charlotte Whitton, the head of the Canadian Council on Child Welfare from 1920 to 1941, participated in that international organization's social projects.<sup>33</sup> From 1926 until its collapse in 1939, she was the Canadian assessor, and subsequently Canada's delegate, to the League's Child Welfare Committee.

This exposure to international developments had a profound impact on the evolution of domestic support for children's rights in Canada. In 1924, for example, after lobbying by such voluntary groups as the London-based Save the Children Fund, which raised funds for war orphans, and the Scottish chapter of the Council of Women, the League of Nations adopted "The Geneva Declaration of the Rights of the Child." Obligations to procure for children the

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material means to develop and the opportunity to work according to their potential and talents were among the five principles of the declaration. The Canadian Council of Child Welfare promptly published the declaration and distributed it across the country.<sup>34</sup>

Children's rights evolved significantly over the course of the next two decades. In the aftermath of the Second World War, promises which were once directed only toward 'abandoned', 'juvenile' or 'neglected' children were now made to all 'normal' young citizens. The rights of youngsters were tied to the idea of universality, not simply because of these international developments, but because this evolution in the notion of children's rights was encouraged by developments elsewhere. For instance, as psychologists and psychiatrists debated the nature of childhood in Canada and in other countries during this period, they broadened their focus to include all children.<sup>35</sup>

Many social groups and citizens also linked their war efforts to entitlements for their children. The government-funded program of Soldiers' Dependent Allowances, for instance, provided Canadian soldiers with supplementary payments for their children and established a precedent that demobilized soldiers and civilians would later invoke.<sup>36</sup> For trade unions, the link between enlistment and children's social citizenship was an important principle for political action. In 1943, for instance, the editors of *Le Monde ouvrier*, a weekly newspaper published by the American-based international unions operating in French Canada, tied the war effort to their support for compulsory schooling: "Pourquoi, à la lumière des graves événements où son sort se joue, vouloir persister à rogner sur ce qui revient au peuple en fait de progrès et de sécurité?"<sup>37</sup> In his annual report for 1945-1946, the school inspector for the Chaudière district in Quebec invoked the same notion of exchange:

Serait-il présomptueux de croire que nous pouvons aider à donner le coup de barre, pour qu'enfin nous puissions avoir l'école humaine non seulement pour une élite, mais aussi pour tout les Canadiens français? ... C'est le voeu implicite de tous ceux qui sont morts ou ont combattu pour la



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défense de nos institutions démocratiques.<sup>38</sup>

In 1944, Josaphat Lapierre, the truant officer for La Sarre, complained to the superintendent of public instruction about his reluctance to enforce compulsory education among families who did not possess sufficient resources to keep their children in school until they were fourteen years old. After the sacrifices these families had already endured for the country's defence, this additional burden did not seem fair:

Quand pendant près de 10 années, on a tenu un peuple dans la misère dans un pays d'abondance, et qu'ensuite on vient lui ravir ses fils à la fleur de l'âge, leur réclamant l'impôt du sang et que de part et d'autre il se voit imposer toutes sortes de restrictions et d'obligations lui enlevant presque entièrement la liberté d'agir conformément à ses goûts et à ses aspirations, rien de surprenant qu'il se produise des réactions fâcheuses au sein de la population.<sup>39</sup>

The idea of delaying promises of equality until the next generation had been the basis of many reform movements since the nineteenth century. The declaration issued by the fifty social organizations from the province of Quebec, meeting in February 1944 under the auspices of the *Ligue de la jeunesse féminine*, shows how widespread this attitude was:

Les problèmes créés par la guerre et les transformations d'un mode de vie, particulièrement dans les grands centres, sont devenus de plus en plus difficiles. L'enfance n'y échappe pas et c'est vers elle que se tournent les personnes et les groupes qui s'intéressent aux oeuvres sociales.<sup>40</sup>

