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**THE WOMEN ARE BEHIND IT ALL?
WOMEN'S INFLUENCE ON SOCIAL POLICY
LEGISLATION IN NEW ZEALAND 1898 – 1999**

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ABSTRACT

This essay explores the influence of women on the development of social policy legislation in New Zealand from 1898 to 1999. Women's influence on three pieces of social policy legislation is examined, in the context of three different social, economic and political environments. The legislation considered is: the Old Age Pensions Act 1898; the Social Security Amendment Act 1945 (which introduced universal family allowances); and the Taxation (Parental Tax Credit) Act 1999.

In relation to each Act, this essay considers the influence women have exerted as individuals, Members of Parliament, and through women's groups and other organisations such as political parties. In addition, factors which have contributed to or limited the extent of women's influence on the legislation are discussed.

This essay shows that the ways in which women have sought to promote and shape social policy legislation have changed over the period. In particular, the number and diversity of women seeking to influence social policy have increased and the channels through which women have been able to exert influence have also increased.

It is argued that women have had significant influence over the legislation considered in this essay. It is shown that the favourable political environments in the 1890s and 1940s contributed to the extent of influence women were able to exert in relation to old age pensions and universal family allowances respectively. However, the success of women's activity and agitation which led to the enactment of the Taxation (Parental Tax Credit) Act 1999 demonstrates that women have been able to exert considerable influence over social policy, even in the context of an unsympathetic government.

The text of this paper (excluding contents page, footnotes and bibliography) comprises approximately 14,300 words.

In the legislation of which we boast, in the great social advancement we have made ... I say the women are behind it all.¹

I INTRODUCTION

It is well documented that women are major recipients and providers of welfare services.² As mothers, caregivers, beneficiaries, voluntary and paid welfare workers, welfare policies have a significant impact on many aspects of women's lives. However, the influence women themselves have had over the development of social policy has not been extensively explored. It is this aspect which is the focus of this essay.

During the period from the late nineteenth century to the end of the twentieth century significant changes took place in the New Zealand welfare state and society. In 1893, New Zealand became the first country to give women the right to vote in national elections. From this time, New Zealand was often considered a world leader due to its social policies in areas such as provision for the elderly, family allowances, social security, and health services. These policies led to the firm establishment of the welfare state by the mid-twentieth century. However, the 1980s and 1990s witnessed a radical restructuring of the welfare state in New Zealand and, with few exceptions, the state largely retreated from welfare provision.

Since the 1890s, women have been politically active and have continuously sought to influence social policies in various ways. This essay will focus on women's influence over three pieces of social policy legislation from 1898 to the present day, in the context of three very different social, economic and political environments. In relation to each Act, this essay will examine and evaluate the influence women have exerted as individuals, Members of Parliament, and through women's groups and

¹ Richard Seddon, New Zealand Premier quoted in Dorothy Page *The National Council of Women A Centennial History* (Auckland University Press/Bridget Williams Books, Auckland, 1996) 46.

² See Gisela Bock and Pat Thane "Editors' Introduction" in Gisela Bock and Pat Thane *Maternity and Gender Politics: Women and the Rise of the European Welfare States 1880s-1950s* (Routledge, London, 1991) 1-2.

other organisations such as political parties. It will be seen that some methods used by women to exert influence have changed in response to new opportunities and environments, while others have remained constant over the period. In addition, this essay will emphasise the factors which have contributed to the extent of women's influence over this legislation.

The first piece of legislation which this essay considers in Parts II and III is the Old Age Pensions Act 1898. This was enacted only five years after women gained the vote and during a period of considerable liberal reform. In passing this legislation, New Zealand became the first country in the English speaking world to make provision for the elderly. The Act's significance did not lie in its generosity; the pensions introduced were small, strictly means-tested and available only to the "morally deserving". However, the Act was important because it signalled the assumption of state responsibility for citizens' welfare and laid the foundations for the future expansion of welfare policies.

The second piece of legislation, considered in Parts IV and V of this essay, is the Social Security Amendment Act 1945, which introduced universal family benefits. This legislation followed the introduction of means-tested family allowances in 1926 and the significant social change and upheaval experienced in New Zealand during the war and interwar years. One of the important features of this period was the marked expansion of the welfare state; by 1945, New Zealand's welfare state was well established and state provision for citizens' wellbeing was generally accepted.

Finally, in Parts VI and VII, this essay will consider the Taxation (Parental Tax Credit) Act 1999. This legislation was enacted in the context of the debate about paid parental leave, and provides a tax credit for low income, working parents for eight weeks after the birth of their child. Between 1945 and 1999, dramatic changes occurred in society and the position of women. As noted above, the welfare state was radically restructured in the 1980s and 1990s, and much state welfare provision was reduced. In this context, the Taxation (Parental Tax Credit) Act was particularly

significant because it recognised the importance of the state's role in assisting low income families with the expenses of new babies.

II BACKGROUND TO THE OLD AGE PENSIONS ACT 1898

State provision for those in poverty or need in New Zealand before 1898 was extremely limited.³ The colony's early population comprised mainly young, healthy men, and therefore the need for social services such as health, unemployment relief and old age pensions was not seen to be pressing.⁴ Early governments were very reluctant to assume any responsibility for those unfortunate enough to experience sickness, injury or unemployment, and legislation emphasised that responsibility for those in need rested with their families.⁵

However, the seasonal nature of employment and volatile economy soon created a need for assistance for those without families, or whose families had insufficient resources to support them. Voluntary organisations and Charitable Aid Boards were set up to provide this assistance. Recipients of charitable aid were stigmatised, as society saw unemployment, poverty and destitution as personal failings.⁶ In addition, relief was only available to those considered "morally deserving" of assistance.⁷

The economic depression experienced in the 1880s was significant in bringing about an increased role for the state in the relief of financial need. Widespread unemployment and hardship witnessed during this period contributed to a shift in attitudes in the community. Financial need began to be seen less as an individual failing as it was recognised that unemployment and poverty could affect any sector of

³ See generally Christine Cheyne, Mike O'Brien and Michael Belgrave *Social Policy in Aotearoa New Zealand* (Oxford University Press, Auckland, 1997) 25; W B Sutch *The Quest for Security in New Zealand 1840 to 1966* (Oxford University Press, Wellington, 1966) 44 [*The Quest for Security in New Zealand*].

⁴ Margaret McClure *A Civilised Community: A History of Social Security in New Zealand 1898-1998* (Auckland University Press, Auckland, 1998) 11; Cheyne et al, above n 3, 25.

⁵ Destitute Persons Ordinance 1846 and Destitute Persons Act 1877.

⁶ *The Quest for Security in New Zealand* above n 3, 44; Cheyne et al, above n 3, 18.

⁷ McClure, above n 4, 12; Cheyne et al, above n 3, 25.

the population.⁸ In addition, Charitable Aid Boards and benevolent societies could not adequately meet the demands for their assistance, and thus calls were made for the state to assume a role in the alleviation of poverty.⁹

The elderly were the first group to attract sufficient attention and sympathy to merit introducing legislation to protect against poverty and destitution.¹⁰ As the early settlers of the colony aged, the number of old people in the population grew rapidly; the number of men and women aged over 65 years increased by 20 per cent between 1891 and 1901.¹¹

Employment opportunities for older men were decreasing at this time,¹² and the seasonal nature of employment and economic depressions meant that many older people had been unable to save sufficient income during their working lives to keep them in their old age. Many members of the older population therefore lived in appalling conditions, and this led to calls for the introduction of an old age pension.¹³

Although women aged over 65 years constituted only a small percentage of the total population at this time, it is interesting to note that a significant number of these women were widows; in 1896 the proportion was 53 per cent of women over 65 years.¹⁴ Presumably old age pensions would have been particularly important for these women as many of them would not have had access to any other source of income.

⁸ Social Security Department and Health Department *The Growth and Development of Social Security in New Zealand* (Social Security Department and Health Department, Wellington, 1950) 21.

⁹ Social Security Department and Health Department, above n 8, 21.

¹⁰ McClure, above n 4, 14-15.

¹¹ McClure, above n 4, 15.

¹² *The Quest for Security in New Zealand* above n 3, 90

¹³ David Hamer *The New Zealand Liberals The Years of Power, 1891-1912* (Auckland University Press, Auckland, 1988) 146 [*The NZ Liberals*].

¹⁴ Women aged over 65 years constituted only one per cent of the total population in 1896: Office of the Registrar-General *Results of A Census of the Colony of New Zealand Taken for the Night of the 12th of August 1896* (Government Printer, Wellington, 1897). The proportion of male widowers was much lower; only 24 per cent of men aged over 65 years were widowers in 1896.

The Liberal Government, elected in 1891, indicated that it was willing to respond to the situation. In 1894, the Government established a Select Committee to investigate the possibility of providing old age pensions. In its brief report, the Committee recommended the introduction of universal old age pensions, as long as a practicable method of finance could be devised.¹⁵

Bills were introduced into Parliament in 1896 and 1897 to establish a system of old age pensions. However, these Bills failed due to disagreements regarding means-testing and financing arrangements. The 1898 Old Age Pensions Bill, which became law in September of that year, offered a small annual pension of £18 to those aged over 65 years who had been resident in New Zealand for at least 25 years. Interestingly, the pension offered an equal income to men and women. The preamble of the Act acknowledged that:

It is equitable that deserving persons who during the prime of life have helped to bear the public burdens of the colony by the payment of taxes, and to open up its resources by their labour and skill, should receive from the colony a pension in their old age.

The Act did not follow all of the earlier Select Committee's recommendations. In particular, the Act did not offer a universal pension; it was to be strictly income and asset tested.¹⁶ Further, in keeping with traditional moral attitudes, the pension was only available to the "morally deserving".¹⁷ Significantly, however, and in accordance with the Select Committee report, the pension was to be non-contributory and paid out of the consolidated fund.¹⁸

¹⁵ "Report of the Old-Age Pensions Select Committee" [1894] AJHR I 11, 1.

¹⁶ Sections 8(7) and (8) of the Old Age Pensions Act 1898 (OAPA).

¹⁷ Those who had been imprisoned for specified lengths of time, or who had deserted their wives, husbands or children were not eligible for the pension: ss 8(3), (4) and (5) of the OAPA. In addition, applicants for the pension had to convince a stipendiary magistrate in open court that they were of "good moral character" and that for the past five years they had led "a sober and reputable life": ss 8(1) and 8(6) of the OAPA. Chinese, other Asians and aliens living in New Zealand were ineligible for the pension: s 64 of the OAPA.

¹⁸ "Report of the Old-Age Pensions Select Committee" [1894] AJHR I 11, 1, 2.

As with the previous Bills, the Bill introduced in 1898 was the subject of much debate in Parliament and many of its provisions were strongly contested.¹⁹ Many members were concerned that a non-contributory scheme would discourage thrift and self-reliance, values which were highly prized in the early colony.²⁰ Others believed that the scheme should be universal in application in order to avoid the stigmatisation and pauperisation of recipients.²¹

However, ultimately the Act was seen by the majority as a humanitarian attempt to address the pressing issue of the elderly poor. Many viewed the Act as the beginning of state provision for those in need and believed that the scheme could be modified and expanded as the resources of the colony allowed.²²

III *WOMEN'S INFLUENCE OVER THE OLD AGE PENSIONS ACT 1898*

A *Introduction*

In 1898, there were few formal or direct channels through which women could exert influence over social policy legislation. Despite having the vote, women were ineligible to stand as candidates for election to Parliament, and there were few women employed in the public service. Thus, issues of concern to women had to be expressed in and filtered through a system in which men held every position of power.²³ However, this did not prevent women from exerting considerable influence over social policy as voters, and through their organisations such as the newly established National Council of Women. The National Council of Women was

¹⁹ One newspaper noted that no measure introduced into Parliament had been more closely scrutinised clause by clause than the OAPA: "The Old Age Pensions Bill" *The New Zealand Mail*, Wellington, New Zealand, 13 October 1898, 8.

²⁰ (2 September 1898) 103 NZPD 541, 549.

²¹ (2 September 1898) 103 NZPD 550, 554, 557, 561; (9 September 1898) 103 NZPD 653, 654; (16 September 1898) 104 NZPD 208.

²² (2 September 1898) 103 NZPD 538; (7 October 1898) 104 NZPD 578-580.

²³ David Hamer "Centralization and Nationalism (1891-1912)" in Keith Sinclair (ed) *The Oxford Illustrated History of New Zealand* (Oxford University Press, Auckland, 1993) 125, 149-150 ["Centralization and Nationalism"].

particularly influential in relation to old age pensions due to the high profile of its members and their informal connections with politicians and public figures.

