

# Independent Women, Problematic Men: First- and Second-Wave Anti-Feminism in Canada from Goldwin Smith to Betty Steele

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*Feminist movements terrify and anger conservatives. At the heart of the backlash has existed an anti-modern narrative of a world at risk, dominated by independent women and problematic men. Canada and Western civilization in general have been seen as a battleground where anti-feminists struggle heroically for humanity's future. This article compares two generations of anti-feminists — those who may be conveniently labelled Victorians (Goldwin Smith, Andrew Macphail, and Stephen Leacock) and their late-twentieth-century counterparts (William Gairdner and Betty Steele). It examines anti-feminist opinions about the origins of the feminist threat, the role of the United States, the desexing of Canadians, the particular victimization of men and children, and finally the naturalness of patriarchy.*

*Les mouvements féministes effraient les éléments conservateurs de la société et soulèvent leur colère. Le ressac a pris appui sur un discours anti-moderniste d'un monde à risque dominé par des femmes indépendantes et des hommes posant problèmes. Dans cette perspective, le Canada et la civilisation occidentale sont généralement considérés comme le théâtre d'une bataille héroïque des anti-féministes pour l'avenir de l'humanité. L'auteure compare deux générations d'anti-féministes qu'il serait convenu d'appeler les Victoriens (Goldwin Smith, Andrew Macphail et Stephen Leacock) et leurs homologues de la fin du XX<sup>e</sup> siècle (William Gairdner et Betty Steele). Elle étudie les opinions anti-féministes sur les origines de la menace féministe, le rôle des États-Unis, la déssexualisation des Canadiens, la victimisation particulière des hommes et des enfants et le caractère « va de soi » du patriarcat.*

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## 2 Histoire sociale / Social History

ANTI-FEMINIST BACKLASHES of substantial proportions have harassed the first-wave feminist movement, which spanned the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, and the second, which began in the 1960s and continues today. While misogyny has rarely, if ever, been absent from Western society,<sup>1</sup> organized feminist demands for political rights, employment opportunities, sexual and reproductive autonomy, and an end to violence against women and children, among others, have provoked explicitly anti-feminist crusades around the world.<sup>2</sup> Feminist movements have repeatedly terrified and angered conservatives who contemplate not only the loss of prized traditions and privileges but a threat to fundamental security and identity. At the heart of the backlash has existed an anti-modern narrative of a world at risk, dominated by independent women and problematic men. Canada and Western civilization in general have been seen as a battleground where anti-feminists struggle heroically for humanity's future.

Anti-feminist women and men have been angry, puzzled, and frightened commentators on their times. They have not been alone. They have found sympathetic listeners in many parts of the country and in political life. Their views have confirmed the legitimacy of barriers to equality and have handicapped Canadian feminists such as Nellie L. McClung and Judy Rebick. Like its adversary, anti-feminism ebbs and flows. Two periods, roughly the 1880s to the 1910s and the 1970s to the 1990s, have seen the apogee of both movements. These decades have also been times of great change, moments when the nation has been "transformed" or even "unmade".<sup>3</sup> Feminists and anti-feminists have squared off as the former championed social transformation and the latter the protection of old rights and privileges. Over more than a century, their contests have unsettled intimate and public relations. Issues and developments ranging from the creation of the welfare state to the evolution of co-education and the use of birth control have been influenced, sometimes critically, by feminist versus anti-feminist wars.<sup>4</sup> Together feminists and anti-feminists have provided an influential and ongoing debate about the future of Canada in the modern world. If we are to appreciate better the meaning of this struggle about the nature of the social and political community we share, the serious attention being given

1 See Joan Smith, *Misogynies* (London and Boston: Faber & Faber, 1989).

2 See Susan Faludi, *Backlash: The Undeclared War Against American Woman* (New York: Doubleday, 1991); Marilyn French, *The War Against Women* (New York: Summit Books, 1992); Barbara Ehrenreich, *The Hearts of Men* (Garden City, N.Y.: Anchor Press, 1983).

3 See R. C. Brown and R. Cook, *Canada 1896-1921: A Nation Transformed* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1974); Robert Chodos, Rae Murphy, and Eric Hamovitch, *The Unmaking of Canada: The Hidden Theme in Canadian History Since 1945* (Toronto: Lorimer, 1991).

4 See, for example, Jane Ursel, *Private Lives, Public Policy: 100 Years of State Intervention in the Family* (Toronto: Women's Press, 1992); and the essays in Ruby Heap and Alison Prentice, eds., *Gender and Education in Ontario: An Historical Reader* (Toronto: Canadian Scholars' Press, 1991).

to Canadian feminist movements<sup>5</sup> needs to be accompanied by more scrutiny of their opponents.

Attacks on feminism have so far received relatively little scholarly attention. This omission has much to do with the reluctant acceptance of a gendered analysis by commentators in the humanities and social sciences. Most discussions of Canadian political theory and intellectual history remain resolutely ungendered. Also important is the relative lack of academic interest, at least in comparison with the enthusiasm for studying the Canadian left, in conservatism north of the 49th parallel. To be sure, the situation with regard to French Canada is somewhat different. Susan Mann, Mona-José Gagnon, and others have contributed significantly to our understanding of Quebec anti-feminism, particularly its clerical and nationalist versions.<sup>6</sup> The absence of sustained commentary might suggest that turn-of-the-century English Canada acted as a progressive counterweight to Quebec and lacked a significant anti-feminist tradition. Such a conclusion, as with many presumed dichotomies between the two solitudes, would be false. In fact, there is ample room for an English-Canadian equivalent to the invaluable annotated bibliography covering the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, *Antifeminism in American Thought*, compiled by Cynthia D. Kinnard.<sup>7</sup>

The vast majority of commentaries on Victorian intellectual life, including those that explicitly take on the question of conservatism, largely fail to recognize the significance of ongoing debates about the relationship of the sexes.<sup>8</sup> Only passing references and an occasional reprint acknowledge the existence of a determined anti-feminist crusade among English-speaking intellectuals.<sup>9</sup> While Canadian imperialists have been recovered and to some

5 See, for example, Constance Backhouse and David H. Flaherty, *Challenging Times: The Women's Movement in Canada and the United States* (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1992); Jeri Dawn Wine and Janice Ristock, *Women and Social Change: Feminist Activism in Canada* (Toronto: Lorimer, 1991); Nancy Adamson, Linda Briskin, and Margaret McPhail, *Feminist Organizing for Change: The Contemporary Women's Movement in Canada* (Toronto: Oxford, 1988).

6 See, *inter alia*, Susan Mann Trofimenkoff, "Henri Bourassa and the 'Woman Question'" in Susan Mann Trofimenkoff and Alison Prentice, eds., *The Neglected Minority: Essays in Canadian Women's History* (Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 1977), and *A Dream of Nation* (Toronto: Gage, 1983); Mona-José Gagnon, *Les femmes vues par le Québec des hommes* (Montreal: Éditions du Jour, 1974); Clio Collective, *Quebec Women: A History* (Toronto: Women's Press, 1987).

