

sions and other benefits acquired by those in the "workforce". These women must depend totally on the man who supports them and if he leaves or dies they are left in a precarious situation.

Women and the Constitution discusses all of these questions and many more. These are all directly or indirectly related to the constitution and the current power structures in Canada. It shows why women have not been able to operate fully as equal partners in our Canadian society and strives to encourage women to become more activist as it relates to their rights and to the governments that are making decisions which affect their lives. The book contains a wealth of information which will be valuable not only to Canadian women but very revealing to many Canadian men who may not be fully aware of the difficulties on the path to true equality.

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Women, Power and Politics. Margaret Stacey and Marion Price. London: Tavistock Publications, 1981. Pp. 208.

Stacey and Price pursue two goals in *Women, Power and Politics*. The first is to provide a descriptive account of the evolution of the social and political status of western women, particularly since the rise of capitalism. Here the authors succeed in compiling a useful and often revealing summary of the development of gender relations in Britain in particular and western society more generally. The second apparent goal of this volume is to, in their words, "develop a distinctive feminist theoretical position" which links changes in political economy to the nature of the family and ultimately to the balance of political power

between the genders. Most people concerned with the interdependence of gender-based, economic and political subjugation, undoubtedly are familiar with the numerous conceptual dilemmas posed by such a theoretical undertaking. Unfortunately, the approach developed in this volume is unconvincing.

The book begins with a promising chapter concerning the study of women, power, and politics. The authors draw innovatively on numerous sources to demonstrate that mainstream political science, especially the behavioural-pluralist approach, has been too narrow in its conceptualization of political power and too formal in its focus to explain (let alone to ask the right questions about) the political status of women in western societies. As an alternative to traditional approaches, Stacey and Price adopt the concepts of public and private domains so that the impact of familial institutions is included in the study of women and politics. Few can take issue with the inclusion of informal power relationships in the study of politics or with the authors' hypothesis that the institution of the family and the ideologies which support it effectively exclude women from the public sphere. The authors, however, grasp the notions of public and private domains to pose a rhetorical question which guides their research in subsequent chapters: "How can it possibly have come about in so short a period of time that so many women have become involved in politics?"

Stacey and Price essentially turn the familiar question of "why so few women in politics" on its head. Their reasons for doing so emanate from the distinction between public and private domains. Extending their analysis back to the Roman period, they argue that "women shared power with men until the state was separated from the household, when it [the state] became the private domain of men." In other words, the balance of power between women and men was dramatically altered with

the transition from feudal to capitalist relations of production. In the feudal period, the authors argue, women had power within familial, economic and religious spheres. Aristocratic women assumed managerial roles "especially in their husband's absence," nuns managed production units, single women supported themselves and the married worked along side their husbands. With the evolution of wage-labour, however, women were displaced from their feudal role. The rise of capitalism and its concomitant, the bourgeois family, meant that women were isolated within the home, non-persons in the eyes of society and the state, while men gained the credentials for full entry into the politics of liberal democracies. For males, capitalist social relations meant an emphasis on individualism and civil rights, particularly the right to private property. These, in turn, eventually accorded them political rights to participate in government. In contrast, capitalism subsumed women under the male head of the household. Women were not "full members of the community." Thus, Stacey and Price interpret the post-feudal history of women as a struggle to achieve some independence as women and to exercise some power as individuals in their own right. Women's advancement to this end in the last two hundred years is the basis for the authors' optimism about women's progress in politics.

Few can deny that the isolation of women in the private sphere has and continues to be a major impediment to their full integration into the politics of capitalism. Nevertheless, in reading this book, one constantly is confused by what the authors exactly mean by the term "power", whether the distinctions between the feudal and capitalist periods are as pronounced as the authors suggest and ultimately, the relationship between gender and politics. One suspects that Stacey and Price exaggerate women's power in the feudal order. Granted women were not isolated in the private sphere as prescribed by the ideology of the bourgeois

family. They maintained their own and contributed to the household's management and subsistence. But does this constitute power? The fact that wife-beating was sanctioned by canon-law and that women exercised virtually no political power would seem to refute this notion. If not, what does power mean? Moreover, if power simply means participation in the economic life of a period, surely a great many women under capitalism have "power".

The recurring question arising from this analysis is whether it is necessary to place so much emphasis on the consequences for women of the transition from feudalism to capitalism. Doing so implies that the gender biases in the distribution of political power can be reduced to modes of economic organization. Another interpretation is that each mode of organization has placed women in different, but, nonetheless, politically subordinate roles. In fact, the evidence compiled in this book could equally support the argument that gender is one basis for political power which cross-cuts both time and space. From this perspective, one is tempted to respond to Stacey and Price with an equally rhetorical question: Is the glass half-full or half-empty?

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Female Power and Male Dominance: On the Origins of Sexual Inequality. Peggy Reeves Sanday. *Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981. Pp. 295.*

We are currently riding on the crest of a breaking wave of materials about women in other cultures, a wave swollen by the work of anthropologists and other scholars interested in redressing the gender balance of cultural