B The Influence of Women as Voters

This essay argues that women as a group of voters contributed significantly to the development of social legislation such as the Old Age Pensions Act 1898 (OAPA). The enfranchisement of women in 1893 created a large new group of electors whose votes politicians were keen to secure.

Women's position in society at the time dictated their primary political concerns. As wives, mothers, care-givers, low paid and voluntary workers in their communities, many women were concerned with social issues and sought greater state support in areas such as child welfare, education, unemployment relief and provision for the elderly.²⁴ In fact, one of the key arguments which had been advanced in the suffrage campaign was that women's vote would bring a purifying "mother's" influence to politics, draw increased attention to social problems, and encourage the passage of legislation to promote the welfare of the community.²⁵

In the first elections held after the enfranchisement of women, politicians were understandably uncertain and cautious of the effect of women's votes.²⁶ Women constituted approximately 41 per cent of the electorate in 1893 and 1896, and the turnout of women voters was significantly higher than that of men.²⁷ In order to capture these women's votes, and to secure their own political futures, politicians

²⁴ McClure, above n 4, 14.

²⁵ Raewyn Dalziel "The Colonial Helpmeet: Women's Role and the Vote in Nineteenth Century New Zealand" in Barbara Brookes, Charlotte MacDonald and Margaret Tennant (eds) *Women in History: Essays on European Women in New Zealand* (Allen and Unwin/Port Nicholson Press, Wellington, 1986) 55, 65-67.

²⁶ Patricia Grimshaw *Women's Suffrage in New Zealand* (Auckland University Press/Oxford University Press, Auckland, 1987) 96.

²⁷ This was particularly the case in the 1893 election; 82 per cent of registered women voted in that election compared with 67 per cent of registered men. In the 1896 election, 76 per cent of registered women voted, as did 75 per cent of men: *New Zealand Official Yearbook* [source: Alexander Turnbull Library, Liberal Party Clippings and Records, MS-Papers 94-106-17/17].

needed to show that they were prepared to address the social issues which were of such importance to women. Therefore, women "forced into prominence social and humanitarian questions".²⁸ Politicians themselves acknowledged the change in politics brought about by women's enfranchisement. Sir Robert Stout said that women's suffrage "changed the whole attitude of Parliament. The House knew that now women had votes they would deal with social questions".²⁹

Old age pensions were a significant issue and one of the Liberal Party's main platforms in the 1893 and 1896 elections. In fact, several Liberal Members of Parliament were thought to have been returned to Parliament in 1896 due to their support of an old age pensions scheme.³⁰ It is reasonable to assume that the prominence given to this issue in these elections was, at least partly, an attempt to appeal to the recently expanded electorate, which had become particularly predisposed to humanitarian reform since the enfranchisement of women.³¹

C *The Influence of the National Council of Women*

1 *The establishment of the NCW and its position on old age pensions*

Government policy was certainly influenced by the need to appeal to women voters in the electorate. However, it is contended that women were able to exert the greatest influence on the Government in relation to old age pensions through their organisations.

²⁸ Mrs Sidney Webb "Report of the New Zealand National Council of Women" in Countess of Aberdeen (ed) *The International Council of Women 1899 Report of Council Transactions* (Fisher Unwin, London, 1900) 125.

²⁹ Sir Robert Stout was a prominent Member of Parliament, Attorney-General and later Chief Justice of New Zealand: Rosalind Atherton "New Zealand's Testator's Family Maintenance Act of 1900 - The Stouts, the Women's Movement and Political Compromise" (1990) 7 Otago LR 202, 219.

³⁰ (2 September 1898) 103 NZPD 562.

³¹ Eric Freedman *Old-Age Pensions in New Zealand, 1840-1972* (unpublished, Victoria University of Wellington, 1977) 39.

Once women's suffrage was achieved, women wanted to use their vote and political power to persuade the Government to introduce social legislation for the benefit of the whole community.³² Women set about to do this by forming a number of organisations.³³ Women's Political Leagues and Women's Liberal Leagues were established nation-wide and advocated causes such as economic independence for women, child welfare, free education, and the reform of marriage and divorce laws. In Wellington, the Southern Cross Society was established by Lady Anna Stout (wife of Sir Robert Stout), and the Women's Social and Political League, whose patron was Louisa Seddon (wife of the Prime Minister), was also active in promoting political equality, improved working conditions for women, and old age pensions.

The event which was most significant in securing a prominent voice for women and ensuring that they were able to influence legislation such as the OAPA was the formation of the National Council of Women of New Zealand (NCW) in 1896, two years before the OAPA was passed. The NCW was established as a result of the suggestion of the International Council of Women, and the recognition by women in New Zealand that a national organisation could play a valuable co-ordinating function and would form a powerful united voice in order "to advance the progress of [the] country".³⁴

Women who were well respected and who had taken a leading role in the suffrage campaign were among the founders of the NCW in New Zealand, including Kate Sheppard and Lady Anna Stout.³⁵ The stated objectives of the NCW were:³⁶

³² Betty Holt, Joyce Herd and Dorothea Horsman *Women in Council: A History of the National Council of Women of New Zealand* (National Council of Women, Wellington, 1980) 5.

³³ See Page, above n 1, 11-12; Raewyn Dalziel "Political Organisations" in Anne Else (ed) *Women Together: A History of Women's Organisations in New Zealand* (Daphne Brasell Associates Press, Wellington, 1993) 55, 56.

³⁴ Anna Paterson Stout *The National Council of Women of New Zealand* (Christchurch Press Co, Christchurch, 1896) 2.

³⁵ Roberta Nicholls *The Women's Parliament: The National Council of the Women of New Zealand 1896-1920* (Victoria University Press, Wellington, 1996) 20-21.

³⁶ Holt et al, above n 32, 9 [emphasis added].

To unite all organised societies of women for mutual counsel and co-operation
and in the attainment of justice and freedom for women and *for all that makes
for the good of the community ...*

The most visible aspects of the NCW's business were conducted at its annual conventions, which were held every year from 1896.³⁷ The organisations represented at the NCW conventions were mainly political associations, and the women office holders of the NCW were almost exclusively middle aged, middle class, well educated and had no children.³⁸ At the conventions, papers were received and discussed, and resolutions were passed on a variety of issues, including unemployment, prison reform, economic independence for married women, equality in divorce law, removing the civil and political disabilities of women, and equal pay.³⁹

An important issue that attracted significant attention at NCW conventions was that of old age pensions. At the NCW's first convention in 1896, Mr T E Taylor, a Member of Parliament, presented a paper advocating a system of old age pensions.⁴⁰ The number of old people experiencing poverty and destitution was highlighted and Taylor argued the need for a universal pension paid out of the consolidated fund.⁴¹

The convention discussed Taylor's paper and heartily endorsed his suggestions.⁴² It was noted that it was unrealistic to expect workers to make contributions to a pension scheme due to the irregular patterns of paid employment experienced in New Zealand, and the meeting therefore believed that the state should assume

³⁷ Full meetings of the NCW were not held between 1906 and 1919.

³⁸ Nicholls, above n 35, 17.

³⁹ National Council of Women of New Zealand "Minutes of Meetings 1896-1900" [source: Alexander Turnbull Library, NCW Constitution and Conference Minutes, MS-Papers 1371-106; NCW Reports and Minutes, MS-Papers 1376-03].

⁴⁰ National Council of Women of New Zealand "Minutes of Meetings 1896-1900" [source: Alexander Turnbull Library, NCW Constitution and Conference Minutes, MS-Papers 1371-106; NCW Reports and Minutes, MS-Papers 1376-03].

⁴¹ "The Women's Convention" *Canterbury Times*, Christchurch, New Zealand, 23 April 1896, 36.

⁴² Holt et al, above n 32, 17.

responsibility for the older population and ensure their security and dignity. The meeting resolved that:⁴³

With a view of securing for the people an assurance against poverty in old age, it is desirable that a system of Old Age Pensions, or Annuities, should be established in this Colony, subject to the following conditions being observed: (1) the cost to be a charge upon the consolidated revenue, (2) the qualifications of the recipients to be 20 years residence in this Colony, and a certified age of 65 years.

The issue was so important that it was discussed again at the 1898 convention, which was held five months before the OAPA was passed. At this meeting, the desirability of a universal, state-funded pension was pursued.⁴⁴ At the conclusion of the discussion, the convention reinforced its earlier resolution calling for the introduction of old age pensions.⁴⁵

It is not surprising that the NCW advocated a non-contributory pension scheme. The seasonal and unpredictable nature of employment, which would have impeded many workers' ability to make regular contributions, was well understood by the women at the conventions. It is also reasonable to assume that the NCW would have been concerned that a contributory scheme would disadvantage women, whose limited participation in the workforce may have prevented them from benefiting from such a scheme.

It is perhaps more surprising that a group of middle class women would support a universal scheme rather than one which distinguished between the "morally deserving" and "undeserving" poor. This position may have been influenced partly by T E Taylor's presentation to the 1896 convention, which seemed to support

⁴³ National Council of Women of New Zealand *100 Years of Resolution* (National Council of Women, Wellington, 1996) 157 [*100 Years of Resolution*].

⁴⁴ "The National Council of Women" *The New Zealand Mail*, Wellington, New Zealand, 28 April 1898, 12, 13.

⁴⁵ *100 Years of Resolution* above n 43, 157.

socialistic principles.⁴⁶ The NCW's support of universal pensions was also consistent with its pragmatic and humanitarian approach to other areas of social need. This may be explained by the fact that many women involved in the NCW had non-conformist and evangelical religious affiliations and thus believed that society had a duty to help the "unfit" gain self respect and achieve independence.⁴⁷

2 The influence of the NCW on the Old Age Pensions Act 1898

This essay argues that the discussions and resolutions of the NCW regarding old age pensions were influential in the development of the OAPA due to the considerable public interest in the Council and in the role the Council had played in the two years of its existence as a champion of the issue. The potential importance of the NCW as a body of newly enfranchised and organised women was quickly recognised by politicians and the general public, as it had the power to mobilise women's votes and to speak with a collective voice representing a now significant section of public opinion.⁴⁸ In fact, in 1898, the editor of the *Otago Daily Times* described the NCW as "a factor in the political arena that has to be reckoned with ...".⁴⁹

The press took a keen interest in the NCW conventions. Each of the early conventions of the NCW received several full pages of coverage in many of the country's main newspapers, such as the *Lyttleton Times*, the *New Zealand Mail*, and the *Otago Daily Times*. These newspapers detailed at length the discussions and resolutions of the Council, including those about old age pensions. This was vital to the success of the organisation as it allowed the Council to exert public pressure on the Government in the areas of its resolutions.⁵⁰

⁴⁶ Holt et al, above n 32, 17; "The Women's Convention" *Canterbury Times*, Christchurch, New Zealand, 23 April 1886, 35, 36.

⁴⁷ Nicholls, above n 35, 27. Nicholls defines the "unfit" as the idle wealthy, and the mentally, physically and morally weak.

⁴⁸ Nicholls, above n 35, 27.

⁴⁹ Nicholls, above n 35, 27.

⁵⁰ See Les Cleveland *The Anatomy of Influence: Pressure Groups and Politics in New Zealand* (Hicks Smith and Sons, Wellington, 1972) 10-12.

The press coverage also added to the strength of the Council's arguments as early reports were generally favourable and helped to present the NCW as a credible organisation. In his report of the 1896 convention, the editor of the *Lyttleton Times* remarked (with some relief) that none of the women present showed "any extreme or hysterical tendency".⁵¹ Further, in its report the day after the convention had discussed old age pensions, the *Lyttleton Times* referred to the Council's "sweet reasonableness" and suggested that this proved women could become valuable in helping to frame the country's legislation.⁵² The middle class respectability of the women involved in the NCW presumably contributed to this favourable attitude.

It appears that the Liberal Government respected the NCW and was therefore prepared to give its resolutions serious consideration. In 1898, the same year the OAPA was passed, a Member of Parliament remarked that "from the manner of the conduct of the business, and the resolutions passed [at the first NCW convention, the women] showed that they understood the affairs of this colony".⁵³

Furthermore, the Liberal Party strongly believed in democracy and was committed to representing the views of the majority.⁵⁴ For example, during Parliamentary debates regarding the Old Age Pensions Act, one Member remarked that "[a]ll political power is centred in the people, we are here as representatives of the people, to give effect to their wishes".⁵⁵ Thus, public opinion as expressed by the NCW was able to wield considerable power.⁵⁶

In addition to applying pressure to politicians through NCW resolutions and the media attention they generated, another important way in which women exerted influence on legislation such as the OAPA was through direct links with politicians.

⁵¹ In Nicholls, above n 35, 20.

⁵² In Holt et al, above n 32, 17. It is important to note, however, that the NCW did not receive such favourable press coverage after the early conventions.

⁵³ (25 June 1898) 92 NZPD 338.