7 Cynthia D. Kinnard, *Antifeminism in American Thought* (Boston: G. K. Hall Co., 1986).

8 See Carl Berger, *The Sense of Power: Studies in the Ideas of Canadian Imperialism* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1970), and *Science, God and Nature in Victorian Canada* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1983); A. B. McKillop, *A Disciplined Intelligence: Critical Inquiry and Canadian Thought in the Victorian Era* (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1979); S. E. D. Shortt, *Search for an Ideal: Six Intellectuals and their Convictions in an Age of Transition* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1976); Ramsay Cook, *The Regenerators: Social Criticism in Late Victorian English Canada* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1985).

9 See, for example, *The Social Criticism of Stephen Leacock: The Unsolved Riddle of Social Justice and Other Essays*, introduced and edited by Alan Bowker (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1973); Alison Prentice *et al.*, *Canadian Women: A History*, 2nd ed. (Toronto: Harcourt Brace & Company, 1996), *passim*.

#### 4 Histoire sociale / Social History

degree rehabilitated as exponents of the nation's outstanding "lost cause", their attitudes to women and suffrage have been ignored. The misogynous views of more liberal and progressive Victorians have similarly remained without commentary. Canadian suffragists have been lambasted for shortcomings, including racism and classism,<sup>10</sup> but the calumnies of their enemies have been largely forgotten.

For the most part, contemporary English-Canadian misogyny has gotten off almost as lightly as its predecessor. Although several important works on anti-feminist women, right-wing homophobia, and the pro-family movement by feminist critics have recently appeared,<sup>11</sup> gender debates on the right, for all their revelation of political orientation, have generally remained of little interest to mainstream Canadian commentators. Although post-colonial and feminist analysts are discussing connections between national identities and sexualities in other countries, Canadian political scientists and historians have rarely acknowledged how nationalism is regularly gendered by partisans and opponents.<sup>12</sup> By way of contrast, for example, American conservatism at the close of the twentieth century, with its explicit articulation of a conservative "family politics" agenda, which found official support during the administrations of Presidents Ronald Reagan and George Bush,

10 See Wayne Roberts, *Honest Womanhood, Feminism, Femininity and Class Consciousness among Toronto Working Women 1893 to 1914* (Toronto: Hogtown Press, 1976); Carol Bacchi, *Liberation Deferred? The Ideas of the English-Canadian Suffragists, 1877-1918* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1983). For an assessment of the limitations of treatments of first-generation feminists, see Veronica Strong-Boag, "The Challenge of Fairness: Thinking about Canada's Two Feminist Waves", paper presented at the colloquium "Féminismes et cultures politiques nationales", septième entretiens du Centre Jacques Cartier, Rhône-Alpes, November 29 — December 1994, Lyon, France.

11 See Karen Dubinsky, "Lament for a 'Patriarchy Lost'? Anti-Feminism, Anti-Abortion and REAL Women in Canada", *Feminist Perspectives féministes* (Ottawa: CRIAW/ICREF, 1985); Margrit Eichler, "The Pro-Family Movement: Are They For or Against Families?", *Feminist Perspectives féministes* (Ottawa: CRIAW/ICREF, 1986); Lorna Erwin, "Researching Anti-Feminism", *Resources for Feminist Research*, vol. 17, no. 2 (1988), pp. 3-5, "REAL Women, Anti-Feminism, and the Welfare State", *Resources for Feminist Research*, vol. 17, no. 3 (1988), pp. 147-149, and "The Politics of Anti-Feminism: The Pro-Family Movement in Canada" (Ph.D. dissertation, York University, 1991); Rachael McKendry, "Anti-Feminism in Alberta" (undergraduate thesis, Department of Sociology, University of Alberta, 1993); Kathleen Storrie, "The Modern Movement for the Submission of Women", *Canadian Women Studies*, vol. 5, no. 2 (Winter 1983), pp. 9-10; Didi Herman, *Rights of Passage: Struggles for Gay and Lesbian Legal Equality* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1994).

12 For the beginnings of the incorporation of gender into mainstream Canadian political science, see some of the essays in Alan Cairns and Cynthia Williams, eds., *The Politics of Gender, Ethnicity and Language in Canada* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1986). On some of the problems generally, see Janine Brodie, *Women and Politics in Canada* (Toronto: McGraw-Hill, 1985); Carole Pateman, *The Disorder of Women* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1989), "Introduction". For important introductions to the issues raised by the connection between nationalism and gender, see George L. Mosse, *Nationalism and Sexuality: Middle-Class Morality and Sexual Norms in Modern Europe* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1985); Andrew Parker, et al., *Nationalism and Sexualities* (New York: Routledge, 1992).

has attracted analysts sensitive to its different meanings for women and men.<sup>13</sup>

A reconsideration of English-Canadian anti-feminism from the Victorian age to the present is a substantial task to which I provide here only a brief and far from complete introduction. Critical parts of the ideology are left for the most part unexamined. Anti-feminism's racism, anti-semitism, anti-abortion politics, and close relationship to Canada's far right in general<sup>14</sup> are important issues which require further treatment. My interest has been caught by the value to be found in a comparison of the views of the sexes held by representatives of two generations of anti-feminists, those who may be conveniently labelled Victorians and their late-twentieth-century counterparts. Their common identification of a problem — what I have termed “independent women and problematic men” — helps us understand better the vigour and passion of the feminist versus anti-feminist wars which have been a critical feature of life in the last century.

In appreciating the depth of anti-feminist passion, I have been informed by Carole Pateman's brilliant evaluation of the classic social contract theorists in her *Disorder of Women*. Revealing the inappropriateness of conventional political labels, especially conservative and liberal, the anti-feminists found in this text agree with theorists like Locke, Rousseau, Hegel, and Freud that

natural freedom and equality were the birthright of one sex. Only men are born free and equal ... sex difference [is constructed] as a political difference, the difference between men's natural freedom and women's natural subjection.<sup>15</sup>

Anti-feminism, I would argue, like “patriarchalism [in general,] rests on the appeal to nature and the claim that women's natural function of child-bearing prescribes their domestic and subordinate place in the order of things.”<sup>16</sup> When women are orderly, or subject to patriarchal discipline, they guarantee morality through their work as mothers and wives. Disorder-

13 See, for example, Pamela Johnston Conover and Virginia Gray, *Feminism and New Right: Conflict over the American Family* (New York: Praeger, 1983); Rebecca Klatch, *Women of the New Right* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1987); Miriam David and Ruth Levitas, “Anti-Feminism in the British and American New Rights” in G. Seidel, ed., *The Nature of the Right: A Feminist Analysis of Order Patterns* (Philadelphia: Benjamin, 1988).

14 For introductions to far right politics which generally ignore their gendered dimension, see Stanley R. Barrett, *Is God a Racist? The Right Wing in Canada* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1987); David Bercuson and Douglas Wertheimer, *A Trust Betrayed: The Keegstra Affair* (Toronto: Seal Books, 1987); Warren Kinsella, *Web of Hate: Inside Canada's Far Right Network* (Toronto: Harper-Collins, 1994).

