

**2003 WINNER OF THE CWSA/ACEF ANNUAL BOOK AWARD
BOOK REVIEW**

***Driven Apart: Women's Employment Equality and Child Care in Canadian Public Policy.* Annis May Timpson. Vancouver: UBC Press 2001; 318 pages; ISBN 0-7748-0820-9; \$85.00 (cloth).**

The lack of available, quality child care has always interfered with women's right to achieve equality in the workplace. The state has at various times manipulated available child care resources to serve their purpose, most notably during the years of the Second World War. Access to higher education, advances in domestic technology, improved wages, and the creation of jobs have all allowed women to play a greater role in paid employment since the 1950s. However, the tension between women's need for child care and their need to earn a living remains unaddressed. Most feminists, regardless of their ideological position, agree that the factors contributing to women's work inequality are not located only in the workplace but are also found in the domestic sphere. The home, and particularly women's role as caregiver, play a significant role in confining women to jobs with limited advancement opportunities, that are increasingly part time and low paid and in general underutilize women's skills as workers.

In her book Timpson traces the fortunes of child care policies through the Canadian federal governments of Prime Ministers Trudeau, Mulroney and Chretien. All three regimes paid lip service to what Trudeau had dubbed the just society. While they claimed to recognize women's right to equality in the workplace, neither the federal Liberals nor the Conservatives were willing to tackle the thorny issue that women face in the private sphere, specifically the question of who will care for the children. Timpson looks at their efforts to address women's inequality through two royal commissions. The Royal Commission on the Status of Women which began in 1967 and the Royal Commission on Equality in Employment of 1983 allowed Canadian women to discuss issues regarding workplace inequalities and to make recommendations to the state as to how such inequalities could be redressed. Canadian women did not shrink from the task of raising the issue of child care that was so much on their minds, both in the 1970s and during the 1980s when these commissions were active. In each case, however, the state refused to cross the boundary that divides the public from the private spheres even though both royal commissions had recommended that they do so. Timpson argues that while the recommendations of the commissions regarding child care policies went unrealized, royal commissions have proved to be a useful tool to empower women and to have their issues heard. She argues that royal commissions can act as a vehicle to affirm the relationship between the state and its citizens. In doing that, however, the public's expectation of what will be accomplished is

often raised unrealistically given the limited parameters in which governments are willing to function.

Timpson's study is wonderfully readable and well grounded in interviews and uses a range of both primary and secondary sources. It is well deserving of the awards it has received.

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