In the same way, the report of the subcommittee on women of the federal government's Advisory Committee on Reconstruction listed help to children as its third priority, after full employment and an end to the scarcity of resources. Indeed, the authors translated the

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economic and social commitments of the Atlantic Charter directly into measures for the protection of children:

The reconstruction policies of the government must adequately protect from want those individuals who are unable to obtain gainful employment through no fault of their own and, as an integral measure of social security in the broadest sense, the children of Canada should be protected from malnutrition and inadequate educational opportunities ... To strive for more would unduly complicate the problem: to content ourselves with less would belie the professions of faith embodied in the Atlantic charter and all the pronouncements that have followed it.<sup>41</sup>

The decision of governments in Canada to adopt these new rights for children shifted the discussion of rights onto new, and often unintended, ground. For instance, when parents wrote to the provincial or the federal administration to ask to be exempted from the regulations governing compulsory schooling, they underlined the contradiction between the new universal children's rights and the older principle of parental responsibility. In the Montmorency district of Quebec, for instance, one farmer, whose children could not attend school because they did not have shoes, informed the superintendent of public instruction that: "[l]a loi doit prévoir des exceptions. J'espère que les parents peuvent encore avoir soin des enfants. Nous ne sommes pas en Allemagne n'est-ce pas?"<sup>42</sup>

Once programs for compulsory education and family allowances were implemented, the rhetoric of universal rights advanced through government propaganda channels, which charged parents with the responsibility for securing the new rights of their children, may eventually have helped strengthen these egalitarian convictions among poor adults. A father in Roberval with four sons in college and three daughters in the convent was forced to pay \$9.50 a month in tuition fees in addition to the money he spent for books and clothing. In a letter to the provincial minister of education, he adopted the government's own rhetoric to protest against its

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demands on him and declared "je trouve cela bien drôle monsieur le Ministre, et même un peu écoeurant quand j'ouvre un journal et que l'on nous parle de famille, famille et famille démocratie et liberté."<sup>43</sup> In the view of many parents in these circumstances, provincial authorities were not guaranteeing the right to education as they had promised. As one of them wrote: "Puisque nous sommes sous le contrôle d'une loi obligatoire, il me semble qu'on devrait avoir le droit d'exiger les avantages de la suivre fidèlement."<sup>44</sup>

In the case of native parents, whose spending was monitored by public agents, family allowances and the promises attached to them provided new grounds on which to attack old practices. The Co-operative Commonwealth Federation (CCF) member of parliament for Selkirk denounced the government's paternalism in the House of Commons:

Si ces hommes se battent pour nous, ils devraient pouvoir toucher cet argent au bureau de poste ou là où on le paiera sans qu'il leur soit nécessaire de passer par l'agent des Indiens ... L'Indien est un Canadien dans le sens même du mot. C'est lui le Canadien véritable. On ne viendra certainement pas demander de verser l'allocation à quelqu'un d'autre pour son compte, s'il assez bon pour aller combattre.<sup>45</sup>

Finally, the notion of children's rights pointed towards an increase in children's individual sovereignty. In particular, the government encouraged parents to allow their children to assume more responsibility for their own spending. The relative financial ease provided by family allowances brought with it the chance for freedom and opportunity, and could also produce a pride that poverty had denied. This new sense of worth may have helped lessen the feeling among poorer children that there was some urgency for them to leave school and earn their own income. In other instances, the new financial possibilities coming from "economic rights" helped young people honour what they perceived as their family obligations. Moreover, the language of universal rights and the images associated with the implementation of universal programs encouraged, with some success, the

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homogenization of the experiences of boys and girls, rural and urban children, at a time when the large majority of instances of child labor were to be found among poor daughters and farmers' sons.<sup>46</sup>

Thus, the rhetoric of children's rights introduced in Canada through reconstruction politics had become as ambiguous and diverse as the many elements in Canadian society by which it had been adopted. Like the human rights of Churchill and Roosevelt, the children's rights of King and Godbout had a life of their own. This was broader than Canada's federal and provincial leaders intended. However reduced, and however cynically used by public administrations of the day, children's rights led to some measure of autonomy for parents and children. Reborn abroad in the face of a fight against fascism, and used at home to answer the many hopes of a democracy expanded by the massive commitment of its citizens to the defence of their nation, universal economic and social rights infused state programs with the possibility of material and political freedom. They contributed to the arrival of new forms of childhood; to a certain equalization of the experiences of girls and boys, both urban and rural; to a larger autonomy of children within their family. More generally, they played an active part in the creation of a political environment where questions of fairness and individual material gains became central.