15 Pateman, *The Disorder of Women*, p. 5.

16 *Ibid.*, p. 124.

ly or independent women threaten the male identity, rendering it essentially problematic, and thus undermine the foundations of civil society. As we shall see, this revolutionary vision has tormented anti-feminists from the past to the present.

### **Goldwin Smith, Andrew Macphail, and Stephen Leacock**

First-wave anti-feminists<sup>17</sup> included many Canadians, but three remarkable men, who stood near the heart of the Canadian intellectual elite, were especially visible and outspoken. No woman was comparable in stature. The oldest, Goldwin Smith (1823–1910), former Regius Professor of Modern History at Oxford and professor of history at Cornell, settled in Toronto in 1871 where he published widely on national and international affairs. A classic nineteenth-century liberal, he vigorously opposed the Boer War and the imperial federation movement. In Canada he is best known today as the author of *Canada and the Canadian Question* (1891), which concluded that the Dominion was not viable and its only satisfactory future lay in amalgamation with the United States.<sup>18</sup> A North American Anglo-Saxon union would, he hoped, save Canada from mediocrity and the United States from racial deterioration. Smith's anti-feminism, well displayed in his chapter "Woman Suffrage" in *Essays on the Questions of the Day* (1893), was integral to his general critique of modern life. This grouped independent women, together with Jews and Blacks, as a menace to the progress of the "human" race.<sup>19</sup>

Among critics of Smith's advocacy of continentalism were leading Canadian conservatives Sir Andrew Macphail and Stephen Leacock. They would have found many of his other views more congenial. Macphail (1864–1938) was born in P.E.I. and studied at McGill, where in 1907 he was appointed its first professor of the history of medicine, a position he retained for 30 years. Like Smith, he published prodigiously. He was also the longtime editor of one of the nation's leading journals, *The University Magazine*

17 "First" and "second" wave anti-feminism seems a logical counterpart to the already identified "first" and "second" wave of feminism. On the latter, see Carol Bacchi, "'First Wave' Feminism in Canada: The Ideas of the English-Canadian Suffragists, 1877–1918", *Women's Studies International Forum*, vol. 5 (1982), pp. 575–583.

18 See Elisabeth Wallace, *Goldwin Smith, Victorian Liberal* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1953). See also Goldwin Smith, *Canada and the Canadian Question*, introduced by C. Berger (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1971).

19 See, *inter alia*, Goldwin Smith, "The Jewish Question" in *Essays on the Questions of the Day* (New York, London, Toronto, 1893). See also the response to his views by Isaac Besht Bendavid, "Goldwin Smith and the Jews", *North American Review*, no. 418 (September 1891), pp. 257–271. See also Berger, "Introduction", *Canada and the Canadian Question*, p. xi; and, for an extended treatment of Smith's anti-semitism, Gerald Tulchinsky, *Taking Root: The Origins of the Canadian Jewish Community* (Toronto: Lester Publishing, 1992), chap. 12. For a discussion of the "scientific" foundation of Victorian and subsequent racism, see Angus McLaren, *Our Own Master Race: Eugenics in Canada, 1885–1945* (Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 1990).

(1907–1920). An imperialist, Macphail looked to Great Britain to help maintain Canadian independence in North America. In his eyes the United States was, for the most part, vulgar, materialist, and degenerate. As his 1910 diatribes on “The American Woman” and “The Psychology of the Suffragette” in *Essays in Fallacy* revealed, Macphail saw feminism at the heart of the American failure. For him, too, a broad-ranging racism was matter-of-course.<sup>20</sup> Anglo-celtic males reigned over a scientifically legitimated racial and gender hierarchy.

Today, Stephen Leacock (1869–1944) is the most famous of the three. Born in England, he trained at Toronto and Chicago universities before joining McGill’s department of economics and political science in 1903. While best remembered as the author of *Sunshine Sketches of a Little Town* (1912) and *Arcadian Adventures with the Idle Rich* (1914), he was also a highly productive political economist, with works such as the best-selling *Elements of Political Science* (1906). Like Macphail, Leacock was an ardent conservative and imperialist. He too was extremely critical of the United States, which he believed to be the leading edge of a modern materialist culture of which he deeply disapproved and which he believed threatened Canada.<sup>21</sup> For him, as his 1915 essay “The Woman Question” indicated, feminism was part and parcel of modernism’s threat to the traditional values he wished preserved.<sup>22</sup> Again Leacock’s preferred and superior exemplars of citizenship were males of Northern European and Christian heritage. Others were, by definition, lesser creatures.<sup>23</sup>

While important differences distinguished Smith, Macphail, and Leacock, all were prominent members of English-speaking Canada’s small intellectual establishment. Intensely concerned with the future of the Dominion, they shared suspicions about the direction of post-industrial society, especially its heterogeneity, and they feared feminist advances. In their minds feminists threatened fundamental laws of nature; their success would ultimately consign the Anglo-celtic race to degeneration.<sup>24</sup> Such thinkers might have been viewed as occasionally excessive by their contemporaries but they

20 See “The Immigrant”, *Canadian Club Year Book 1919–1920* (Ottawa, 1920) as cited in Berger, *The Sense of Power*, p. 151.

21 See F. W. Watt, “Critic or Entertainer? Stephen Leacock and the Growth of Materialism”, *Canadian Literature*, vol. 5 (Summer 1960), pp. 33–42; Ramsay Cook, “Stephen Leacock and the Age of Plutocracy” in J. Moir, ed., *Character and Circumstance* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1970).

22 Stephen Leacock, “The Woman Question”, reprinted in *The Social Criticism of Stephen Leacock*, edited and introduced by Alan Bowker (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1973).

23 See Stephen Leacock, “Canada and the Immigration Problem”, *National Review*, vol. 57 (1911), pp. 316–327.

24 On the sexual “science” of the day, see Cynthia Eagle Russett, *Sexual Science: The Victorian Construction of Womanhood* (Cambridge and London: Harvard University Press, 1989); Wendy Mitchinson, *The Nature of their Bodies: Women and their Doctors in Victorian Canada* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1991).

were not marginal to the debates of the day. Thoughtful Canadians read and discussed their works, sharing, to what degree we cannot know, both their sexism and their racism. Although they had predecessors and contemporaries in the cause of anti-feminism,<sup>25</sup> they were powerful participants in critical discussions about the roles that women and men ought to play in modern Canada.