⁵⁴ *The NZ Liberals* above n 13, 43, 45.

⁵⁵ (2 September 1898) 103 NZPD 563.

In the suffrage campaign women had recognised the importance of developing alliances with sympathetic men in influential positions who could advocate women's concerns in public and, particularly, in Parliament.⁵⁷ Such alliances were also sought by the NCW.

Male politicians (as well as academics and clergymen) were invited to speak on a number of issues, including old age pensions, at the first NCW convention.⁵⁸ The attendance of these speakers established a direct connection between the NCW and politicians. This provided women with the opportunity to hear politicians' opinions on particular matters and, more importantly, ensured that politicians had first hand knowledge of the women's views.

In spite of a decision not to invite men to future NCW conventions, the NCW still cultivated informal connections with people in power. While it is difficult to measure the extent of influence exerted in this manner, it is recognised that personal relationships between politicians and the public (or a group of the public) can greatly impact on the transactions of the political system.⁵⁹

As with some of the prominent suffragists, several women active in the NCW were married to politicians whom they could encourage to promote their causes. For example, Elizabeth Best Taylor was a founding member of the NCW and was the wife of the politician, T E Taylor, a strong advocate of old age pensions.⁶⁰ As already noted, T E Taylor addressed the first NCW convention in 1896 on the issue of old age pensions. It is reasonable to assume that Elizabeth Taylor, in light of the NCW resolutions, would have encouraged her husband to continue supporting an old age pensions scheme. It also cannot be discounted that T E Taylor may have been actively seeking the support of the NCW in order to exert pressure on the Government to enact old age pensions legislation.

⁵⁶ Nicholls, above n 35, 27.

⁵⁷ Nicholls, above n 35, 30.

⁵⁸ Nicholls, above n 35, 30.

⁵⁹ Cleveland, above n 50, 3.

Another woman who was prominent in women's organisations was Lady Anna Stout.⁶¹ She was the wife of Sir Robert Stout, a leading politician and strong advocate of women's rights. Her marriage to Sir Robert gave her powerful connections with the political elite of the time, and she used these to advantage.⁶²

In the absence of personal connections, women were also not afraid to approach politicians in a formal capacity to express their desire for particular legislation. The NCW would have been aided in this by the Liberal Government's commitment to the public accessibility of its Ministers.⁶³ The *New Zealand Mail* reported that in 1898 a deputation from the NCW met with the Minister of Education and the Minister of Justice in relation to child neglect issues.⁶⁴ Although there is no record of women having approached ministers formally about old age pensions, this example illustrates that the NCW was a visible group, employing a variety of means to communicate their views to men in positions of power and thereby to influence government policy.

D *The Influence of Other Organisations*

In addition to the NCW, there were a number of other organisations advocating old age pensions at this time in which many women were involved, and which were able to command significant Government attention. Prominent among these were the Liberal Associations which were active nation-wide, and in particular the Christchurch Progressive Liberal Association.

⁶⁰ Holt et al, above n 32, 17.

⁶¹ Lady Anna Stout established the Southern Cross Society in Wellington in 1895 and was also one of the Vice Presidents of the NCW in 1896: Page, above n 1, 12.

⁶² Nicholls, above n 35, 16-17. For example, before Sir Robert introduced his Bill limiting testamentary freedom into Parliament in 1900, Lady Anna took the issue to the NCW and a resolution was passed supporting its principles. Thus when Sir Robert introduced the Bill, Parliament was aware of the importance of the issue to the women's movement and this added considerable weight to the proposed legislation: Atherton, above n 29, 208.

⁶³ *The NZ Liberals* above n 13, 43, 45. Cleveland also notes that the public accessibility of government Ministers can greatly facilitate the work of interest groups: Cleveland, above n 50, 3.

⁶⁴ "Neglected Children The Women's Council Approach the Government" *The New Zealand Mail*, Wellington, New Zealand, 5 May 1898, 17.

The Christchurch Progressive Liberal Association, established in 1893, advocated democratic government and social reforms to advantage the community. One of the reforms the Association was particularly active in promoting was the establishment of a system of old age pensions.⁶⁵ As with the NCW, the Progressive Liberal Association supported a universal, non-contributory pension scheme. The Association had a high profile and enjoyed connections with a number of politicians. As a result of this, the Association was acknowledged in Parliament as exercising significant influence over the Government in relation to old age pensions.⁶⁶

There were a number of prominent women active in the Christchurch Progressive Liberal Association, including Stella and Christina Henderson and Margaret Sievwright, who were also active in the NCW. It is reasonable to assume that these women promoted and supported old age pensions within this organisation, as they did within the NCW.⁶⁷

E Conclusion

The enactment of the OAPA was significant because it marked the beginning of state assumption of responsibility for those in financial need and laid the foundations for future welfare legislation. The influence women exerted as voters, through the NCW and other organisations, was considerable. While the OAPA did not satisfy many women's demands for a universal pension, the Government was anxious to secure women's votes and saw the promotion of social reform such as old age pensions as a way to achieve this.

⁶⁵Christchurch Progressive Liberal Association *Manifesto* (Christchurch Progressive Liberal Association, Christchurch, 1900) 3 [source: Alexander Turnbull Library, Liberal Party Clippings and Records, MS-Papers 94-106-17/17].

⁶⁶(7 October 1898) 104 NZPD 592.

⁶⁷The Knights of Labour was another organisation in which many women were involved, and which strongly supported old age pensions and other reforms to improve social conditions: W B Sutch *Women with a Cause* (2 ed, New Zealand University Press, Wellington, 1974) 73.

It is argued that the high public and political profile of the NCW and its continued commitment to an old age pension scheme was an "incessant and ultimately irresistible pressure upon the ... legislation".⁶⁸ The respectability and personal connections enjoyed by many of the NCW's members contributed significantly to the influence the organisation was able to exert. The success of the NCW and other organisations in promoting an old age pensions scheme was also aided by the fact that the Liberal Government was committed to democracy and community participation in the political process, and was thus willing to listen and respond to demands of the electorate.⁶⁹

Further, the Liberal Government was not averse to creating a larger role for the state in providing for the welfare of its citizens, as evidenced by its factory legislation, land reforms, and the introduction of workplace arbitration.⁷⁰ Therefore, the demands made by women voters, the NCW and other organisations in which women were involved were timely and opportune in the progressive political environment of the time.⁷¹

IV BACKGROUND TO THE SOCIAL SECURITY AMENDMENT ACT 1945

After the enactment of the OAPA in 1898, the Government was reluctant to extend pensions to other groups in need, as it feared the escalating costs of state welfare provision for which there was "no logical stopping place".⁷² However, between 1898 and 1926 the Government did incrementally and rather haphazardly extend pensions to cover various other groups.⁷³ As with old age pensions, the pensions introduced

⁶⁸ J B Condliffe quoted in Holt et al, above n 32, 6.

⁶⁹ "Centralization and Nationalism" above n 23, 126, 128.

⁷⁰ McClure, above n 4, 14.

⁷¹ It is interesting to note, however, that women's continued demands for further civil and political rights were not met by the Liberal Government. This suggests that the political environment of the time is pivotal in determining the extent of influence women are able to exert over government policy: see Nicholls, above n 35, 46. See also below Part VIII.

⁷² McClure, above n 4, 29.

⁷³ In 1911, pensions were introduced to assist widows with children, and in 1915 pensions for miners incapacitated by pneumoconiosis were introduced. During World War One, war pensions were offered to injured soldiers and soldiers' widows. Further, in 1924, the Government introduced pensions for the blind: McClure, above n 4, 31, 34-37.

during this time were non-contributory, means-tested, and generally only available to the "morally deserving". Charitable aid remained the sole source of support for those ineligible for a state pension.

A significant development occurred in 1926, when the conservative Reform Government introduced a means-tested family allowance, making New Zealand the first country in the world to provide a fully state-funded family benefit.⁷⁴ Several historians suggest that the Reform Government was reluctant to introduce such a benefit and had been forced into promising a family allowance as a result of Labour Party pressure during the 1926 election campaign.⁷⁵ However, Nolan argues that the Reform Government did support the legislation and was keen to provide an independent means of subsistence for children in order to alleviate child poverty.⁷⁶

Regardless of the Government's motivation, the family allowance afforded recognition of the fact that male wages were inadequate to meet the needs of all families, and that large families could therefore be the cause of poverty and hardship.⁷⁷ The legislation provided an allowance for families with more than two children and whose weekly income was less than £4.⁷⁸ It is important to note that the legislation recognised women's role in managing household incomes by providing for the allowance to be paid to the mother.⁷⁹ While the amount provided by the allowance was small, its introduction was important because it recognised families as a legitimate charge on the state and set a precedent for the extension of the allowance in later years.⁸⁰

⁷⁴ McClure, above n 4, 40.

⁷⁵ McClure, above n 4, 40; WH Oliver "The Origins and Growth of the Welfare State" in AD Trlin (ed) *Social Welfare and New Zealand Society* (Methuen, Wellington, 1977) 1, 17; Elizabeth Hanson *The Politics of Social Security* (Auckland University Press/Oxford University Press, Auckland, 1980) 24; *The Quest for Security in New Zealand* above n 3, 151.

⁷⁶ Melanie Nolan *Breadwinning: New Zealand Women and the State* (Canterbury University Press, Christchurch, 2000) 140.

⁷⁷ The male wage was determined by the Arbitration Court to be sufficient to provide for two adults and two children: Nolan, above n 76, 141; Hanson, above n 75, 24.

⁷⁸ Deserted wives and their children were, however, unable to benefit from the allowance as the children's father's signature was required on the application for the benefit.

⁷⁹ McClure, above n 4, 40.

⁸⁰ Hanson, above n 75, 25.

As with the depression of the 1880s, the depression experienced in the 1930s in New Zealand forced the inadequacies of existing welfare systems into prominence and was instrumental in bringing about an increased role for the state in welfare provision. The conservative Government's policies of retrenchment pursued during the depression generated public hostility and fostered the perception that the Government was contributing to unemployment and hardship.⁸¹

During the build-up to the 1935 election, the Labour Party capitalised on growing public discontent and advocated a larger role for the state in securing prosperity for the community.⁸² The Labour Party believed that everyone was susceptible to the hazards of unemployment and poverty and that the incidence of these could not be attributed to any individual's fault.⁸³ Thus, the Party promoted collective, universal welfare policies in order to provide security for all individuals against poverty and destitution.

The landslide victory of the Labour Party in the 1935 election demonstrated the strength of community support for these ideas.⁸⁴ The Labour Government sought to implement its policies quickly; pensions were increased, public works were initiated, and wage levels were restored.⁸⁵ Most significant in the creation of the welfare state was the enactment of the Social Security Act 1938. Consistent with the Labour Party's policies of collectivity and universalism, the Act provided for state-funded, universal superannuation, subsidised healthcare, and a number of other benefits.⁸⁶

The Government's commitment to universalism was extended to family allowances in 1945. Family allowances had been adjusted several times during

⁸¹ Erik Olssen "Depression and War (1931-1949)" in Keith Sinclair (ed) *The Oxford Illustrated History of New Zealand* (Oxford University Press, Auckland, 1993) 211, 213; McClure, above n 4, 48, 52-53.

⁸² McClure, above n 4, 58-59; *The Quest for Security in New Zealand* above n 3, 154.

⁸³ McClure, above n 4, 61.

⁸⁴ *The Quest for Security in New Zealand* above n 3, 236.

⁸⁵ McClure, above n 4, 63, 66.

⁸⁶ McClure, above n 4, 68, 78.

World War Two to compensate families for rising costs of living and in an attempt to raise productivity levels. It was believed that the strict means-test discouraged some men and women from seeking paid employment due to the loss of allowance they would suffer. Consequently, the amount payable was increased in 1939 and 1944; the allowance was made payable on behalf of every child in eligible families in 1941; and in 1944 the means-test was relaxed.⁸⁷

World War Two also forced into prominence concerns regarding New Zealand's small population and dwindling birthrate, and resulted in renewed appreciation of the role of the family in building a strong society. Thus, the Social Security Amendment Act 1945 provided a benefit of 10 shillings per week in respect of every child under 16 years.⁸⁸ As with the means-tested allowance, the universal family allowance was payable to mothers.

There was little disagreement in principle during Parliamentary debates about the 1945 Act. Members emphasised the role the family allowance would play in encouraging larger families and raising productivity levels.⁸⁹ Many members also stressed the importance of the family allowance in making adequate provision for and acknowledging the importance of mothers, who provide such a "wonderful service ... to the nation".⁹⁰

⁸⁷ McClure, above n 4, 97, 98.

⁸⁸ Sections 28, 30, 31 of the Social Security Amendment Act 1945.

⁸⁹ (10 October 1945) 270 NZPD 532, 549, 558, 559, 562, 566, 567, 645.