### *An Ambiguous Legacy For the Post-War World*

With the end of the Second World War, compulsory education and welfare receded from the political agenda. Most historians attribute this withdrawal to the collapse of the wartime consensus and, beyond this phenomenon, to a disengagement of the population from social welfare. The diagnosis proposed by Dennis Guest in his history of Canadian social security is commonplace:

In the rush to plan a collectively oriented postwar society, had there been any time to build a supporting political constituency? Apparently not, if we are to judge by the ease with which the glittering prize of comprehensive health, housing and social security was withdrawn from public gaze.<sup>47</sup>

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In a way, the programs themselves contributed to this decline of popular interest: with the general enrichment of households during and after the war, the proportion of families susceptible to an economic crisis that would render them dependent on the state was diminishing. The nature of suburban life and the insecurity brought by the cold war enhanced this defensive individualism.<sup>48</sup> Support for the left-leaning CCF declined steadily until the early 1960s. Reassured by postwar prosperity, many economic elites, professionals and trade union leaders were abandoning their wartime commitment to a stronger measure of industrial democracy. Often, the same reformers who sought improvements in the social security system were also pressing for tax reductions.<sup>49</sup> To these factors, we can add that the politically expedient features of the original programs had weakened their universalist nature, from the moment of their inception.

A comparable retreat was underway in the international sphere. The diplomatic movement towards human rights was shaken by the very authors of the Atlantic Charter. Cold war tensions, national jealousies, and the fear among western governments of the national liberation movements that were emerging in many European colonies, threatened the bill of universal rights planned by the new United Nations in 1945. Within some quarters of the U.N.'s secretariat itself, "there was a tendency...to play down the human rights program as an exotic in an international organization." In 1948, when the General Assembly's third committee examined the declaration closely, Canada surprised observers by abstaining from the vote. Canadian policy-makers in Ottawa later cited many factors to excuse their "bad grace" including their unwillingness to infringe on provincial jurisdictions and the imprecise nature of the declaration. Ottawa's general indifference towards human rights questions at the U.N. is hardly surprising against the background of its use of children's rights as an expedient political tool during the reconstruction years, and considering the lack of interest that characterized large segments of the Canadian population.<sup>50</sup>

However, as Fiorello H. La Guardia, the mayor of New York, optimistically stated at the end of the war, "the Atlantic Charter could not be reduced...its authors could not evade what had gone

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into its making and what now flowed from it.”<sup>51</sup> Allied tribunals used human rights to “override the defense that those arraigned had been acting in accordance with the laws of the regime they served.”<sup>52</sup> In June 1945, at the San Francisco Conference, “some forty-two private organizations representing various aspects of American life – the churches, trade unions, ethnic groups, peace movements, etc. – [invited by the United States government to act] as consultants to its delegation ... aided by the delegations of some smaller countries ... conducted a lobby in favor of human rights for which there is no parallel in the history of international relations, and which was largely responsible for the human rights provisions of the Charter.”<sup>53</sup> The agreement “reaffirm[ed] faith in fundamental human rights, in the dignity and worth of the human person, in the equal rights of men and women of nations large and small.” At the same time, the U.N. Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) “was instructed to create a commission on human rights; and it was generally understood that this commission would draw up an international bill of rights.”<sup>54</sup> John Humphrey, a Canadian law professor at McGill University, was asked to head the U.N. secretariat’s *Division of Human Rights* when it was created in 1946. In 1948, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights which he drafted was adopted by the General Assembly with the support of 58 member states. Canada, embarrassed by its presence in the group of repressive countries which had abstained in the third committee’s vote, endorsed it.