### **William Gairdner and Betty Steele**

Anti-feminist statements can still be heard, with a fair degree of regularity, from academics, politicians, economists, journalists, and medical and legal professionals in the 1990s.<sup>26</sup> Feminist bashing is a stock-in-trade of right-wing periodicals such as *Alberta Report* and *BC Report*,<sup>27</sup> but diatribes are also found in more supposedly middle-of-the-road publications. For example, Barbara Amiel, one of the more well-known anti-feminists, is a senior contributor to *Maclean's*.<sup>28</sup> The strength and range of reactionary outbursts today suggest a resumption of the Victorian battle for ideological dominance, a struggle in other words for the hearts and minds of Canadians. Today's right-wing heirs of the early anti-feminists champion individualism, the so-called free market, traditional religion, racial and ethnic solidarity, and patriarchal governance: in their eyes feminism and socialism loom as intertwined evils that threaten the body politic at its heart. The world since World War II, especially the post-1960 world, as expressed in the social welfare state and feminist reforms, leaves them feeling disinherited and embittered. Hardly surprisingly, anti-feminist sentiments are closely implicated in the late twentieth century's upsurge of violence against women, as the massacre of 14 women at Montreal's École Polytechnique on December 6, 1989, demonstrated.<sup>29</sup>

The essential spirit of much of the contemporary crusade against feminism is captured by two Canadian authors, William Gairdner and Betty Steele. William Douglas Gairdner (b. 1940), author of *The Trouble with Canada* (1990) and *The War Against the Family* (1992), is strongly linked to the traditional Canadian establishment. His grandfather was founder of a once well-known brokerage company of the same name. Educated at

25 See articles by Robert Sedgewick *et al.* in Ramsay Cook and Wendy Mitchinson, eds., *Their Proper Sphere: Woman's Place in Canadian Society* (Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1970).

26 Probably the most notorious recent example from an academic is the chemist Gordon R. Freeman's "Kinetics of Non-Homogeneous Processes in Human Society: Unethical Behaviour and Societal Chaos", which made its misogynist appearance, very peculiarly, in the *Canadian Journal of Physics*, vol. 68 (1990), pp. 794–798.

27 See, for example, the issue of January 7, 1991.

28 See, for example, her "The Female Refugee: A Fraudulent Concept", *Maclean's*, March 29, 1993, p. 9.

29 On this see, *inter alia*, Louise Malette and Marie Chalouh, *The Montreal Massacre*, translated by Marlene Wildeman (Toronto: Gynergy Books, 1991).



Appleby College, McGill, Colorado, and Stanford universities, “Captain Canuck”, as he was regrettably dubbed by one journalist, competed in the Commonwealth Games (1966 and 1970) and the Olympics (1964), taught in the English Department at York University, is a former president of Toronto’s Fitness Institute and a former interim chairman of the conservative lobby group, the National Citizens’ Coalition.<sup>30</sup> Now on his second marriage, he is father to five children. Raised as an Anglican, he “finds churches too liberal and rarely attends”.<sup>31</sup> In the two volumes which concern us here, Gairdner mixes vitriolic assaults on feminists with a passionate attachment to a view of Canada that celebrates Anglo-celtic masculinity and enterprise. As his worries about Chinese demographic takeover confirm, his dream of Canada is neither inclusive nor egalitarian.<sup>32</sup>

The older writer, Betty Steele (b. 1915), author of *The Feminist Takeover: Patriarchy to Matriarchy in Two Decades* (1987) and *Together Again: Men and Women, Love and Sex, Mothers and Children* (1991), is now a homemaker. She was formerly a journalist and has worked for the CBC, *Marketing*, and *New World*. While I have discovered less about her, she appears to have been a member of conservative women’s organizations, including the Imperial Order of Daughters of the Empire and REAL Women. Like Gairdner, she is married with children and is a Protestant. Ties with Canadian elites, either past or present, are not obvious. Her intensely bitter tirade against feminists, especially lesbians, suggests the deep-seated personal terrors which Andrea Dworkin so brilliantly explores in her classic, *Right Wing Women*.<sup>33</sup> Compared with Gairdner, who has received considerably more press coverage, Steele is much the lesser known writer. She suffers relative obscurity despite the fact that some observers believe that the anti-feminist movement is “largely orchestrated by women”.<sup>34</sup> Ironically enough, her inability to command public attention comparable to her male counterparts, like that of anti-suffrage women in the first generation, reflects the relative value of the two sexes in patriarchal society.<sup>35</sup>

Anti-feminism was and remains a complex phenomenon, but its broad outlines over the last 100 years can be usefully identified in the key writings of Smith, Macphail, Leacock, Gairdner, and Steele. Above all, it remains

30 John Lorine, “Captain Canuck”, *Saturday Night*, October 1992, pp. 51–53, 102, 104, 108.

31 Trevor Lautens, “Fighting for the Family”, *Vancouver Sun*, clipping undated but early in 1993.

32 See William Gairdner, *The Trouble with Canada* (Toronto: Stoddart, 1990). This has been revised and updated in a new edition in 1994, but the references here are to the first edition. See also his *On Higher Ground: Reclaiming a Civil Society* (Toronto: Stoddart, 1996) and *Constitutional Crackup: Canada and the Coming Showdown with Quebec* (Toronto: Stoddart, 1994).

33 Andrea Dworkin, *Right Wing Women* (New York: Perigee Books, 1983). For the limitations of this analysis, see Dubinsky, “Lament for a ‘Patriarchy Lost’ ”.

34 Erwin, “Researching Anti-Feminism”, p. 3.

35 See Canada’s only Anti-Suffrage Society, organized by Mrs. H. D. Warren, “the wife of a Toronto businessman”, in Bacchi, *Liberation Deferred?*, p. 47.

rooted in a catastrophic view of the world and a fearful image of the nature of men and women. First- and second-generation Canadian anti-feminists have diagnosed modernism's trilogy of secularism, individualism, and materialism as the central illnesses of the age. In this scenario feminism emerges as a virulent carrier of modernism's plagues. Its major by-products, independent women and problematic men, in turn inevitably guarantee the destruction of the patriarchal sinews of traditional society, thus dooming the whole of Western civilization. Suspicion of other racial and ethnic groups, which often forms part of the anti-feminist tapestry, adds to the anger at betrayal by Anglo-celtic women who challenge the patriarchy.

A comparative assessment of the Victorian and modern assault on feminism explores anti-feminist views about the origins of the feminist threat, the role of the United States, the desexing of Canadians, the particular victimization of men and children, and finally the naturalness of patriarchy. What distinguishes the first and second generations is not so much the substance of their fears as their differing perceptions of the magnitude of the threat. Where yesterday's anti-feminists saw a skirmish, today's see a war, an Armageddon.

### **Origin of the Feminist Threat**

While first-wave anti-feminists were very conscious of a long history of rebellious women, evident well before St. Paul, they tended to credit industrialization, with its attendant disorder and prosperity, for creating the women's movement of their day. Although the liberal Goldwin Smith was significantly more ambivalent than his Tory counterparts, the pre-industrial past was generally viewed, at least in terms of the relations between women and men, as a better place. The development of complex industrial machinery and the modern city had destroyed an old order in which, as Leacock noted, the home was an important place and "women did fairly well out of it."<sup>36</sup> In the nineteenth century, however, "every advance in that industrial development of which we are boasting continually makes for the destruction of the family."<sup>37</sup> If matters did not change, Leacock foresaw a dreary future:

[T]he home has passed, or at least is passing out of existence. In place of it is the "apartment" — an incomplete thing, a mere part of something, where children are an intrusion, where hospitality is done through a caterer, and where Christmas is only the twenty-fifth of December.<sup>38</sup>

36 Leacock, "The Woman Question", p. 54.

37 Macphail, "The American Woman", *Essays in Fallacy* (New York, 1910), p. 11.

38 Leacock, "The Woman Question", p. 55. Ironically, much of the ritual associated with modern Christmas is in fact a Victorian invention which was closely linked to the promotion of the middle-class family ideal. On this see Leslie Bella, *The Christmas Imperative: Leisure, Family and Women's Work* (Halifax: Fernwood Publishing, 1992).