⁹⁰ (10 October 1945) 270 NZPD 532. See also (10 October 1945) 270 NZPD 532-533, 536, 559; (5 November 1945) 271 NZPD 174.

V WOMEN'S INFLUENCE OVER THE SOCIAL SECURITY AMENDMENT ACT 1945

A Introduction

By 1945, greater opportunity existed for women to exert influence over social policy in formal and direct ways, and a larger and more diverse number of women were active in seeking to influence social policy than in the 1890s. Women were made eligible to stand for Parliament in 1919, and the several women who were elected to Parliament from 1933 demonstrated a strong commitment to social policy issues. In addition, an increasing number of women were active in political parties.

The NCW remained active in seeking to exert influence over social policy. By this time, the NCW had grown considerably in size and represented a more diverse range of organisations. However, the decrease in media attention and lack of informal connections with politicians meant that the NCW had to employ more formal methods of influencing policy at this time. An additional influence which contributed to the introduction of universal family allowances in New Zealand was the introduction of such allowances in England, which appears to have been attributable to some extent to women's agitation in that country.

B The Influence of Women in Political Parties

In the 1890s, the party system of government was still a recent introduction to New Zealand and few women were directly involved in political parties. By the mid-twentieth century, political parties had grown in size and organisation and a greater number of women had become involved. It is argued that women were able to exert some influence over social policies through their participation in political parties. In particular, there is evidence to suggest that women involved in the New Zealand Labour Party had considerable impact on the development of universal family allowances.

The New Zealand Labour Party was established in 1916. Several women were actively involved from the Party's inception, and there were two women on the Party's first national Executive.⁹¹ These women had backgrounds of involvement in welfare and political organisations which supported socialistic principles and the idea of universal state welfare provision.⁹² It is thus reasonable to assume that they supported and promoted welfare policies during their terms on the Labour Party Executive.

As more women became involved in the Party, women's branches were established and women's conferences were held to discuss and develop policy.⁹³ Women who sought to influence social policy through membership of the Labour Party represented a more diverse group than those women who had exerted influence over old age pensions in the 1890s; in contrast to women who advocated old age pensions, there were a significant number of working women and women with families active in the Labour Party.

Women in the Labour Party strongly supported increased state welfare provision and the women's branches devoted considerable time to the discussion of social policy.⁹⁴ An issue which commanded much of Labour women's attention was that of motherhood endowments and family allowances.⁹⁵ A number of women were concerned at the rising costs of living and the inadequacy of male wages to meet the needs of many families.⁹⁶ They argued that family allowances would help support

⁹¹ These women were Sarah Snow and Elizabeth McCombs: Janet McCallum *Women in the House: Members of Parliament in New Zealand* (Cape Cattley, Wellington, 1993) 3. Elizabeth McCombs later became New Zealand's first woman Member of Parliament in 1933.

⁹² For example, Elizabeth McCombs was active in Housewives' Unions, child welfare organisations and the Christchurch Progressive Liberal Association: McCallum, above n 91, 2.

⁹³ Charlotte MacDonald (ed) *The Vote, the Pill and the Demon Drink: A History of Feminist Writing in New Zealand 1869-1993* (Bridget Williams Books, Wellington, 1993) 91.

⁹⁴ MacDonald (ed), above n 93, 91-92; Connie Purdue (ed) *Women in the Labour Cause: The History of the Auckland Women's Branch of the New Zealand Labour Party 1925-1975* (Auckland Women's Branch, New Zealand Labour Party, Auckland, 1975) 22.

⁹⁵ MacDonald (ed), above n 93, 92. In this essay, the terms motherhood endowments, family endowments and family allowances are used interchangeably.

⁹⁶ Nolan, above n 76, 148.

families financially and, importantly, would also directly recognise women's contribution to society.⁹⁷ Thus, many women's branches advocated the adoption of family allowances, to be paid to the mother.

Policy determined by the women's branches was submitted to Labour Party Annual Conferences for inclusion in the Party platform. While there were no women represented at many of the Party's early conferences, this did not prevent women from exerting influence over Party policy. For example, in 1921 a remit was sent to the Party's Annual Conference supporting motherhood endowments. The remit was sent by the Auckland and Dunedin Labour Representation Committees at the request and agitation of women's branches.⁹⁸ Thus, as women had done when advocating old age pensions, women within the Labour Party utilised connections with men in order to promote their policy of family allowances in forums to which they had no direct access.

From 1922, more women attended Labour Party conferences.⁹⁹ This enabled women to promote the policy and positions of their branches directly. In addition, women promoted family allowances through articles in the *Maoriland Worker*, the Labour Party's newspaper, and thereby ensured that the issue remained current and on the Party's agenda.¹⁰⁰

The Labour Party pursued a policy of equality between the sexes and was also committed to humanitarian reform and socialist ideals.¹⁰¹ Therefore, policies promoted by women, such as family allowances, which were in accordance with these principles would have been seriously considered by the Party. It is argued that

⁹⁷ Nolan, above n 76, 149.

⁹⁸ Nolan, above n 76, 153.

⁹⁹ Nolan, above n 76, 153.

¹⁰⁰ Nolan, above n 76, 148-149.

¹⁰¹ Edna Graham Macky "Why All Women Should Support Labour" in MacDonald (ed), above n 93, 95, 96; Elizabeth McCombs "Women in the Labour Movement" in MacDonald (ed), above n 93, 98, 101.

the extent of women's influence within the Party is evidenced by the fact that motherhood endowments became Labour Party policy in 1922.¹⁰²

Labour Party and Labour women's support for this policy continued throughout the 1920s, at which time public support also increased. In fact, as noted above, some historians suggest that the level of Labour Party agitation for family allowances and the public support which this generated prompted the conservative Reform Government to introduce means-tested family allowances in 1926. Thus, it is argued that by initiating and promoting the issue within the Labour Party, Labour women made a significant contribution to the enactment of the means-tested family allowance in 1926, and thereby contributed to the further extension of family allowances in 1945.

From 1926, women in the Labour Party continued to be interested in social policies, including family allowances. However, Gordon suggests that women's activism within the Party was not as great in the 1930s and 1940s as it had been in the 1920s.¹⁰³ This may be due to the pressures of the depression and Second World War, which diverted women's energy and attention away from political organisations. In addition, the Labour Party refused to support the establishment of women's conferences in the 1930s and 1940s, thus limiting the ability of Labour women to co-ordinate nationally.¹⁰⁴

Some women's branches remained active over this period, however, and these branches continued to agitate within the Party for enlarged and universal family allowances.¹⁰⁵ The election of the first Labour Government in 1935 helped to increase the influence women were able to exert in relation to family allowances

¹⁰² Nolan, above n 76, 153.

¹⁰³ Liz Gordon *A History of Women's Involvement in the Labour Party* (Social Sciences Research Funding Committee, Massey University, Palmerston North, 1984) 3 [*A History of Women's Involvement*].

¹⁰⁴ Liz Gordon *A History of Women's Involvement in the Labour Party* (unpublished, 1985) chs 5 and 6.

because the Government was committed to improved social security provision and also strongly emphasised the importance of the family. Further, the election of several Labour women Members of Parliament in the 1930s and 1940s promoted a resurgence of women's involvement in the Party.¹⁰⁶ As noted below, these women Members of Parliament were committed to social security provision and were responsive to Labour women's demands for universal family allowances.

C *The Influence of Women Members of Parliament*

Women became eligible to stand as candidates in general elections in New Zealand in 1919, 26 years after gaining the right to vote. However, it was not until 1933 that the first woman Member of Parliament, Elizabeth McCombs, was elected. Women had stood for election to Parliament before 1933. However, political parties were reluctant to select women as candidates in secure seats and thus women had met with little electoral success.¹⁰⁷ From 1933 until the enactment of universal family allowances, five women were elected to Parliament.¹⁰⁸ It is interesting to note that three of these women succeeded their late husbands or fathers to their seats.¹⁰⁹

All of the women elected to Parliament during this period came from similar backgrounds. Most had extensive experience in local body politics, as representatives on school committees, hospital boards, or city councils and were also active in women's organisations, community and welfare groups, or trade unions.¹¹⁰

¹⁰⁵ For example, in 1940 the women's branches sent a remit to the Annual Conference calling for increased family allowances: *A History of Women's Involvement* above n 103, 4; Purdue (ed), above n 94, 24-26.

¹⁰⁶ Margaret Wilson "Women in the Labour Party" in Margaret Clark (ed) *The Labour Party After 75 Years* (Victoria University of Wellington, Wellington, 1992) 35, 40.

¹⁰⁷ McCallum, above n 91, vii, x.

¹⁰⁸ These women were: Elizabeth McCombs, Labour Member for Lyttleton, 1933-1935; Catherine Stewart, Labour Member for Wellington West, 1938-1943; Mary Dreaver, Labour Member for Waitemata, 1941-1943; Mary Grigg, National Member for Mid-Canterbury, 1942-1943; Mabel Howard, Labour Member for Christchurch East, 1943-1946, Labour Member for Sydenham, 1946-1969: McCallum, above n 91, 1, 15, 23, 31, 36.

¹⁰⁹ Elizabeth McCombs and Mary Griggs succeeded their late husbands and Mabel Howard followed her father into Parliament: McCallum, above n 91, vii-viii.

In addition, these women shared a commitment to social policy issues and were supportive of increasing state welfare provision. In their maiden speeches in Parliament, several women Members emphasised their support for the social security advances that the Labour Government had initiated and voiced their intentions to advocate further improvements in health, education, housing, child welfare and women's economic position.¹¹¹

Consistent with their commitment to social welfare provision, a number of women Members of Parliament were deeply committed to family allowances and supported their extension and enlargement. These women articulated their support for enlarged family allowances both in Parliament and in their party caucuses. For example, Catherine Stewart strongly advocated the extension of the allowance to all children in poor families.¹¹² This change was effected by the Labour Government in 1941. In addition, Mary Dreaver passionately believed that the allowances should be made universal, as occurred in 1945.¹¹³

The influence women Members of Parliament were able to exert on the House and within their own caucuses may have been limited due to their small numbers and short terms in Parliament.¹¹⁴ However, it is argued that the presence of these women and their determined commitment to addressing welfare issues helped to raise the profile of social policy issues, including family allowances, and to ensure that these issues were not neglected in Parliament.

In addition, women Members of Parliament helped other women to exert influence over social policy by representing their views to the House. Women Members of Parliament received many letters from individual women regarding welfare issues, and were also frequently approached by women's organisations such as the NCW

¹¹⁰ McCallum, above n 91, 2, 4, 31, 37.

¹¹¹ McCallum, above n 91, 18; David Gee *Our Mabel* (Millwood Press, Wellington, 1977) 73-74.

¹¹² McCallum, above n 91, 19.

¹¹³ McCallum, above n 91, 26.

¹¹⁴ McCallum, above n 91, x.

promoting particular reforms.¹¹⁵ As noted above, several women Members of Parliament were themselves members of women's organisations and often advocated the causes of these organisations.¹¹⁶ Thus, the introduction of and increase in the number of women in Parliament was important in securing another, direct means whereby women could exert influence over welfare policies, including universal family allowances.

D The Influence of the National Council of Women

1 Changes in the structure of the NCW and its position on family allowances

The NCW underwent significant change between 1898 and 1945. In 1906, the NCW went into recess, and the NCW which was re-established and exerted influence over the Social Security Amendment Act 1945 was very different from the NCW which had agitated for old age pensions in the 1890s. There were three main reasons for the decline of the NCW in 1906.

Firstly, the heavy concentration of radical and political organisations in the NCW resulted in the criticism that the NCW was not representative of the majority of New Zealand women's views.¹¹⁷ Secondly, the NCW had lost much of its earlier influence.¹¹⁸ The NCW claimed significant success in its early years but by 1906 it was clear that the Government's programme of social reform was slowing and it was also apparent that the Government was not going to meet the NCW's continued demands for greater civil and political rights for women. Thirdly, the Council's leadership was ageing and discouraged, and there was a lack of younger women in the Council to revitalise the movement.¹¹⁹

¹¹⁵ McCallum, above n 91, 7; Gee, above n 111, 92.

¹¹⁶ McCallum, above n 91, 1, 16, 24, 38. For example, Elizabeth McCombs based her election campaign in 1933 on the reforms demanded by the NCW: McCallum, above n 91, 6.

¹¹⁷ Page, above n 1, 45.

¹¹⁸ Page, above n 1, 45.

¹¹⁹ Page, above n 1, 46.

Despite the NCW's decline, women's activity in New Zealand continued in the 1900s and 1910s, though this was mainly through organisations which focused on providing welfare services rather than political organisations.¹²⁰ World War One highlighted a number of issues of concern to women and caused many women to perceive a renewed need to co-ordinate nationally and advocate reforms to advance women's position as well as the good of society as a whole.