Behind the work of the American non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and in the performance of Canadians like Humphrey, one can sense the profound transformation of the political culture that led to – and was consolidated by – the formation of universal welfare programs at home. The social and economic work of the United Nations seemed to be supported with enthusiasm by Canadians. By the mid-1940s, according to international historians, after “the horror aroused by the discovery of the Nazi extermination camps,” it was the “weight of public opinion [that] compelled governments ... to draft an international Bill of Rights.”<sup>55</sup>

Similarly, the specific history of children’s rights was to be

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marked by their ambiguous role in reconstruction politics at the international level. Initially, the significant wartime enhancements to the concept of universal rights quickly made their way into international discussions about children. As early as 1946, the same groups that had compelled the League of Nations to act after the First World War asked the United Nations to update the Geneva Declaration of 1924. In particular, they wanted the world organization to include provisions covering the new duties of the state in protecting children, integrating wartime advances in social security, and in the promotion of the family environment. This pressure met with some success. In 1946, the United Nations' temporary social commission recommended that the organization add a clause on "respect of the family as an entity" to the 1924 Geneva Declaration on the Rights of the Child. The commission, influenced by the atrocities of the Second World War, also proposed adding a provision to extend these rights regardless of "race, nationality or creed."<sup>56</sup>

However, the process that started in 1946 quickly slowed down. Only in 1959 did the U.N.'s human rights commission succeed in having its "Declaration on the Rights of the Child" adopted by the General Assembly. According to Philip Veerman, the principal historian of the international movement for children's rights, the delay came from the fact that the declaration was not "politically urgent" for the member states. Moreover, there were repeated questions from member states about the binding nature of the principles on states and individuals.<sup>57</sup> Again, Canada was a reluctant participant: when ECOSOC's social commission first discussed the principle of a declaration on children's rights in July 1950, "[t]he Canadian delegate ... did not favor a separate Declaration concerning certain age groups. He pleaded for a thorough review of the course taken by the Social Commission."<sup>58</sup>

The uncooperative position adopted by Canada in 1950 was hardly surprising. Indeed, the entire history of the evolution of children's universal rights in Canada between 1940 and 1950 was characterized by a contradictory tendency both to promote these rights and to subordinate them to more immediate political and social objectives. The expedient nature of reconstruction politics chan-

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nelled popular hopes for increased economic and political democracy after the war, and elite aspirations for an enhanced state role in Canada and abroad, into a peculiar notion of universal children's rights. This involved supplying children with minimum levels of welfare and education. The ambiguity inherent in this conception of human rights and the history of its evolving position on the international agenda are intricately articulated to the social and political history of Canadian families.

### Acknowledgements

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### Notes

1. On the meaning and the use of the concept of "state formation", see Philip Abrams, "Notes on the Difficulty of Studying the State", *Journal of Historical Sociology*, 1, 1, March 1988, pp. 58-89.
2. Richard Wild, "Human Rights: In Retrospect", in K. J. Keith (ed.), *Essays on Human Rights* (Wellington, 1968), pp. 4-5.
3. Jeremy Waldron (ed.), *Nonsense upon Stilts: Bentham, Burke and Marx on the Rights of Man* (London, 1987), p. 154.
4. Theodore A. Wilson, "The First Summit," in Douglas Brinkley and David R. Facey-Crowther (eds.), *The Atlantic Charter* (New York, 1994), pp. 1-31; Warren F. Kimball, "The Atlantic Charter: "With All Deliberate Speed," in *ibid.*, pp. 89-90.
5. "The Atlantic Charter", in Douglas Brinkley and David R. Facey-Crowther (eds.), *The Atlantic Charter*, p. xvii. See also John Humphrey, "The Magna Carta of the World," in Clyde Sanger (ed.), *Canadians and the United Nations* (Ottawa, 1988), p. 19.
6. J.L. Granatstein, "The Man Who Wasn't There: Mackenzie King, Canada, and the Atlantic Charter," in Brinkley and Facey-Crowther (eds.), *The Atlantic Charter*, p.