Both liberals like Smith and conservatives like Macphail and Leacock agreed that the age itself, a product of powerful economic and social shifts, was revolutionary. As Goldwin Smith wrote in 1893:

The Revolt of woman ... is part of the ferment of a revolutionary age in which the foundations of authority are shaken by the decay of the old beliefs on which the public order as well as personal morality has hitherto rested, and by the political disturbance which has accompanied the final decadence of the hereditary principle of government and the advent of democracy.<sup>39</sup>

When it came to woman suffrage, Smith forsook his conventional liberalism, attacking John Stuart Mill in the process. According to him, women's biology meant they had no natural right to public political power. Like Pateman's classical theorists, Smith concluded that "Men's domination over women" followed "from the respective natures of the sexes".<sup>40</sup> Such views brought him into agreement with Tories Leacock and Macphail, whose anti-feminism appeared more obviously consistent with their overall respect for traditional authority.

By the end of the twentieth century, anti-feminists like Gairdner and Steele are less inclined to acknowledge feminism as a product of powerful social forces. While feminism, in one form or another, was acknowledged as dating from at least Plato's time, the modern woman's movement seems a quixotic, at some level incomprehensible, response to good times for the majority of North American women. In this scenario, the years after World War II emerge as a relative paradise in which "men and women ... had found a comfortable accommodation."<sup>41</sup> An efficient working relationship, based on a recognition of natural differences, is believed shattered by Betty Friedan and a hard core of lesbian fanatics, who have been corrupted by a surfeit of leisure and material goods. As Betty Steele fervently argues, "in 1963, the largest proportion of middle-class women on this continent were living in peace in what they believed to be a normal, traditional, worthwhile lifestyle — or if not, then they aspired to that lifestyle."<sup>42</sup> Taking this rose-coloured assessment up to the present, Gairdner insists that "North American women are demonstrably the best fed, the best-educated, most materially well-off group of women that has ever existed ... . To say that they are an oppressed and exploited class is intellectually vulgar."<sup>43</sup> Given this privi-

39 Smith, "Woman Suffrage", *Essays on the Questions of the Day*, p. 184.

40 Pateman, *The Disorder of Women*, p. 39.

41 Betty Steele, *Together Again: Reuniting Men and Women, Love and Sex, Mothers and Children* (Toronto: Simon & Pierre, 1991), p. 143.

42 Betty Steele, *The Feminist Takeover: Patriarchy to Matriarchy in Two Generations* (Toronto: Tercet, 1987), p. 20.

43 William Gairdner, *The War Against the Family: A Parent Speaks Out* (Toronto: Stoddart, 1992), p. 349.

## 12 Histoire sociale / Social History

lege, the only source anti-feminists find for the feminist plague is the selfishness and greed of middle-class women. According to Steele:

[T]he problem facing innumerable middle-class women was the compulsive consumerism which had pervaded North America. It had encouraged them to take on commitments, such as large mortgages, which could be maintained only with that second salary. Their expectations, sometimes grandiose and undoubtedly contributing to the evils in that consumerism, would then trap them in lifestyles in which they became extremely disillusioned.<sup>44</sup>

Contemporary feminism is finally little more than a nasty conspiracy to deprive men of their fair and natural rights.

Both generations argue that women in general have been misled by a tiny radical and unrepresentative minority. Victorians like Smith, Macphail, and Leacock categorized feminists as sad, desexed, and bitter creatures, who would eventually fall by the way, despised by their ultimately more sensible and more feminine sisters. By the end of the century, the challenge appears far greater. As is often the case in right-wing polemics, conspiracy plays a key role. Feminism scores repeated victories because its leaders are “some of the most brilliant and dedicated protagonists in history”.<sup>45</sup> In particular, Steele identifies “the professors and lecturers involved [in women’s studies who] may come to be recognized as the most powerful influence in the Women’s Liberation Movement, the very builders of the new society, the matriarchy”.<sup>46</sup> Still worse from her point of view, lesbians, the effective successors to the “spinsters” targeted by the earlier generation,<sup>47</sup> have, it seems, got the upper hand in the women’s movement. So-called normal (heterosexual) women are being led in ignorance to the ultimate goal which, from the perspective of unrepentant cold warriors, is “a socialist age, with a feminist-dominated economy and a totalitarianism utterly foreign to Western Culture”.<sup>48</sup>

Anti-feminists also condemn male traitors to their sex. Goldwin Smith lamented that woman suffrage was inevitable because of males’ “feeble facility of abdication”,<sup>49</sup> a view very similar to that held by Camille Paglia today.<sup>50</sup> At the end of the twentieth century, patriarchy is perceived to be especially vulnerable because too many Canadians acquiesce in the feminist

44 Steele, *Together Again*, p. 6.

45 Steele, *The Feminist Takeover*, p. 26.

46 *Ibid.*, p. 54. See also the special issue of *Alberta Report* (January 7, 1991) on women’s studies.

47 See Sheila Jeffreys, *The Spinster and her Enemies: Feminism and Sexuality, 1880–1930* (London and New York: Pandora, 1985).

48 Steele, *Together Again*, p. 10.

49 Smith, “Woman Suffrage”, p. 185.

50 See Camille Paglia, *Sexual Personae* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1990), and *Sex, Art and American Culture* (New York: Vintage Books, 1992).

usurpation of power. This betrayal occurs at the top rungs of society where “legions of well-intentioned but smug, educated elites ... have agreed ... to reject thousands of years of inherited wisdom, values, habit, custom and insight.”<sup>51</sup> An unholy conspiracy, located in the modern media, politics, and academe, empowers a tiny feminist minority far beyond its meagre numbers.

### **The Role of the United States**

As is often the case for those grappling with Canada’s prospects, the United States plays a critical role for anti-feminists. For the first generation, feminism was a threat originating in large measure south of the border. Andrew Macphail offered an explanation that has proved germane to more than his own time: “When Canadians discover political and social evils in their midst, they are quite sure that they come from the United States.”<sup>52</sup> While he admitted that feminist sentiments had existed for centuries, he also succumbed to the national temptation he had identified, finding that American feminism spread with “an exuberant growth and ... thrive[d] exceedingly, with ... coarse luxuriousness”.<sup>53</sup> In its encounter with first-wave feminism, the United States foreshadowed the dilemma of the modern world. Its populist democracy, rich resources, and advanced technology liberated women for license. In the less-developed Dominion, on the other hand, changes were slower to appear and satisfied women more reluctant to embrace feminism. The snake of discord had entered the garden, however, let loose by the American example and by its feminist missionaries.