The first full conference of the re-established Council was held in 1919. A larger range of women and women's organisations were represented by the new NCW, including organisations of rural and professional women, church groups, educational societies and welfare organisations.¹²¹

The structure of the NCW was also different. Branches were introduced, and local women's organisations affiliated to a branch in their area.¹²² The number of branches and affiliated organisations grew dramatically from the 1920s and by 1940 there were 14 branches nation-wide.¹²³ The establishment of this structure was significant because it created a strong network of women's organisations throughout New Zealand, and enabled the national body to co-ordinate and express the views of a large number of New Zealand women.¹²⁴

While the economic position of women continued to be of concern to the NCW, family allowances were not a major issue promoted by the NCW during the interwar years.¹²⁵ However, the issue was raised at a number of NCW conferences during the 1920s. In her address to the 1919 conference, Kate Sheppard highlighted concerns about the falling birthrate and discussed the considerable hardship and poverty faced by large families.¹²⁶ She suggested that the question of family allowances deserved

¹²⁰ MacDonald (ed) above n 93, 68.

¹²¹ Page, above n 1, 55.

¹²² Page, above n 1, 55.

¹²³ Page, above n 1, 60.

¹²⁴ Page, above n 1, 56.

¹²⁵ Nolan, above n 76, 153.

¹²⁶ Kate Sheppard "President's Address to the National Council of Women (1919)" in MacDonald (ed), above n 93, 82, 86.

careful consideration by the Council in order to address these issues. Further, in 1921, the International Council of Women recommended that all national councils of women should study the issue of family endowments.¹²⁷

The NCW of New Zealand gave effect to these recommendations in 1925 when it resolved that the branches should consider a system of family endowments as outlined by Eleanor Rathbone in her book *The Disinherited Family*.¹²⁸ However, it was not until the 1930s that NCW support for family allowances became apparent. In 1935, a resolution was passed urging the Government to extend the allowance to all children in families whose income was insufficient to meet the needs of the family.¹²⁹ This extension of family allowances occurred in 1941.

Support for a universal family allowance became NCW policy in 1937 and was reiterated in 1944, just one year before universal allowances were introduced.¹³⁰ In 1944 the NCW resolved:¹³¹

that [it] urge that a Universal Family Allowance be instituted immediately as a step towards removing some of the grave and unjust hardships under which the parents and children of larger families now suffer, the amount to be paid to the mother.

2 *The influence of the NCW on family allowances*

In many respects, the NCW employed similar methods of exerting influence in relation to family allowances as it did when advocating old age pensions.

¹²⁷ National Council of Women of New Zealand "Minutes of the 1925 Conference Meeting" 3 [source: Alexander Turnbull Library, NCW Minutes of Annual Meetings and Conferences 1919-1944; MS-Papers 1371-126].

¹²⁸ National Council of Women of New Zealand "Minutes of the 1925 Conference Meeting" 3 [source: Alexander Turnbull Library, NCW Minutes of Annual Meetings and Conferences 1919-1944; MS-Papers 1371-126]. The influence of Eleanor Rathbone and her ideas on family allowances in New Zealand is discussed below.

¹²⁹ *100 Years of Resolution* above n 43, 156.

¹³⁰ *100 Years of Resolution* above n 43, 156.

¹³¹ *100 Years of Resolution* above n 43, 156.

Resolutions passed at conferences were publicised and communicated to Government, and delegations of women visited Ministers and Members of Parliament to promote NCW policy. In addition, in 1944, the NCW published a pamphlet promoting its universal family allowance policy.¹³² As a result of these activities, it is argued that the NCW did exert some influence over the policy of universal family allowances.

Unlike in the 1890s, however, the NCW did not enjoy the same informal connections with politicians and other influential figures. The larger, more diverse range of women represented by the re-established NCW did not have the personal profile or connections of many of the earlier NCW members. Thus, the NCW was more dependent on exerting influence through formal channels and approaches to Members of Parliament. This may have reduced the influence the Council was able to exert over politicians and policy. However, it is significant that from 1933 there were several women Members of Parliament whom the NCW could approach. As noted above, many of these women Members were involved in NCW affiliated organisations and were keen to promote the NCW's policies in their political parties and in Parliament.

A further difference was the level of press attention bestowed on the NCW. Media interest in the NCW had been very keen and favourable in the 1890s and thus allowed the Council to exert considerable pressure on the Government in relation to old age pensions. However, the interest of the press was weaker after the NCW was re-established. There was still some coverage of NCW conferences and resolutions in the main newspapers, however, NCW conferences no longer received several pages of detailed coverage in the press as they had done in the 1890s.¹³³

This decrease in media interest may be attributable to the fact that the women the NCW represented were no longer a new or unknown political quantity. In addition,

¹³² Page, above n 1, 95.

¹³³ See Page, above n 1.

the depression and World War Two diverted press attention away from women's organisations during these years. The decrease in press coverage meant that the Council was less able to publicly apply pressure to the Government to act in accordance with its resolutions.

However, the change in structure of the NCW and continued growth in the number of branches meant that the NCW was a more diverse and democratic organisation in 1945, representing a sizeable proportion of New Zealand women.¹³⁴ It is argued that this enabled the NCW to command Government attention and respect for its policies, including universal family allowances, as the Government would have been fearful of disregarding the opinions of such a large section of the voting population.

E The Influence of International Developments

Universal, state-funded family allowances were introduced in Britain in June 1945, four months before they were established in New Zealand. It is suggested that the introduction of family allowances in Britain encouraged the New Zealand Government to enact similar legislation; in fact, several Members referred to the establishment of family allowances in Britain when promoting the Social Security Amendment Bill in Parliamentary debates.¹³⁵ This is because New Zealand traditionally regarded itself, and was regarded by other nations, as a leader in welfare provision. The New Zealand Government was very keen to maintain this position by keeping abreast of welfare developments.¹³⁶

Women in Britain advocated family allowances through their organisations and political parties and were able to exert considerable influence over family allowance legislation. Therefore, it is argued that these women also indirectly contributed to the enactment of universal family allowances in New Zealand.

¹³⁴ Page, above n 1, 56.

¹³⁵ (10 October 1945) 270 NZPD 645.

¹³⁶ McClure, above n 4, 99.

Particularly prominent in promoting family allowances in England were Eleanor Rathbone and her Family Endowment Society (FES), established in 1917; Rathbone's contribution to the development of family allowances was even acknowledged during Parliamentary debates in New Zealand.¹³⁷ Rathbone recognised that male wages were inadequate to provide for many families.¹³⁸ She believed that universal family endowments would recognise women's unpaid work in the home and promote pay equality between men and women by removing men's claim to higher wages on the basis that they needed to support their wives and children.¹³⁹

The FES had a large membership, which included a number of prominent and well connected men and women of various political persuasions such as William Beveridge, and several Labour, Liberal and Conservative Members of Parliament.¹⁴⁰ The FES promoted the issue of family endowments in public meetings and lectures, through newspapers and pamphlets, and lobbied Members of Parliament.¹⁴¹

The Society was successful in arousing considerable public interest and consequently most political parties were forced to discuss the issue of family endowments.¹⁴² Despite this, the economic problems encountered in the 1920s meant that family allowances were not pursued further at this time. However, the FES continued to promote family endowments.¹⁴³

¹³⁷ (10 October 1945) 270 NZPD 645.

¹³⁸ John Macnicol *The Movement for Family Allowances 1918-1945: A Study in Social Policy Development* (Heinemann, London, 1980) 20.

¹³⁹ Macnicol, above n 138, 23, 26; Jane Lewis "Models of Equality for Women: The Case of State Support for Children in Twentieth-Century Britain" in Gisela Bock and Pat Thane *Maternity and Gender Politics: Women and the Rise of the European Welfare States 1880s-1950s* (Routledge, London, 1991) 73, 74.

¹⁴⁰ Macnicol, above n 138, 24, 26.

¹⁴¹ Macnicol, above n 138, 26.

¹⁴² Macnicol, above n 138, 54.

¹⁴³ Macnicol, above n 138, 43; Susan Pedersen *Family, Dependence and the Origins of the Welfare State Britain and France 1914-1945* (Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1993) 177.

Women in the Labour Party also strongly supported family allowances.¹⁴⁴ Women were formally integrated in the Party in 1918, when women's sections of branches were established.¹⁴⁵ The number of women members of the Party increased significantly, and between 1927 and 1939 women constituted at least half of the individual membership of the Party.¹⁴⁶ As in New Zealand, women in the Labour Party were committed to pursuing welfare issues and actively advocated universal family allowances within the Party.

Despite their large numbers and persistent agitation, the demands of women in the British Labour Party for family allowances met with little success during the 1930s due to male and trade union dominance in policy making positions.¹⁴⁷ Trade unions were not prepared to support family allowances because they feared that allowances would be used to justify male wage reductions.¹⁴⁸ However, during World War Two, public support for family allowances grew, as did support for greater social security provision in general.¹⁴⁹ Significantly, trade unions reconsidered their position and gave their support to family allowances in the 1940s.¹⁵⁰ With the support of the trade unions, in 1945 the Labour Government enacted universal family allowances, payable to the mother of every child.

It is argued that women in the FES and the Labour movement contributed significantly to the development of family allowances in Britain. From the 1910s, women persistently advocated family allowances, ensured that the issue was on the political agenda, utilised personal connections with Members of Parliament to

¹⁴⁴ Pat Thane "Visions of Gender in the Making of the British Welfare State: the Case of Women in the British Labour Party and Social Policy, 1906-1945" in Gisela Bock and Pat Thane *Maternity and Gender Politics: Women and the Rise of the European Welfare States 1880s-1950s* (Routledge, London, 1991) 93, 109 ["Visions of Gender"].

¹⁴⁵ "Visions of Gender" above n 144, 94.

¹⁴⁶ "Visions of Gender" above n 144, 94.

¹⁴⁷ "Visions of Gender" above n 144, 112; Pat Thane "Women in the British Labour Party and the Construction of State Welfare, 1906-1939" in Seth Koven and Sonya Michel (eds) *Mothers of a New World: Maternalist Politics and the Origins of Welfare States* (Routledge, New York, 1993) 343, 345.

¹⁴⁸ Macnicol, above n 138, 142.

¹⁴⁹ For example, the Beveridge Report of 1942 favoured enlarging social security provision to promote social cohesion; family allowances were among the Committee's recommendations: Macnicol, above n 138, 183, 186.

promote the issue, and generated considerable public and political support. However, it is important to note that women's influence over family allowances in England was limited by the adverse economic environment of the 1920s and strong male, trade union opposition in the 1930s. Thus, it was not until trade unions reconsidered their position and the Government began to investigate enlarging state welfare provision more generally that women's demands were met.

Further, as in New Zealand, it cannot be ignored that the provision of family allowances satisfied the Government's post-war economic objectives.¹⁵¹ Thus, some argue that the introduction of family allowances in Britain was more attributable to government economic policy than women's agitation and influence.¹⁵² However, Thane convincingly argues that in the absence of women's activism, "it is almost unimaginable that family allowances would have entered the political agenda".¹⁵³ In addition, women were instrumental in forcing the Government to enact legislation which provided that allowances were payable to the mother of the family.¹⁵⁴

F Conclusion

A number of significant changes in the methods women used to exert influence took place between 1898 and 1945. A greater number of women sought to influence social policy in the 1940s than in the 1890s, with a larger number of channels available for exerting that influence.

A very important change was that by 1945, women were able to exert influence over social policy more directly as Members of Parliament and through membership of political parties. While the number of women Members of Parliament was small and policymaking positions in political parties were dominated by men, the influence

¹⁵⁰ See Macnicol, above n 138, 176; Pedersen, above n 143, 301, 331.

¹⁵¹ These objectives included managing inflation and wage levels, creating work incentives, and encouraging greater productivity: Macnicol, above n 138, 201-202.

¹⁵² Macnicol, above n 138, 201, 202, 217.

¹⁵³ "Visions of Gender" above n 144, 113.

¹⁵⁴ Macnicol, above n 138, 192; "Visions of Gender" above n 144, 113.

of women in these areas was significant in ensuring that the issue of family allowances remained on the public and political agenda.

The NCW also continued to pressure the Government in the area of its policies. The NCW enjoyed less press attention and fewer personal connections with politicians at this time. Despite this, the growth in size and representativeness of the Council enabled it to command considerable Government attention and respect.

In addition, the enactment of universal family allowances in Britain influenced the passage of similar legislation in New Zealand. Eleanor Rathbone, the FES and women involved in the British Labour Party were prominent in agitating for family allowances in Britain, and thus these women also contributed indirectly to the adoption of family allowance policy in New Zealand.