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123.

7. Theodore A. Wilson, *The First Summit: Roosevelt and Churchill at Placoma Bay, 1941* (Lawrence, 1991), pp. 3-4, 154.
8. Cited in Wakbron, p. 154; see also Richard Wild, "Human Rights, in Retrospect", *Essays on Human Rights*, p. 4.
9. Humphrey, p. 18. See also Escott Reid, "Hopes That Vanished at San Francisco," in Sanger (ed.), *Canadians and the United Nations*, pp. 7-9.
10. Rob Witts, "Family allowances in Canada and Australia 1940-1945: A comparative critical case study," *Journal of Social Policy*, 16, 1(1987), pp. 19-48.
11. Cited in Raymond S. Blake, "Mackenzie King and the Genesis of Family Allowances in Canada, 1939-1944," in Raymond B. Blake and Jeff Keshen (eds.), *Social and Welfare Policy in Canada: Historical Readings* (Toronto, 1995), p. 245.
12. J.L. Granatstein, "The Man Who Wasn't There," p. 128, citing the preface to the 1975 edition of *Marsh's Report on Social Security for Canada* (Toronto, 1975). Marsh himself was to work for the United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration. For details, see David J. Bercuson and J.L. Granatstein, *The Collins Dictionary of Canadian History: 1867 to the Present* (Toronto, 1988), p. 133. See also the report by W.E.C. Harrison on the discussions of the 9th annual study conference of the Canadian Institute of International Affairs [CIIA], held at the University of Toronto on 23-24 May 1942 entitled "The United Nations in War, Victory and Peace." This is in *Canada and the United Nations: Report of a Conference of the Canadian Institute of International Affairs* (Toronto, 1942), p. 31. Conference participants included Dorothy Stepler, who was later associated with the movement for family allowances. The participants were aware that the problem of "fear from want" was linked to the attitudes of the "Great Powers." This may explain why they launched their own booklet to promote family allowances. See Dorothy Stepler, "Family Allowances for Canada," *Behind the Headlines* Vol. 3, No. 2, published jointly by the CIIA and the Canadian Association for Adult Education.
13. J.L. Granatstein, *Canada's War: The Politics of the Mackenzie King Government, 1939-1945* (Toronto, 1975), p. 3, citing Mackenzie King's diary.
14. Cited in Raymond Blake, "Mackenzie King and the Genesis of Family Allowances," p. 248.
15. George Davidson, "Maintenance as an Eligibility Factor. Dr. Davidson's Remark at Supervisors' Conference with Introductory Discussion", Ottawa, March 1948, National Archives of Canada [NAC], Department of National Health and Welfare

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[DNHW], RG 29, vol. 1934, R233/100-6/25. Davidson was a former director of the Canadian Welfare Council and the deputy minister of the department of national health and welfare.