In contrast to the turn-of-the-century preoccupation with the southern menace, second-wave feminists, at least before Bill Clinton’s November 1992 victory, found cause for hope in the United States as harbinger of a conservative future. Perhaps its history in that nation, particularly with the defeat of the ERA, suggests that feminism has peaked? Certainly the situation of the two countries had changed dramatically from the days of Smith, Macphail, and Leacock. According to Betty Steele:

[D]angers are seen to be looming the largest in Canada. ...where new strength and an increasing momentum are seen in federal and provincial legislatures.... The momentum of the Women’s Liberation Movement in Canada never flags, but accelerates with the founding of every new women’s group and women’s courses in our universities, encouraged and applauded daily in all media — where women are often seen to be in control.<sup>54</sup>

51 Gairdner, *The War Against the Family*, p. 6.

52 Macphail, “The American Woman”, p. 10.

53 *Ibid.*, p. 6.

54 Steele, *The Feminist Takeover*, pp. 6–7.

While the National Action Committee and Section 15 of the Charter of Rights and Freedoms, not to mention a host of feminist sympathizers throughout the Canadian elite, left REAL Women on the defensive, Phyllis Schlafly, the leader of the anti-feminist American New Right, is saluted by Canadian admirers as “a Churchill”.<sup>55</sup>

The string of anti-feminist victories south of the border in the 1980s reassured northern conservatives. It was only a matter of time, they hoped, until “Americans and Canadians alike return to former moral values, including celibacy ... many women across the continent had already begun to question the feminist ideology that had denigrated the motherhood-home-making role.”<sup>56</sup> In the interval, they search for proof that the Dominion is catching up, that “Motherhood is back in style: motherhood on all fronts.”<sup>57</sup>

### A Diseased Attack on “Sex” Roles

Whatever its cause or projected course, both generations of critics use the metaphor of disease to stigmatize the feminist threat facing Canada.<sup>58</sup> Macphail described a *fin-de-siècle* “epidemic”.<sup>59</sup> Eighty years later Gairdner continues in the same vein: “countries, like biological organisms, bear within themselves the seeds of their own health, or decay.”<sup>60</sup> Religious metaphors join those of illness in anti-feminist descriptions of the loss of social stability and security. According to Macphail, writing in “The American Woman”:

[T]he fall of the race always comes through the woman. Tempted by the “subtle beast” towards ambition and away from her appointed task, she puts forth her hand to attain a knowledge which is forbidden, and brings the disaster of obliteration. This is the curse of Eve.<sup>61</sup>

A perspective grounded in religious fundamentalism continues to inform many in the second generation.<sup>62</sup> For Betty Steele, it is self-evident that “the false premises in feminist ideology have led to results as lethal as the fig leaf and the poisoned apple offered Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden.”<sup>63</sup> Even a small dose of feminism promised disaster, just as “widow

55 Steele, *Together Again*, p. 111.

56 *Ibid.*, p. 4.

57 *Ibid.*, p. 235. See also Gairdner, *The War Against the Family*, p. 353.

58 On the significance of this metaphor, see the observations by Susan Sontag, *Illness as a Metaphor and AIDS and its Metaphors* (New York: Doubleday, 1990).

59 Macphail, “The American Woman”, p. 6.

60 Gairdner, *The Trouble with Canada*, p. 1. See also *The War Against the Family*, where he refers to feminism as “intellectual cancer”, p. 296.

61 Macphail, “The American Woman”, p. 24.

62 On the Canadian Christian right, see Herman, *Rights of Passage*, especially chaps. 5 and 6.

63 Steele, *Together Again*, p. ix.

and spinster suffrage” was, for Goldwin Smith, “the thin edge of the wedge”.<sup>64</sup> However innocuous it appears, feminism inevitably undermines “the core values that made this nation strong — freedom, family, individual responsibility, reward for effort”.<sup>65</sup> The result is a poisoned moral order in which neither man nor God will be honoured.

The feminist apocalypse has occurred because fundamental principles have been abused. Goldwin Smith was typical in asserting that “there are some landmarks of nature which cannot be removed” without great danger.<sup>66</sup> Feminism threatens that tentative contract between the sexes by which civil society is maintained. As Macphail, the medical doctor, explained at length:

This division of living beings into male and female is also a fiction ... the characteristics of the male or of the female are especially predominant in any given individual.... There are those persons who are anatomically males and psychically females, that is, with the outward appearance of men and the minds of women.... These persons who lack in maleness always ally themselves with women who possess the quality in which they are deficient and between the two the proper complement is established.

On the other hand is the residue of the male element in the female which strives to express itself by the assumption of manly garb, voice, gesture, and conduct; though it is much easier for a man to become a woman than it is for a woman to become a man.<sup>67</sup>

No wonder, as Smith warned, feminism posed the threat of “national emasculation”.<sup>68</sup>

Fear of the naturalness and attraction of homosexuality remains characteristic of end-of-the-century anti-feminism.<sup>69</sup> Indeed, terror is all the more exaggerated since heterosexuality appears more at risk. For William Gairdner, it is essential that:

Cultures that want to guard against the threat of homosexuality must therefore drive a cultural wedge down hard between maleness and femaleness for it is no simple coincidence that homosexuality is flourishing in a time of feminism. They go together like two sides of a coin.... And today, there is a whole feminist school promoting homosexuality as liberation from men.<sup>70</sup>

64 Smith, “Woman Suffrage”, p. 186.

65 Gairdner, *The Trouble with Canada*, p. 272.

66 Smith, “Woman Suffrage”, p. 185.

67 Macphail, “The Psychology of the Suffragette”, p. 63–64.

68 Smith, “Woman Suffrage”, p. 189.

69 For more on this fear, see Herman, *Rights of Passage*.

70 Gairdner, *The Trouble with Canada*, p. 281.

The conditional nature of male identity and behaviour in particular puts great responsibility on women. Both generations of anti-feminists stress that men's ability to build a stable and civilized heterosexual personality depends on women concentrating on their roles as wives and mothers. For Smith, Macphail, and Leacock, this meant condemnation of the "spinster". In the more sexually explicit years of the late twentieth century, lesbians are targeted. Thus polemicists like Steele and Gairdner insist that heterosexual women not engage in any activities, including masturbation, which may "bring them closer to lesbian women".<sup>71</sup> Female homosexuality, fearful enough in itself, is a still worse threat because it frees men from the anchor of heterosexual lust and love. Civil order, over which domestic women, that is wives, are the ultimate guardians, will collapse.

While opponents of the contemporary feminist movement see lesbians, the supposed vanguard of contemporary feminism, as the ultimate female subversives feared by political theorists,<sup>72</sup> male homosexuality is at least as troubling:

Because homosexuality is a "hit-and-run" phenomenon for males (distinctly not so for females), and suits their predilection for immediate gratification, male homosexuality is in accord with the sexual nature of males and thus thrives when male/female role distinctions are discouraged.<sup>73</sup>

In its critique of heterosexism and support for same-sex relations, modern feminism is condemned for promoting "a denaturalizing process, with the most disastrous repercussions for our future generations".<sup>74</sup>

### **Feminism's Victims**

For critics, men and especially children are victims of feminist disorders. Leacock's males, cowering behind a fern when in sight of the "Woman with Spectacles", are ultimately the weaker sex. Macphail endeavoured to put a favourable cast on masculine weakness, treating it as a particular kind of superiority,<sup>75</sup> but like Leacock he seemed to believe that male stability depended on women. He explained:

71 Steele, *Together Again*, p. 160.

72 See Pateman, *The Disorder of Women*, p. 25 and *passim*, not on lesbians *per se* but on women's natural tendency to the subversion of the patriarchy.