As discussed above, the Labour Government elected in 1935 demonstrated a strong ideological commitment to universal welfare provision and also perceived that a universal family allowance would satisfy its objectives of increased productivity and population levels. In this context, it is perhaps difficult to isolate the extent of women's influence on universal family allowances. However, as was the case in Britain, the persistent agitation for universal family allowances by women in the Labour Party, women Members of Parliament, and the NCW ensured that the issue was on the political agenda and encouraged the Government to adopt the policy. In addition, it is argued that women's influence is apparent from the facts that the allowance was made payable to the mother and that several Members of Parliament reflected the arguments raised by women that family allowances would recognise women's contribution to society during Parliamentary debates.

¹⁴ Page above p. 142.

¹⁵ McClure, above p. 111.

¹⁶ Clavin et al, above p. 279.

¹⁷ Clavin et al, above p. 11-12.

¹⁸ McClure, above p. 111.

¹⁹ McClure, above p. 111.

²⁰ Jane Kelsey, *The New Zealand Experiment* (2 ed, Auckland University Press, Auckland, 1997) 180.

VI BACKGROUND TO THE TAXATION (PARENTAL TAX CREDIT) ACT 1999

The two decades following the end of World War Two witnessed unsurpassed prosperity and social tranquillity in New Zealand, and state provision of social security was widely accepted in the community and across the political spectrum.¹⁵⁵ By the late 1970s, 23 per cent of New Zealand's Gross Domestic Product was spent on social security, compared with 13 per cent in the 1950s.¹⁵⁶

However, by the 1980s it had become clear that the prosperity of earlier years had passed and that the welfare state was not delivering the level of social and economic security expected by the community.¹⁵⁷ From 1984, the Labour Government embarked on a dramatic programme of economic reform designed to reduce the role of the state and to increase prosperity by the operation of the free market.¹⁵⁸ These policies, which were continued by the National Government from 1990, marked a significant shift in social policy.

The large and increasing amount spent on social welfare was seen by the Government as unsustainable and ineffectual.¹⁵⁹ In order to reduce expenditure, the Government pursued a residualist model of welfare provision, which emphasised self reliance and sought only to provide a temporary safety net for those who experienced unemployment or hardship. A shift was made away from universal to targeted benefits, benefit rates were cut, and eligibility was tightened.¹⁶⁰ At the same time, state housing was made subject to market rentals, and the Employment Contracts Act 1991 exposed the employment relationship to market forces through its emphasis on individual bargaining.¹⁶¹ As a result of these changes, the standards of living of

¹⁵⁵ Page, above n 1, 82.

¹⁵⁶ McClure, above n 4, 211.

¹⁵⁷ Cheyne et al, above n 3, 39.

¹⁵⁸ Cheyne et al, above n 3, 41-42.

¹⁵⁹ McClure, above n 4, 211.

¹⁶⁰ McClure, above n 4, 212.

¹⁶¹ Jane Kelsey *The New Zealand Experiment* (2 ed, Auckland University Press, Auckland, 1997) 180.

beneficiaries and low income earners fell dramatically and poverty became increasingly evident in the community.¹⁶²

It was against this background of shrinking state welfare provision and increasing hardship in the community that the debate regarding state provision of paid parental leave was raised. Unlike many other countries, there was (and still is) no state provision of or legislative requirement for paid parental leave in New Zealand. Public support for the provision of paid parental leave grew significantly during the late 1990s, and in 1998 Laila Harre introduced a Private Member's Bill to the House providing for paid parental leave. Thus, by 1999, an election year, the Government was under considerable pressure to act in this area. It is argued that the introduction of the Taxation (Parental Tax Credit) Act 1999 was an attempt by the National Government to diffuse the debate and satisfy the growing public demands for paid parental leave.¹⁶³

The Taxation (Parental Tax Credit) Act 1999 provides a tax credit, funded out of general taxation, for low and middle income earners for eight weeks after the birth of their child. Families with at least one member in employment and with an income of up to \$37,547 are entitled to a maximum of \$1,200 for each baby.¹⁶⁴ Thus, consistent with the residualist welfare model, the tax credit is targeted and, in order to reward self reliance, welfare beneficiaries are ineligible to receive the credit.

¹⁶² See for example R J Stephens, C Waldergrave and P Frater "Measuring Poverty in New Zealand" (1995) 5 *Social Policy Journal of New Zealand* 88; R J Stephens *The Incidence and Severity of Poverty in New Zealand 1990-1991* (Graduate School of Business and Government Management, Victoria University of Wellington, 1994); V Krishnan "Modest but Adequate: An Appraisal of Changing Household Income Circumstances in New Zealand" (1995) 4 *Social Policy Journal of New Zealand* 76.

¹⁶³ See for example (20 May 1999) 577 NZPD 16645, 16647, 16688. Interview with Lyndy McIntyre, founding member of the 12 Weeks Paid Parental Leave Campaign Group, Wellington, 3 August 2000; interview with Dianne Yates, Labour List Member of Parliament, Wellington, 25 July 2000; interview with Lynn Middleton, National Secretary of the PSA, Wellington, 26 July 2000; interview with the Hon Laila Harre, Minister of Women's Affairs, Wellington, 25 July 2000; interview with Liz Hicks, Executive Officer of the NCW, Wellington, 12 July 2000. See also Guyan Espiner "Nats accused of going soft" *The Evening Post*, Wellington, New Zealand, 8 March 1999, 13; "Nats plan own scheme for paid parent leave" *Waikato Times*, Hamilton, New Zealand, 4 March 1999, 2.

During Parliamentary debates, supporters emphasised that the tax credit acknowledged the contribution families make to society and the economy and recognised their entitlement to assistance from the state.¹⁶⁵ It was argued that the tax credit would make a significant contribution to the wellbeing of working families by increasing their disposable income at a time when they faced considerable additional expenses.¹⁶⁶ Members also argued that the Act had several advantages over paid parental leave, including that the tax credit was funded by general taxation and that eligibility was not dependent on employment for a certain length of time.¹⁶⁷ This was in contrast to the paid parental leave scheme proposed in Laila Harre's Private Member's Bill, which was to be funded by an employer levy and which was only available to women who had been in employment with the same employer for at least 12 months.

Opposition Members were strongly critical of the Act, alleging that it was merely an election year populist move,¹⁶⁸ and arguing that it was inadequate to assist families in need.¹⁶⁹ Several Members also emphasised the fact that the Government had been pressured into enacting the legislation due to mounting public and political support for paid parental leave.¹⁷⁰

VII *WOMEN'S INFLUENCE OVER THE TAXATION (PARENTAL TAX CREDIT) ACT 1999*

A *Introduction*

By 1999, the avenues available to women seeking to influence social policy had again increased and some of the ways in which women exerted influence had

¹⁶⁴ The tax credit is payable to the principal caregiver of the child each week, or alternatively can be claimed as a lump sum at the end of the tax year.

¹⁶⁵ (20 May 1999) 577 NZPD 16644.

¹⁶⁶ (20 May 1999) 577 NZPD 16644.

¹⁶⁷ (20 May 1999) 577 NZPD 16644.

¹⁶⁸ (20 May 1999) 577 NZPD 16654.

¹⁶⁹ (20 May 1999) 577 NZPD 16648, 16657-16658.

¹⁷⁰ See for example (20 May 1999) 577 NZPD 16647.

changed. A new way of influencing policy employed by women at this time which enjoyed considerable success was the formation of single-issue groups. The direct influence on social policy exerted by women Members of Parliament was also particularly important at this time, especially as by 1999 their numbers had increased significantly and more women had achieved senior political positions.

The NCW continued to seek to influence social policy and to command respect due to the large number of women it represented. However, it is argued that the NCW was less influential in 1999 than it had been in the past. A further new channel through which women could exert influence over social policy was the Ministry of Women's Affairs. The formation of the Ministry was evidence itself of government's recognition of the important role of women in policy matters. The Ministry created a formal voice for women within government and enabled women to have significant input to the development of policy.

B The Influence of the 12 Weeks Paid Parental Leave Campaign

An organisation which contributed significantly to the enactment of the Taxation (Parental Tax Credit) Act 1999 was the 12 Weeks Paid Parental Leave Campaign Group (the Group). The Group grew out of the Wellington Working Women's Resource Centre, which was established by union women in 1991 to provide women with employment advice and union contacts. The Centre also had a political arm, which decided to lead a campaign on the issue of paid parental leave.¹⁷¹ Unlike women who agitated for old age pensions and family allowances as one of many demands made by broad-based women's organisations, the Group focused specifically on the single issue of paid parental leave.

The increase in the number of single-issue groups seeking to influence social policy reflected the changes which took place in the women's movement in the

¹⁷¹ Interview with Lyndy McIntyre, founding member of the 12 Weeks Paid Parental Leave Campaign Group, Wellington, 3 August 2000.

1980s and 1990s.¹⁷² At this time, many younger women perceived women's organisations as no longer relevant; a greater number of women were in paid employment and thus had less time to commit to voluntary organisations; and women were interested in a wide range of issues, which it became increasingly difficult for broad-based women's groups to accommodate.¹⁷³ Consequently, fewer women joined broad-based women's organisations, opting instead for involvement in single-issue groups.

The 12 Weeks Paid Parental Leave Campaign Group was launched in 1992 and the NCW, the Young Women's Christian Association (YWCA), Women's Centres and a number of union women were among its founding members.¹⁷⁴ The size of the Group and the involvement of women's organisations such as the NCW and the YWCA meant that it represented a large section of women's opinion and was able to speak with considerable authority when demanding paid parental leave. The involvement of union women in the campaign also lent credibility; from their experience, union women could attest that bargaining under the Employment Contracts Act was not delivering paid parental leave for most workers and that a legislative response was therefore required.¹⁷⁵

The Group aimed to raise the profile of the issue, to educate the public, and to promote the introduction of legislation to provide for paid parental leave.¹⁷⁶ The Group employed a number of methods to achieve its aims. It gained public and political credibility by conducting research on the benefits, costs and various models of parental leave in order to support its claims.¹⁷⁷ This information was sent to

¹⁷² See Sandra Coney "Why the Women's Movement Ran Out of Steam" in Sue Kedgley and Mary Varnham (eds) *Heading Nowhere in a Navy Blue Suit* (Daphne Brassell Associates Press, Wellington, 1993) 51.

¹⁷³ See Coney, above n 172, 51; Page above n 1, 183-184.

¹⁷⁴ Interview with Lyndy McIntyre, founding member of the 12 Weeks Paid Parental Leave Campaign Group, Wellington, 3 August 2000.

¹⁷⁵ Interview with Lyndy McIntyre, founding member of the 12 Weeks Paid Parental Leave Campaign Group, Wellington, 3 August 2000.

¹⁷⁶ 12 Weeks Paid Parental Leave Campaign *Information Kit* (12 Weeks Paid Parental Leave Campaign, Wellington, no year given).

¹⁷⁷ Interview with the Hon Laila Harre, Minister of Women's Affairs, Wellington, 25 July 2000.

Members of Parliament, women's groups, resource centres and unions. The Group also took every opportunity to raise the issue in women's committees of unions, women's forums and public meetings.¹⁷⁸ A significant amount of promotional material, including leaflets, stickers and balloons was produced to raise the profile of the campaign and to attract public interest. The campaign was thus conducted on a much larger and more theatrical scale than earlier women's campaigns for social policy measures. This was possible because the group focused all its energy and resources on campaigning for one particular issue.

As women had done in the fight for old age pensions and family allowances, the Group strongly lobbied Members of Parliament in order to generate political support for the issue. The Group wrote to every Member of Parliament seeking their position on paid parental leave at the beginning of the campaign, and for the next seven years the Group maintained contact with and lobbied politicians.¹⁷⁹ Lobbying was particularly important once Laila Harre's Private Member's Bill was before the House, and at this time the Group lobbied politicians both with Harre and independently to secure support for the Bill.

As it had been to women promoting old age pensions and family allowances, media coverage was critical for the Group to achieve public and political interest and support.¹⁸⁰ Several of the Group's activities were devised specifically to capture press attention. For example, the campaign was launched in 1992 with six babies in the Beehive. Five years later, on Labour Day in 1997, 12 pregnant women were pictured on Parliament steps advocating paid parental leave. These activities gained considerable media coverage, and this press interest intensified once Laila Harre's Bill came before the House in 1998.¹⁸¹ In addition, at this time *She and More*, a

¹⁷⁸ Interview with Lyndy McIntyre, founding member of the 12 Weeks Paid Parental Leave Campaign Group, Wellington, 3 August 2000; interview with Lynn Middleton, National Secretary of the PSA, Wellington, 27 July 2000.

¹⁷⁹ Interview with Lyndy McIntyre, founding member of the 12 Weeks Paid Parental Leave Campaign Group, Wellington, 3 August 2000.