16. Peter Baldwin, "The Welfare State for Historians: A Review Article", *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, 1992, p. 706. Philip Resnick, *The Mask of Proteus: Canadian Reflections on the State* (Montreal and Kingston, 1990), pp. 208-11. I have explored these ideas further in "Nationalisme et politiques sociales au Québec depuis 1867. Un siècle de rendez-vous manqués entre l'État, l'Église et les familles," *British Journal of Canadian Studies*, Vol. 9, No. 2, (November 1994), pp. 301-47.
17. Canada, Ministère de la Santé nationale et du Bien-être social, *Économisez les vivres*, 1946, NAC, RG 29, Education and Nutrition-Cooperation with F. A. re Inserts, 109, 180-26-15. F. W. Rowse to Harvey W. Adams, 21 June 1954, NAC, DNHW, RG 29, 111-181-1-15, "Information Service Division". Fournier to Lafrance, 1 August 1949, Archives du Bureau régional des allocations familiales à Québec, 8-0, vol. 1. *Rapport annuel du ministère de la Santé nationale et du Bien-être social, 1951-1952*, p. 120. *Rapport annuel du Bureau régional des allocations familiales à Québec, 1952-1953*, p. 10.
18. For British reactions to the conservatism of the Atlantic Charter in comparison with Beveridge's proposals, see Kimball, p. 91.
19. For a more detailed analysis of the immediate political circumstances of the enactment of these laws, see my essays "Family Allowances and Family Autonomy: Quebec 1945-1955," in Bettina Bradbury (ed.), *Canadian Family History: Selected Readings* (Toronto, 1992), pp. 401-37. "The Decline of Child Labour in Quebec, 1940-1960: Conflict Between Poor Families and the State", in Tina Loo and Lorna McLean (eds.), *Historical Perspectives on Law and Society in Canada* (Toronto, 1994), pp. 254-88. For a discussion of the meaning and limits of the Veterans Charter, see Peter Neary and Shaun Brown, "The Veterans Charter and Canadian Women Veterans of World War Two," in J.L. Granatstein and Peter Neary (eds.), *The Good Fight: Canadians and World War Two* (Toronto, 1995), pp. 387-415.
20. The first payments were announced in the summer of 1945, a few weeks after King's re-election.
21. Mark E. Palmer, "The Origins and Implementation of Family Allowances in Canada," unpublished MA Thesis (History), Queen's University, 1976, p. 101.
22. Canada, Department of National Health and Welfare, *Allocations familiales. Charte de l'enfance* (Ottawa, 1945-56). Drawings by the National Film Board of Canada, Government Printed Documents, NAC.

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23. *Santé et Bien-être social au Canada*, Vol. 2, no. 10, July 1948, Supplement on family allowances, p. 1.
24. I have developed the ideas in the two following sections further in "The Role of the Universal Welfare State and the History of Childhood: Quebec, 1940-55," *Canadian Historical Review*, Forthcoming.
25. The general argument, by which the initially substantial promises for a better life that were made in the name of international reconstruction were later narrowed down considerably, is summarized in Michiel Horn, "Leonard Marsh and the Coming of the Welfare State in Canada: A Review Article," *Histoire sociale/Social History*, 9, (1976), pp. 197-204.
26. For those interested in the relationship between diplomacy and welfare, it is worth noting that Norman Robertson, the under-secretary of state for external affairs, was the first senior civil servant to suggest that family allowances might help calm the labour unrest which the National War Labour Board faced. More than his colleagues in the departments of finance, pensions and health or labour, he adopted the language of "social justice," although he applied it not to children, but to labour. Specifically, he wrote of "the rights and status of workers and their organizations" and of a "national labour charter." Cited in Palmer, "The Origins and Implementation of Family Allowances," pp. 133-38.
27. Marcel Gauchet and Gloria Swain, *La pratique de l'esprit humain. L'institution asilaire et la révolution démocratique* (Paris, 1980), p. 18.
28. "Home thoughts: Germaine Greer on the folly of 'children's rights,'" *The Independent Magazine*, 20 January 1990, p. 16. Gill Jones and Claire Wallace, *Youth, Family and Citizenship* (Buckingham, 1992), chapters 1 and 7.
29. Paul Thompson, "The War With Adults," *Oral History*, 3, 2 (Fall 1975), p. 37; See also Stephen Humphries, *Hooligans or Rebels: An Oral History of Working-Class Childhood and Youth 1889-1939* (Oxford, 1981), pp. 21-23.
30. See, for instance, Charlotte Whitton, *The Dawn of an Ampler Life* (Toronto, 1943), pp. 14-15. See also Carole Pateman, "Feminist Critiques of the Public/Private Dichotomy," in *The Disorder of Women* (Polity, 1989), pp. 118-40; Raymond Boudon and F. Bourricaud, "Égalitarisme", *Dictionnaire critique de la sociologie* (Paris, 1985), p. 217; Norton Grubb and Marvin Lazerson, *Broken Promises: How Americans Fail Their Children* (New York, 1982).
31. The main work on the history of child reform in Canada during this period is Neil Sutherland's *Children in English-Canadian Society: Framing the Twentieth Centu-*

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ry *Consensus* (Toronto, 1976).