73 Gairdner, *The Trouble with Canada*, p. 282.

74 Steele, *Together Again*, p. 2.

75 Macphail, "The Psychology of the Suffragette", p. 65. Macphail's, and for that matter Smith's and Leacock's, ideas about male variability seem very akin to those current among the Victorian fathers of sociology. See Jill Conway, "Stereotypes of Femininity in a Theory of Sexual Evolution" in *Suffer and Be Still: Women in the Victorian Age* (Bloomington and London: Indiana University Press, 1973).



A man expects very little of a woman, nothing more than that she shall willingly receive kindness at his hands, that she will permit herself to be loved. Little as this is, it is much. Without it he is condemned to a brutish isolation, wandering between the confines of asceticism and profligacy.<sup>76</sup>

Women's failure to be lovable, in other words their determination to be feminist, to ask for equal rights, casts men unwillingly into a "brutish" state of nature.

Modern anti-feminists draw many of the same conclusions. Fathers and husbands, Betty Steele feels sure, are "the principal victims of the feminist revolution".<sup>77</sup> In *The Feminist Takeover* she describes a world turned upside down:

With little warning, men had suddenly been charged and condemned, without trial or any opportunity of defence, as the "oppressors" of women.... Yet it can be demonstrated historically that the evils of patriarchy were seldom conceived by chauvinistic design.<sup>78</sup>

Not content with defending men from feminist charges, anti-feminists have also counterattacked. As Goldwin Smith and Betty Steele both argue, wife-beating is unusual; bad wives are not.<sup>79</sup> Citing observations which emphasize women's abuse of children, husbands, and elders, Gairdner typically dismisses feminist preoccupation with male violence as "an abomination of dishonesty".<sup>80</sup>

In 1891 Smith predicted dire consequences when males were unleashed by feminism from the bonds of conventional behaviour:

Marriage may be described from one point of view as a restraint imposed upon the passions of the man for the benefit of the woman. Cold-blooded philosophers choose to speak of the sexual passion in man as brutal.... Being imperious, it will be gratified, if not by marriage, in other ways, and woman would not be the gainer by the change.<sup>81</sup>

Years later, William Gairdner, drawing heavily on the American writer George Gilder's *Men and Marriage* (1985),<sup>82</sup> takes up the same argument in computing feminism's costs:

76 Macphail, "The American Woman", p. 49.

77 Steele, *Together Again*, p. 13.

78 Steele, *The Feminist Takeover*, p. 15.

79 See Smith, "Woman Suffrage", pp. 196 and 210; and Steele, *The Feminist Takeover*, chap. 7.

80 Gairdner, *The War Against the Family*, p. 348.

81 Smith, "Woman Suffrage", p. 198.

82 On Gilder, see Faludi, *Backlash*, chap. 11.

[S]exual liberation ... has caused women to lose the one sure control they had over men, the one sure method that enabled women to have children, provide for them, protect them, and nurture them *personally* at the same time — all paid for by doting males — if they so desired.... For without the long-range goals of women, men would be content to fight, enjoy their lust, wander, make war, compete, and strive for power, glory, and dominance.<sup>83</sup>

Freed from the age-old contract to protect women, men are “dangerous” and “frightening”.<sup>84</sup> Even good men run out of good will. Injured physically and psychologically, they will retaliate. Justifiable anger, not patriarchy, fuels battering, incest, and a host of other offences against women and children.

Anti-feminists identify children as feminism’s second group of victims. If children are to be healthy, happy, and productive citizens, mothers, they argue, must remain at home to uphold the patriarchal order. In particular, childbirth and childcare constitute women’s enduring and unique responsibilities. As Stephen Leacock humorously, and all the more effectively, pointed out:

The vacuum cleaner can take the place of the housewife. It cannot replace the mother. No man ever said his prayers at the knees of the vacuum cleaner, or drew his first lessons in manliness and worth from the sweet old-fashioned stories that a vacuum cleaner told.<sup>85</sup>

In the home, women serve as irreplaceable guarantors of a moral order of which sons are the special beneficiaries. If women, tempted by feminism, failed to give birth or to mother, they were, as Macphail said in speaking for the first generation, doomed to be parasites.<sup>86</sup>

For later critics, abortion and daycare supply modern proof of women’s loss of moral bearings. Paeans to “Motherhood” as “selfless devotion, unquestioning love and an open door to the eternal”<sup>87</sup> and repetition of old adages such as “the hand that rocks the cradle rules the world”<sup>88</sup> reveal a nostalgic romanticism that would have done justice to any Victorian. Rejection of both abortion and daycare is also very much in keeping with the older criticism of women using birth control and hiring nursemaids. Modern anti-feminists uncritically use, for example, John Bowlby’s discredited studies on attachment to argue that absent mothers produce anti-social, even sociopathic, children:<sup>89</sup> “It is bad enough that children are a low priority

83 Gairdner, *The Trouble with Canada*, pp. 281–282.

84 Gairdner, *The War Against the Family*, pp. 80–83.

85 Leacock, “The Woman Question”, p. 58.

86 See Macphail, “The American Woman”, p. 22.

87 Steele, *Together Again*, p. 189.

88 *Ibid.*, p. 235.

89 See John Bowlby, *Attachment and Loss* (1969), cited in Gairdner, *The War Against the Family*, p. 339.

for men. It is far, far worse for society when they also become a low priority for women.”<sup>90</sup> As Gairdner indicates, the alternative is clear: “Every study of violent behaviour shows that the very best protection against crime is the intact, traditional family, especially where there is strong religious faith and no drug or alcohol use.”<sup>91</sup> In the late twentieth century, anti-feminist fury is all the greater when public funds subsidize childcare. Taxation for what is regarded as a spineless concession to the feminist lobby is castigated as a direct threat to breadwinner families which must send wives and mothers into the labour market in order to pay such bills. A vicious cycle undermining the male head of the household is consequently set in motion.

### **The Naturalness of Patriarchy**

Not surprisingly, anti-feminists find the explanation for patriarchy, female subordination, and the breadwinner family not in male privilege but in women’s weaknesses and preferences. All women’s efforts to become like men are assessed as doomed because of “the real bondage, of their own nature”.<sup>92</sup> Stephen Leacock concluded that “practically all of the world’s work is open to women now, wide open. *The only trouble is that they can’t do it.*”<sup>93</sup> His comment has been repeatedly echoed in a later generation’s attack on pay equity or what Gairdner terms “coercive humanitarianism”.<sup>94</sup> He and Steele join the Walker Institute, Canada’s premier reactionary “think tank”,<sup>95</sup> in insisting that women’s economic inferiority is of their own making. Biology, in everything from PMS to childrearing, appears to provide “mental and emotional, as well as physical constraints on women’s performance”.<sup>96</sup> Women’s legitimate authority rests ultimately, as it did for the Victorian anti-feminists, in their “natural resources ... gentleness, long-suffering, kindness”.<sup>97</sup>

Goldwin Smith summed up women’s dilemma in the language of his age: “To don the other sex she must doff her own, a process in which she will run some risk of ceasing to be, or at least to be deemed, the ‘angelic portion of humanity’.”<sup>98</sup> The result would be catastrophe. Finally, like the worst

and Steele, *Together Again*, p. 204. For criticism of Bowlby, see Ann Dally, *Inventing Motherhood: The Consequences of an Ideal* (New York: Schocken Books, 1983), especially chap. 6.