¹⁸⁰ Cleveland, above n 50, 113.

¹⁸¹ Interview with Lyndy McIntyre, founding member of the 12 Weeks Paid Parental Leave Campaign Group, Wellington, 3 August 2000.

women's magazine which was very supportive of paid parental leave, funded a "postcard campaign". Postcards were printed requesting Jenny Shipley, the Prime Minister, to support the Paid Parental Leave Bill and were widely distributed for the public to post in to Jenny Shipley's office.

As a result of these activities, the Group was very successful in generating public support for the issue. Polls consistently showed that approximately 60 per cent of the public supported paid parental leave.¹⁸² The level of public support which quickly developed in favour of paid parental leave attracted considerable political attention and enabled the Group to exert significant public pressure on the Government to act in this area. The enactment of the Taxation (Parental Tax Credit) Act 1999 represented the Government's response to this pressure.

C *The Influence of Women Members of Parliament*

Although increasing numbers of women were elected to Parliament from 1933, women were not represented in significant numbers in the House until the 1980s. From 1981, the number of women Members increased considerably, due largely to the demands of women in political parties to increase the number of women candidates.¹⁸³

In 1993, New Zealanders voted to change the electoral system from first-past-the-post to mixed-member proportional (MMP). Proponents of MMP argued that it would increase the representation of women and other traditionally under-represented

¹⁸² "Leave poll" *The Evening Post*, Wellington, New Zealand, 23 July 1998, 2; "Paid parental leave finds favour" *The Evening Post*, Wellington, New Zealand, 23 April 1999, 3. Paul Holmes also conducted a viewers' survey on the *Holmes* show, which also revealed around 60 per cent support for paid parental leave: interview with Lyndy McIntyre, founding member of the 12 Weeks Paid Parental Leave Campaign Group, Wellington, 3 August 2000.

¹⁸³ Jennifer Curtin and Marian Sawer "Gender Equity in the Shrinking State: Women and the Great Experiment" in Francis Castles and Jack Vowles (eds) *The Great Experiment: Labour Parties and Public Policy Transformation in Australia and New Zealand* (Auckland University Press, Auckland, 1996) 149, 151; Margaret Wilson "Women and the Labour Party" in Margaret Clark (ed) *The Labour Party After 75 Years* (Victoria University Press, Wellington, 1992) 35, 42, 46; Judith Aitken "Women in the Political Life of New Zealand" in Phillida Bunkle and Beryl Hughes (eds) *Women in New Zealand Society* (George Allen and Unwin, Sydney, 1980) 11, 22-23.

groups in Parliament.¹⁸⁴ The first MMP election held in 1996 resulted in the largest number of women being elected to Parliament; there were 36 women Members elected, representing 30 per cent of the House.¹⁸⁵

One important effect of the increase in the number of women in Parliament was that more women assumed positions on select committees. This was significant as it helped to ensure that women's perspectives and priorities were reflected in select committee reports on legislation. In addition, a greater (though still small) number of women achieved Ministerial positions. The National-New Zealand First Coalition Cabinet formed in 1996 included one woman Minister, with three women Ministers outside Cabinet. After the collapse of the Coalition Government in 1998, there were two women inside Cabinet, and one woman Minister outside.¹⁸⁶ It is also noteworthy that at this time, both the Prime Minister and Leader of the Opposition were women.

Women elected to Parliament in the 1980s and 1990s have been involved in a diverse range of issues.¹⁸⁷ However, as did the first women elected to Parliament, many women Members elected in the 1980s and 1990s demonstrated a special interest in the social policy area. For example, most women who have achieved Cabinet positions have held portfolios such as housing, health, social welfare, youth affairs, and women's affairs. In addition, women have often been members of the Social Services Select Committee.¹⁸⁸

It is suggested that women Members of Parliament have often given greater priority and attention to social policy issues because of their backgrounds and

¹⁸⁴ Supporters of MMP argued that it would increase the representation of women mainly because of the party list system. It was suggested that parties would be encouraged to include a diverse range of candidates on their party lists in order to attract the party vote of the widest possible number of voters: Margaret Wilson "Women in Politics" in Raymond Miller (ed) *New Zealand Politics in Transition* (Oxford University Press, Auckland, 1997) 418, 423 ["Women in Politics"].

¹⁸⁵ "Women in Politics" above n 184, 424.

¹⁸⁶ <<http://www.executive.govt.nz/96-99/minister/index.htm>> (last accessed 20 September 2000).

¹⁸⁷ Arthur Baysting, Dyan Campbell and Margaret Dagg (eds) *Making Policy Not Tea: Women in Parliament* (Oxford University Press, Auckland, 1993) 191, 192, 198. This may be a result of greater recognition of women's abilities and experience in a wide range of areas, and the concerted effort of some women Members not to be restricted to the traditional "women's areas".

¹⁸⁸ Baysting et al, above n 187, 184, 189, 190, 191, 193, 197.

experiences.¹⁸⁹ Similar to the women who were elected to Parliament in the 1930s and 1940s, many women Members of Parliament elected in the 1980s and 1990s came from backgrounds of involvement in community organisations and local government.¹⁹⁰ This is in contrast to many male Members of Parliament whose backgrounds more commonly involved business, professional and farming experience.¹⁹¹ It is therefore argued that women Members of Parliament have often raised and promoted issues, such as paid parental leave, which would otherwise not have received high political priority.¹⁹²

Women Members of Parliament were very influential in relation to the Taxation (Parental Tax Credit) Act 1999. In particular, by promoting paid parental leave in Parliament, women Members generated considerable pressure which resulted in the Government enacting the parental tax credit legislation.

Laila Harre, an Alliance List Member, was particularly prominent in advocating paid parental leave. In 1998, she introduced a Private Member's Bill to Parliament providing for 12 weeks paid parental leave to be funded by employer levies. Harre and the Alliance were already committed to the issue of paid parental leave. However, Harre's decision to introduce the Paid Parental Leave Bill at that time was influenced by the level of public support generated by the 12 Weeks Paid Parental Leave Campaign Group in its five years of activity.¹⁹³ The issue was therefore politically attractive at that time.

Once the Bill was introduced, the 12 Weeks Paid Parental Leave Campaign increased its activities and, as noted above, the Group worked with Harre to lobby

¹⁸⁹ Pippa Norris "Women Politicians: transforming Westminster?" (1996) 49 *Parliamentary Affairs* 89; interview with the Hon Laila Harre, Minister of Women's Affairs, Wellington, 25 July 2000; interview with Judy Keall, Labour Member of Parliament for Otaki, Wellington, 25 July 2000; interview with Katherine O'Regan, former National Party Member of Parliament, Te Awamutu (by telephone), 31 July 2000.

¹⁹⁰ Baysting et al, above n 187, 190, 193, 197.

¹⁹¹ Interview with the Hon Laila Harre, Minister of Women's Affairs, Wellington, 25 July 2000.

¹⁹² Interview with Sonja Davies, former trade unionist and Labour Member of Parliament, Masterton, 6 August 2000.

¹⁹³ Interview with the Hon Laila Harre, Minister of Women's Affairs, Wellington, 25 July 2000.

Members of Parliament to support the Bill.¹⁹⁴ In addition, Harre and the Alliance organised several campaign activities in order to promote the issue publicly.¹⁹⁵

One of the key features contributing to the success of Harre's Bill in pressuring the Government to enact the Taxation (Parental Tax Credit) Act 1999 was the high level of media attention the Bill attracted.¹⁹⁶ This was presumably encouraged by the level of public support which was apparent both before and after the Bill was introduced. This media coverage applied considerable pressure to the Government by emphasising the widespread popularity of the issue.

The success of Harre's and the campaign's efforts is evidenced by the fact that Harre's Bill enjoyed considerable support in Parliament. It is particularly significant that several women Members, who usually voted with the Government, indicated their intention to vote with the Alliance to send the Bill to a select committee.¹⁹⁷ The support of these women (in addition to that of Labour, the Alliance, New Zealand First and several other independent Members) meant that the National Minority Government could not prevent the Bill from passing its second reading. Thus, in order to avoid political embarrassment, the Government also voted to send the Bill to a select committee.¹⁹⁸

The level of support evidenced for paid parental leave at the Select Committee contributed greatly to the pressure applied to the Government in relation to this

¹⁹⁴ Interview with Lyndy McIntyre, founding member of the 12 Weeks Paid Parental Leave Campaign Group, Wellington, 3 August 2000.

¹⁹⁵ Interview with the Hon Laila Harre, Minister of Women's Affairs, Wellington, 25 July 2000; interview with Lyndy McIntyre, founding member of the 12 Weeks Paid Parental Leave Campaign Group, Wellington, 3 August 2000.

¹⁹⁶ Interview with the Hon Laila Harre, Minister of Women's Affairs, Wellington, 25 July 2000.

¹⁹⁷ These women included Christine Fletcher (National Member of Parliament), Alamein Kopu and Ann Batten (independent Members): "Return of parental leave bill" *The Dominion*, Wellington, New Zealand, 31 August 1999, 2; Cathie Bell "Govt forced to allow two bills through" *The Press*, Auckland, New Zealand, 10 September 1998, 8.

¹⁹⁸ Sue Eden "Nats backing bill to save face, says Opposition" *The Dominion*, Wellington, New Zealand, 10 September 1998, 2.

issue.¹⁹⁹ Submissions received by the Committee overwhelmingly affirmed the level of public support for the Bill; 84 of the 118 substantive submissions received were in favour of the Bill.²⁰⁰ The Committee also received 719 form submissions supporting the proposed legislation.²⁰¹ Among the supporters of the Bill were many community and women's groups and trade unions. Members of Parliament noted that the submissions made by unions and a number of women's organisations were particularly influential due to the research they had conducted to support their arguments, and the fact that the organisations represented the views of large numbers of women and workers.²⁰²

D The Influence of the National Council of Women

The NCW grew considerably in size between 1945 and 1999. By 1999, there were 35 NCW branches throughout New Zealand with over 150 affiliated local organisations.²⁰³ In addition, there were 47 national societies affiliated to the Council's head office. Unlike the Council established in 1896, the range of affiliated organisations in 1999 was very diverse, and included the Labour Women's Council, the National Party of New Zealand, the Women's Division of Federated Farmers, the New Zealand Educational Institute, and the New Zealand Federation of Business and Professional Women.²⁰⁴ By 1999, it was estimated that the NCW represented over 200,000 New Zealand women, including a large number of working women.²⁰⁵

The NCW was very supportive of paid parental leave and, as discussed above, was a founding member of the 12 Weeks Paid Parental Leave Campaign Group. The NCW was therefore heavily involved in promoting paid parental leave through the

¹⁹⁹ The Taxation (Parental Tax Credit) Act 1999 was passed before the select committee report on the Paid Parental Leave Bill was released. However, the strength of support for the Paid Parental Leave Bill presented to the committee was clearly apparent to the Government when it enacted the parental tax credit legislation.

²⁰⁰ Social Services Select Committee "Report on the Paid Parental Leave Bill" (1999) 3.

²⁰¹ Social Services Select Committee "Report on the Paid Parental Leave Bill" (1999) 4.

²⁰² Interview with Dianne Yates, Labour List Member of Parliament, Wellington, 25 July 2000.

²⁰³ Interview with Liz Hicks, Executive Officer of the NCW, Wellington, 12 July 2000.

²⁰⁴ Page, above n 1, 202-208.

²⁰⁵ Interview with Liz Hicks, Executive Officer of the NCW, Wellington, 12 July 2000.

Group. The NCW also promoted paid parental leave separately. From its establishment in 1896, the Council was concerned with the inequalities created by women's child-rearing role, and passed a number of resolutions urging the government to make economic provision for women caring for children.²⁰⁶ In 1994, the NCW passed a resolution requesting the Government to provide for 12 weeks paid parental leave, jointly funded by employers and the state.²⁰⁷ The NCW also made a submission to the Social Services Select Committee supporting the Paid Parental Leave Bill in accordance with this policy.

As in the 1930s and 1940s, the NCW did not attract significant media attention in the 1990s. The NCW regularly issued press releases in the areas of its resolutions and policies, however, these rarely resulted in any significant press coverage.²⁰⁸ Liz Hicks, the Executive Officer of the NCW, suggests that the lack of press interest in the NCW may be attributable to the general lack of coverage of women's news and issues in the media.²⁰⁹ In addition, the increase in single-issue groups, such as the 12 Weeks Paid Parental Leave Campaign, and the press coverage they generated may have detracted attention from the NCW. As a result of this, the NCW was a less prominent organisation than it had been in the 1890s, and was therefore less able to publicly exert pressure on the Government.