32. Robert Bothwell and Norman Hillmer, *La politique extérieure du Canada, 1919-1939* (Ottawa, Museum of Man and the National Film Board of Canada). Collection of slides from "Histoire du Canada en Images". Vol. 27, p. 11.
33. On this point see P.T. Rooke and R. L. Schnell, *No Bleeding Heart: Charlotte Whitton: A Feminist on the Right* (Vancouver, 1987). See also Mack Eastman, *Canada at Geneva* (Toronto, 1946), pp. 37-39 and Marcel Hamelin (ed.), *Les mémoires du Sénateur Raoul Dandurand (1861-1942)* (Quebec, 1967). In the early 1900s, the senator's wife was closely associated with the international and domestic work of the Council of Women that adopted its own charter in 1922 (p. 115) and that was to be central to the elaboration of the Children's Charter in 1924. It is also interesting to note that the Montreal industrialist and city reformer, Herbert Brown Ames, was the financial director of the Secretariat of the League of Nations, between 1919 and 1926. For additional details, see Richard Veatch, "League of Nations", *Canadian Encyclopedia* (Edmonton, 1988) and P.W.F. Rutherford (ed.), "Introduction," *The City Below the Hill* (Toronto, 1972), first published by Ames in 1897, pp. xi and xviii.

It is also worth noting that the International Labour Office [ILO] of the League of Nations had promoted family allowances since the 1930s. It had amassed considerable expertise in this area, and when, in the spring of 1941, the federal government's advisory committee on reconstruction began its work, it consulted with the ILO. Subsequently, an ILO technical advisor, Maurice Stack, helped write the Marsh Report. See Palmer, "The Origins and Implementation of Family Allowances in Canada," pp. 28, 118 and 121. See also The League of Nations, Child Welfare Committee, *Report by the ILO on Family Allowances* (Geneva, 1928) C.P.E. 150.
34. Philip E. Veerman, *The Rights of the Child and the Changing Image of Childhood* (London, 1991), pp. 155-59. Coll. International Studies in Human Rights. Tamar Hareven, "An Ambiguous Alliance: Some Aspects of American Influences on Canadian Social Welfare," *Histoire sociale/Social History*, 3, (April 1969), p. 93. In Canada, the Montreal suffragist and professor at McGill University, Idola Saint-Jean, after working in a similar manner with Canadian children affected by the war, was proposed as a representative of Canadian welfare agencies at the League of Nations. For details, see Andrée Lévesque, *Résistance et transgression. Études en histoire des femmes au Québec* (Montreal, 1995), p. 45, citing *The Montreal Herald*, 2 November 1929.
35. Cynthia R. Comacchio, "Nations Are Built of Babies": *Saving Ontario Mothers and Children 1900-1940* (Montreal & Kingston, 1993). On international changes in the status of children, see Lawrence J. Le Blanc, *The Convention on the Rights of the Child: United Nations lawmaking on human rights* (Lincoln, Nebraska, 1995), p. xvi.