90 Gairdner, *The War Against the Family*, p. 302.

91 *Ibid.*, p. 348.

92 Macphail, “The Psychology of the Suffragette”, p. 86.

93 Leacock, “The Woman Question”, p. 57.

94 Gairdner, *The Trouble with Canada*, p. 293.

95 On the Walker Institute, see Warren Magnusson, *et al.*, *The New Reality: The Politics of Restraint in British Columbia* (Vancouver: New Star Books, 1984), *passim*.

96 Steele, *The Feminist Takeover*, p. 92.

97 Macphail, “The American Woman”, p. 32.

98 Smith, “Woman Suffrage”, p. 216.

of men, women too, according to those like Steele, will become sexual “predators — notably in the workplace from the executive positions”.<sup>99</sup> Prostitution, male violence, venereal disease, and, in the late twentieth century, AIDS are all deadly consequences of independent women’s denial of their traditional roles.

Goldwin Smith and his contemporaries feared for the future if women became men’s equals, insisting that “A head of the family there must be if there is not to be domestic anarchy.”<sup>100</sup> Civil law and government were not conceivable without male rule. Lurking not too far off also seemed the fear that, if feminism, even in its moderate Victorian versions, triumphed, capitalism and even private property could not ultimately be guaranteed. Nevertheless, for first-generation anti-feminists, the world as they knew it did not yet appear close to complete disaster. Indeed the Tory Leacock, in assessing women’s weakness, opted for more government intervention, arguing that “women need not more freedom but less. Social policy should proceed from the fundamental truth that women are and must be dependent.”<sup>101</sup>

In the 1980s and 1990s anti-feminists are much more suspicious of governments. Arguing that they, not feminists, represent popular Canadian sentiments, those of the so-called “silent majority”, they are outraged when “provincial funding for feminist causes appears inexhaustible”.<sup>102</sup> Not surprisingly, they denounce federal support for the National Action Committee on the Status of Women as a threat to the values of most Canadians.<sup>103</sup> His successors fully share Andrew Macphail’s early fears that “A world of iniquity is created out of their [feminists’] desire for change.”<sup>104</sup>

By the close of the twentieth century, *The War Against the Family*’s “call to action” in defence of “freedom, family, free enterprise, and faith”<sup>105</sup> again makes the conservative connection between liberation for women and a threat to long-standing traditions, including capitalism. In a statement typical of the anti-statism of much of the more secular “New Right”,<sup>106</sup> Gairdner concludes:

99 Steele, *The Feminist Takeover*, p. 106.

100 Smith, “Woman Suffrage”, p. 215.

101 Leacock, “The Woman Question”, p. 60.

102 Steele, *The Feminist Takeover*, p. 11.

103 Gairdner, *The Trouble with Canada*, p. 296.

104 Macphail, “The Psychology of the Suffragette”, p. 84.

105 Gairdner, *The War Against the Family*, p. 585.

106 Anti-statism is of course only part of the story. The Christian New Right appears much more likely to hope to use state power to its own ends. On distinctions between what she terms “social conservatives”, or the Christian right, and “laissez-faire conservatives”, whom I categorize as the “secular” right, see Klatch, *Women of the New Right*. See also Didi Herman, “Gay Lesbians, Feminist Lesbians, No Lesbians: The Christian Right Constructs Lesbian Sexuality”, paper given at the Centre for Research in Women’s Studies and Gender Relations, University of British Columbia, November 9, 1994. The dangers of a theocracy are of course the prospect that fuels Margaret Atwood’s dystopian novel, *The Handmaid’s Tale* (Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 1985).

There is nothing more emblematic of the social-welfare State than the ideas and programs of radical feminism.... Theirs is a program for the radical restructuring of society through centralized social engineering of the most insidious kind. Radical feminists are not interested in equal *opportunities* for women: they want equal *outcomes*, or results, even if these have to be *forced* on people by the powers of the State; *even if men and women, left to their own free devices, would never choose such outcomes*. That is why, once dissected, every evil of socialism can be found in radical feminism.<sup>107</sup>

In the nightmares of modern conservatives, “feminist dictators may be able to ensure more and more Marxist control in all areas of society.”<sup>108</sup>

### Conclusion

While Smith, Macphail, and Leacock denounced a threat on the horizon, writers like Gairdner and Steele believe themselves betrayed by the traditional Canadian establishment. The humorist Leacock felt sufficiently at ease to tag his suffrage opponents as “Superior Beings”, “Awful Women”, and “Women with Spectacles”, but by the end of the century Gairdner is humourless. His vision of Canada is in tatters:

Like so many citizens of this country, I became upset over the past two decades to see this great country rush headlong into the embrace of sweet-sounding but inherently destructive political, economic, and social policies. Like them, I felt helpless.<sup>109</sup>

For Gairdner’s female counterpart, Betty Steele, national deterioration is also a bitter fact of modern life. An intense sense of personal outrage fuels her conservatism, as she explains:

I began to trace many problems in our society back to the new ideology of the Women’s Liberation Movement. As a beleaguered housewife continuously downgraded in the media, increasingly belittled in society generally as a result of such media influence, and reduced to a Ms. on all my mail against my wishes, I came to believe that I was being manipulated — as in a dictatorship.<sup>110</sup>

According to such critics, the suffragists opposed by an earlier generation have been succeeded by a far more powerful band of feminist agitators, influential polemicists for the politically correct. The barbarians, or rather the Amazons, muster at the gates of patriarchal civilization.

107 Gairdner, *The Trouble with Canada*, p. 272.

108 Steele, *The Feminist Takeover*, p. 99.

109 Gairdner, *The Trouble with Canada*, p. vii.

110 Steele, *The Feminist Takeover*, p. ix.

Canadian anti-feminism is a fighting creed whose bitterness and viciousness has grown with the twentieth century. The independence of feminist women, supposedly bringing in its wake men made problematic by effeminacy or violence, threatens a treasured patriarchal order. Where the Victorians saw disaster only on the horizon, modern polemicists see it lodged in their midst. At the end of the twentieth century their mounting rage, intolerance, and fear are marshalled against feminists and the traitorous elites which support them. Their passionate allegiance to a supposed golden age of patriarchy, in which natural men lead and natural women submit, ensures that the feminist versus anti-feminist struggles of the last decades are far from over. In Canada, as elsewhere in the modern world, the champions of patriarchy are determined to ensure that women's long-standing subordination remains a feature of the future as well as of the past.