In addition, the way in which the NCW sought to influence social policy changed between 1896 and 1999. As discussed above, in the 1890s, the NCW was able to exert significant influence over policy due to the high profile and strong personal connections of its members, as well as the level of public and media interest in its resolutions. In the 1940s, when the Council was promoting family allowances, the NCW no longer enjoyed the same informal connections with politicians or the same level of media attention, and thus the Council was more active in formally approaching and lobbying Members of Parliament. This was made possible by the

²⁰⁶ See *100 Years of Resolution* above n 43.

²⁰⁷ *100 Years of Resolution* above n 43, 55.

²⁰⁸ Interview with Liz Hicks, Executive Officer of the NCW, Wellington, 12 July 2000.

²⁰⁹ Interview with Liz Hicks, Executive Officer of the NCW, Wellington, 12 July 2000.

fact that most of the Council's members had few family or work responsibilities and could therefore devote a significant amount of time to promoting NCW policy.

However, by 1999, changes in the position of women in society and the large increase in the number of women in paid employment meant that members of the NCW no longer had as much time to commit to the organisation.²¹⁰ In addition, as noted above, while the membership of the NCW was still large, the number of women joining broad-based groups was decreasing. As a result of this, the NCW could not send as many delegations to Ministers and Members of Parliament, and instead focused on exerting influence through making submissions on legislation to select committees.²¹¹ This meant that the role of the NCW in 1999 was more reactive than it had been in the past. This may have reduced the influence that the NCW, acting on its own, was able to exert.

Despite these changes, however, the Council was able to command Government respect through its submissions on legislation, including the Paid Parental Leave Bill. The large and diverse number of women represented by the Council meant that the government was likely to pay close attention to its demands.²¹² In addition, the consultative approach to policy-making employed by the Council added weight to its resolutions and submissions as being truly representative of NCW members.²¹³ Members of Parliament also commented that the Council generally made thoroughly researched submissions which further enhanced the weight of its arguments.²¹⁴

Thus, the NCW's support for the Paid Parental Leave Bill as evidenced by its substantial submission to the Select Committee increased the pressure on the Government to respond to the issue, which it did by enacting the Taxation (Parental

²¹⁰ Page, above n 1, 183-184.

²¹¹ Interview with Liz Hicks, Executive Officer of the NCW, Wellington, 12 July 2000; Page, above n 1, 121.

²¹² Page, above n 1, 121.

²¹³ Page, above n 1, 121.

²¹⁴ Interview with Dianne Yates, Labour List Member of Parliament, Wellington, 25 July 2000; interview with Katherine O'Regan, former National Party Member of Parliament, Te Awamutu (by telephone), 31 July 2000.

Tax Credit) Act 1999. However, the changes in the NCW meant that the Council did not, on its own, play the pivotal role in relation to paid parental leave which it did in relation to earlier social policy legislation.

E The Influence of the Ministry of Women's Affairs

The Ministry of Women's Affairs (MWA) was a new avenue through which women were able to influence social policy in the 1990s. The MWA was established in 1985, and was charged with the functions of providing gender analyses of government policy and supplying policy advice in order to promote women's interests.²¹⁵

As a government department, the MWA must serve its Minister and cannot act as a lobby group or advocate policies on behalf of women's organisations. However, the establishment of the Ministry was significant as it created a formal voice for women within government to ensure that women's perspectives and interests are taken into account when developing policy. The MWA maintains contact with many national women's organisations and twice a year women's groups are invited to the Ministry for formal consultation. This ensures that the MWA remains in touch with women's views and has access to information regarding the actual impact of government policies in the community.

Throughout the 1990s, the MWA provided a vast quantity of policy advice to the Minister of Women's Affairs, other Ministers and government departments regarding paid parental leave. The MWA conducted extensive research into the prevalence of paid parental leave overseas, the models of paid parental leave, and the effect it could have on women, employers, society and the economy in New Zealand.²¹⁶

²¹⁵ Ministry of Women's Affairs *Briefing to the Incoming Minister 1999* (Ministry of Women's Affairs, Wellington, 1999) 1.

²¹⁶ See for example: Ministry of Women's Affairs "Department of Labour Parental Leave Survey November 1996: Summary of Key Results: Advice to the Minister of Women's Affairs" 13 May 1997; Ministry of Women's Affairs "Maternity Leave/Birth Payment in New Zealand: Advice to the Minister of Women's Affairs" 21 February 1996; Ministry of Women's Affairs "Paid Parental Leave:

Significantly, the MWA maintained that paid parental leave could enhance equity between men and women and enable parents to combine their paid and parental roles more effectively.²¹⁷

By conducting research and providing policy advice, the MWA has raised the profile of issues such as paid parental leave and has exerted some influence over government policy.²¹⁸ Members of Parliament comment that the MWA is generally very well respected and its advice seriously considered because of the quality of the research and analysis it undertakes.²¹⁹ This was particularly so in relation to paid parental leave, as the MWA conducted a significant amount of research and was known to have developed considerable expertise in this area.²²⁰

Thus, the MWA's involvement with paid parental leave helped to ensure the visibility of the issue and may have influenced some Members of Parliaments' views. In addition, the MWA's research and findings regarding the benefits of paid parental leave helped other women's organisations, such as the 12 Weeks Paid Parental Leave Campaign Group, to maintain pressure on the Government.

F Conclusion

Women contributed significantly to the enactment of the Taxation (Parental Tax Credit) Act 1999 through their agitation for paid parental leave. In contrast to women's campaigns for old age pensions and family allowances, women were able to exert most influence through the single-issue group formed to lobby for paid parental

Advice to the Minister of Women's Affairs" 26 November 1997; Ministry of Women's Affairs *Parental Leave Policies, Women and the Labour Market A Comparative Analysis of New Zealand, Sweden, United Kingdom, United States and Australia* (Ministry of Women's Affairs, Wellington, 1995).

²¹⁷ Ministry of Women's Affairs "Paid Parental Leave: Advice to the Minister of Women's Affairs" 26 November 1997, 3.

²¹⁸ Interview with Katherine O'Regan, former National Party Member of Parliament, Te Awamutu (by telephone), 31 July 2000.

²¹⁹ Interview with Katherine O'Regan, former National Party Member of Parliament, Te Awamutu (by telephone), 31 July 2000.

²²⁰ Informal discussion with officials from the Ministry of Women's Affairs, Wellington, 12 July 2000.

leave, and through women Members' promotion of paid parental leave in Parliament. While the NCW remained an important force in the political arena and was widely respected by Members of Parliament, its influence was not as great as it had been in the past.

Given that the National Government was opposed to increasing welfare provision and expenditure, it is not surprising that women's demands for legislative provision of paid parental leave were not satisfied. In this sense, the environment in which the Group was operating was very different from the more supportive political climates women advocating old age pensions and family allowances enjoyed. It is argued, however, that in this adverse environment it was particularly significant that women were able to generate enough public and political support to pressure the Government into enacting legislation which it hoped would diffuse the paid parental leave debate and satisfy some of the public's demands.

VIII OVERALL CONCLUSION

This essay has shown that over the period 1898 to 1999 women have been active in agitating for the introduction of social policies, and have enjoyed significant success. Consideration of the three pieces of social policy legislation discussed in this essay reveals certain trends of women's influence over the period.

Some of the methods used by women to shape social policy remained the same over the whole period. For instance, women found ways of communicating their demands to government, they lobbied Members of Parliament, and used the media to generate public support for their policies. There were, however, some marked changes. One important change which took place over the period was that women's ability to exert direct influence over social policy legislation increased while the influence of broad-based women's organisations such as the NCW, though still important, decreased.

In the 1890s, women could only exert influence over legislation such as the OAPA by indirect means. Nevertheless, women's influence was considerable. Their success seems largely attributable to two inter-related factors: firstly, the use of personal connections and relationships of individual women with men in positions of power; and secondly, the use of women's collective influence over men in power. This collective influence was exerted by organisations such as the NCW, which as an organisation of newly enfranchised women gained significant press attention and which consisted of well connected members able to exert considerable informal and personal influence over politicians and the Government.

By the 1940s, when women's attention was focused on the promotion of universal family allowances, women's means of influencing social policy had changed significantly. More direct avenues of influence had opened up to women; they were now active in political parties and, since becoming eligible to stand for Parliament in 1933, several had become Members of Parliament. However, the impact of women in these areas was limited to some extent due to their small numbers and lack of representation in senior positions. Therefore, women continued to be dependent on cultivating connections with men in order to promote and enact their policies in some situations.²²¹

While the NCW's contribution to social policy continued to be important in the 1940s, it is interesting to note that its membership had changed considerably. It was no longer an organisation of the mainly well connected, middle class women who had given the Council the high profile it enjoyed in the 1890s. Its membership was a broader reflection of New Zealand rural and urban women, and thus the Council was forced to change the ways in which it exerted influence. It now sent formal delegations to Ministers, instead of relying on the personal connections of its members and the high media interest those connections generated. The Council had also grown considerably in size and was able to command government respect as an

²²¹ For example, there were no women represented at several of the Labour Party's early Annual Conferences. Women therefore relied on men to raise and promote their policy of family allowances at the Conferences: see above Part V B.

organisation representing a large proportion of New Zealand women. In addition, women Members of Parliament helped to ensure that the Council's influence was maintained by advocating the Council's policies in their party caucuses and in Parliament itself.

Between the 1940s and 1990s, women's voice within Parliament developed significantly due to the increased number of women Members of Parliament and the increased number of women achieving senior political positions. An example of this increased influence was seen in the 1990s when women Members of Parliament were particularly instrumental in applying pressure to the Government regarding paid parental leave.

Another important avenue of women's collective influence over the development of policy was established by the creation of the Ministry of Women's Affairs in 1985. The Ministry provided a formal role for women in the policy-making process and, with regard to paid parental leave for example, was able to ensure that women's perspectives and interests were prominently before the Government.

A significant difference between the 1990s and the earlier periods is that women sought to influence social policy in relation to paid parental leave through a specially formed single-issue group, rather than through broad-based women's organisations. As has been shown, by the 1990s, membership of broad-based organisations such as the NCW was declining and the NCW was less proactive in influencing government policies.

It is argued that women were able to exert greater influence through the single-issue Paid Parental Leave Campaign Group. The Group was successful because it was able to devote all its resources and energy to one issue. This factor helped it gain considerable media coverage and generate significant public and political support for paid parental leave, thereby increasing the pressure on the Government to act in this area.

Another important trend which emerges from the consideration of the three pieces of social policy legislation is that the extent of women's success has depended to some degree on the social, political and economic environment of the time. Cleveland argues that the more closely aligned an interest group's goals are to the government's philosophies and policies, the more influence the group is able to exert.²²² This theory can be applied to the experience of women's campaigns for the social policies considered in this essay. However, the success of women's campaign for paid parental leave demonstrates the gains women have made since the 1890s in their ability to exert pressure, even on an unsympathetic government.

An important factor contributing to the influence women were able to exert over the Government in the 1890s was that the Government was prepared to create a larger role for the state in areas such as welfare. The Government was also strongly committed to responding to the views of the electorate. Thus, women advocating old age pensions were operating in a generally supportive and responsive political environment. It is interesting to note, however, that the financial constraints of the day imposed a limit on women's influence, resulting in the introduction of a means-tested pension as opposed to the universal pension which women were demanding.

As with the depression of the 1880s, the depression experienced in the 1930s resulted in increased community support for state welfare provision, and the Labour Government elected in 1935 was strongly committed to social security and universalism. This enabled women to enjoy significant success in the 1940s in their fight for universal family allowances. The women's cause was further enhanced by the Government's objectives of encouraging population growth and increasing productivity levels. Thus, as they had been in the 1890s, women's demands were timely and opportune in this political environment.

²²² Cleveland, above n 50, 93.

The environment of the 1990s was very different to that experienced in the earlier two periods considered. By this time, the Government had reduced its involvement in welfare provision, was committed to promoting individual responsibility, and was reluctant to increase expenditure on welfare provision. Thus, despite the significant public and political support women were able to generate for paid parental leave, the National Government would not capitulate to women's demands. It did, however, enact the Taxation (Parental Tax Credit) Act 1999 in order to diffuse the paid parental leave debate. The enactment of this legislation shows that, even in an adverse political environment, women have been able to exert sufficient influence to force the Government to go some way towards meeting their demands.

It has been shown that women contributed significantly to the development of the social policy legislation considered in this essay. Over the period 1898 to 1999, women have continuously been politically active and have persistently promoted social policies and sought to influence the government of the day. This essay has shown that some of the methods used by women to influence social policy have changed over the period, and women's influence has sometimes been constrained by social, economic and political factors. Despite this, it is argued that the examination of the three pieces of legislation in this essay verifies Prime Minister Seddon's statement and illustrates that women have indeed been behind much of "the great social advancement we have made".²²³

²²³ Quoted in Page, above n 1, 46.

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