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36. "Canadian Provisions for Aid for Dependents of Members of the Army and Air Force," *Social Security Bulletin*, November 1941, pp. 19-24.
37. "Fréquentation scolaire obligatoire?", *Le Monde ouvrier*, 20 March 1943, p. 1.
38. M. J.-H. Bessette in Québec, *Rapport annuel du Surintendant de l'Instruction publique, 1945-1946*, p. 108.
39. Rapport annuel 1943-1944, 4 July 1944, Centre de documents semi-actifs [CDSA] of the Archives nationales du Québec à Québec [ANQQ], 1946-789, 112 398. Lapiere said that he was conveying parents' opinions. Letter to Victor Doré, 4 July 1944, CDSA, 1946-789, 112 398. See also the opinion of one of his anonymous colleagues in the same file, 12 July 1944.
40. "La protection de l'enfance," *Le Soleil*, 23 February 1944.
41. Canada, Advisory Committee on Reconstruction, VI, *Post-War Problems of Women: Final Report of the Subcommittee*, 30 November 1943, (Ottawa, 1944), pp. 10-11.
42. CDSA 1943-1200, box 112 317, case n. 71.
43. Gagnon Boulanger, Roberval County, to Hector Perrier, Secrétaire provincial, 21 September 1943, ANQQ, E-13, C. r., 1942-199, 2223.
44. CDSA 1943-1200, box 112 317, case n. 124; 6-43.
45. Canada, Chambre des communes, *Débats*, 1944, p. 5690.
46. See my article, "Le recueil du travail des enfants au Québec entre 1940 et 1960: une explication des conflits entre les familles pauvres et l'Etat-providence," *Labour/Le Travail*, No 24 (automne 1989), pp. 91-129.
47. Dennis Guest, *The Emergence of Social Security in Canada* (Vancouver, 1981), pp. 217-18.
48. See Arlene Skolnick, *Embattled Paradise: The American Family in an Age of Uncertainty* (New York, 1991), p. 68.
49. Alvin Finkel, "Paradise Postponed: A Re-examination of the Green Book Proposals of 1945," *Journal of the Canadian Historical Association/Revue de la Société historique du Canada*, 1993, pp. 120-42. See also Peter McInnis, "Planning Prosperity: Canadians Debate Postwar Reconstruction," in this volume.

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50. Humphrey, "The Magna Carta of the World," pp. 23, 19. F.R. Scott warned against such constitutional impediments to the spirit of the Atlantic Charter in "The Constitution and the post-War World," in Alexander Brandy and F.R. Scott (eds.), *Canada After the War* (Toronto, 1944), pp. 60-87. He urged the parties to "put forward...specific schemes...offering advantages to the great mass of the people." The contributions by F.H. Soward and Charlotte Whitton to this collection also refer actively to the Atlantic Charter.
51. La Guardia cited in Lloyd C. Gardner, "The Atlantic Charter: Idea and Reality, 1942-1945," in Brinkley and Crowther, *The Atlantic Charter*, p. 50.
52. Wild, "Human Rights in Retrospect," p. 5.
53. Humphrey, "The Magna Carta of the World," p. 18. A last minute opening and the commitment of the United States' Secretary of State gave them a chance to get their propositions enshrined.
54. Charter of the United Nations, cited in Wild, "Human Rights in Retrospect," p. 5. See also Humphrey, "The Magna Carta of the World," p. 18. Accordingly, the Charter "did not define or even list" the rights.
55. Wild, "Human Rights in Retrospect," p. 5. See also Bothwell and Hillmer, *La politique extérieure du Canada*.
56. Veerman, *The Rights of the Child*, pp. 159-62. The Canadian family allowance program included similar concerns: For the first time, natives were included in a welfare program designed for the general population, even if a significant minority of them were to receive the allowance only in kind and through the office of the local Indian agent. The payment of allowances was also associated with the promotion of child placement agencies in order to favour foster families and discourage orphanages.
57. *Ibid.*, chapter 10. On the role of Canadian NGOs in the international development of children's rights between 1946 and 1967, it is worth noting Adelaide Sinclair's important contributions made to the United Nations' International Children's Emergency Fund [UNICEF]. On this point, see Desmond Morton, *The United Nations: Its History and the Canadians who Shaped It* (Toronto, 1995).
58. Veerman, *The Rights of the Child*, p. 219, notes 42 and 43.