Neoliberal Globalization: Threats to Women's Citizenship in Canada

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What does it mean to be poor in Canada? It's not the same as the deep poverty experienced in some parts of the world. To be poor in Canada means to be surrounded by wealth but have no access to it. It means having to choose between paying your rent, bills, groceries, transportation, doing your laundry and buying necessary medical supplies. . . . The poverty of women has a deep personal impact, from acute and chronic ill health, early death, increased vulnerability to violence and all forms of abuse, and self-destructive coping mechanisms . . . When government revenues fall the first thing to go are public services, and the first to pick up the pieces are women.

- Marika Morris, Canadian Research Institute for the Advancement of Women, 2000.

We have to understand that if women are continually told they are not equal, they will continue to believe that. We say that everyone in Canada is equal.

- Bev Oda, Minister of Canadian Heritage and Status of Women (Canada, House of Commons Debates, 2006).

Although we have equality rights on paper, we need to do more much work to make these equality rights a reality for *all* women in Canada.

- Canadian Research Institute for the Advancement of Women, 2006.

People come from around the world to seek refuge in Canada. But what kind of refuge does this country offer to women? In light of the above comments, shaped by difference-blind neoliberalism, of the former Minister for the Status of Women, one can wonder how well Canadian women's equality, seen as a fulfilment of their rights as citizens, fares under our current political-economic system.

In this paper[1], I will ask: how do the twin forces of neoliberalism and globalization affect Canadian citizenship? More significantly, I ask: how do they affect women and men differently? I intend to show how the neoliberal economics of globalization impairs Canadians' citizenship rights, especially those of women. As will be seen, because of the move toward undifferentiated citizenship and a focus on formal equality, rather than substantive equality, social rights have been

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[1]I originally wrote this paper for a directed reading class in fall, 2005. A change in the federal government and some recent developments have allowed me to update the paper for this conference. I am very grateful for comments that were provided, regarding the original paper, by Dr. Linda Trimble. I also appreciate the help from the staff of Member of Parliament Maria Minna, Opposition Critic for the Status of Women, who provided me with access to some archived websites and debates.

eroded, political rights have been hollowed out, and civil rights have been demeaned in an uneven, economically-driven playing field.

In this paper, I will use part of T.H. Marshall's approach to citizenship right. I will start by explaining this theory, and then frame my concepts of neoliberalism and globalization. In the main part of the paper, I will conduct a literature review of Canadian works on neoliberalism and globalization to see how these two forces have generally affected Canadians' citizenship, assessing their impact, in turn, on each of Marshall's three elements of citizenship rights. I will then examine the impact on each of these same rights by using a *gendered* approach. I will conclude this gendered section with a more thorough analysis of two recent developments: the government's redirection of Status of Women Canada and its elimination of the Court Challenges Program. Finally, I will look at some of the possible benefits offered by new global technology. I will conclude, however, that these benefits are often chimeral and ultimately outweighed by the negative effects of neoliberal globalization.

I note here that this paper will focus only on Canada. Without a doubt, the women who are hurt most by globalization are those in the developing world (Burn 2005). They and their children make the products that Canadians purchase as our state profits from global economic integration. But, at the risk of being too narrow, I will use Canada as a cast study for discovering what changes have been made to women's citizenship rights and to see whether we live in a country of refuge from economic, political, and social hardships.

Conceptions of Citizenship

First, in order to understand what rights citizens have (or should have) it is useful to use the influential theory of T.H. Marshall (Brodie 1997; Schneiderman 2003; Green 2005; Kymlicka

& Norman 1994; Jenson & Phillips 1996). Marshall describes three "parts" or "elements" in the evolution of liberal-democratic citizenship rights. He shows that civil citizenship rights, led to political citizenship rights, which led to social citizenship rights (Marshall 1963: 71). Marshall explains that:

> the civil element is composed of the rights necessary for individual freedom – liberty of the person, freedom of speech, thought and faith, the right to own property and to conclude valid contracts, and the right to justice . . . the institutions most directly associated with civil rights are the courts of justice (1963: 71).

The political element is "the right to participate in the exercise of political power, as a member of a body invested with political authority or as an elector of the members of such a body. The corresponding institutions are parliament and councils of local government" (*ibid*.: 72). The social element of citizenship includes "the whole range from the right to a modicum of economic welfare and security to the right to share to the full in the social heritage and to live the life of a civilized being according to the standards prevailing in the society" (*ibid*.: 72). Brodie clarifies this as "the right to the collective provision of a minimum level of economic security" (1997: 229). Although Marshall claims that the three elements of citizenship were achieved in the above order, social rights are seen today as a prerequisite for the other two. In other words, political and civil rights mean little if citizens are so unequal or impoverished that they cannot exercise them (Brodie 1997: 229).

It should be noted that T.H. Marshall's theory is itself exclusive; he relies on inherently gendered conceptions of rights and discourses which can exclude women (Lister 1997). Valentine and Vickers note how Marhsall's history of rights is based only on the historical experiences of European men and that many feminists argue that his historical order of rights does not apply to women. They argue that women gained political rights *before* civil citizenship and point out that

women's civil rights did not lead to full social citizenship (1996: 166). That said, as long as one is mindful of its foundations, Marshall's broader theory of the three elements of citizenship still provides a useful analytical framework for describing the different, yet connected, aspects of Canadian citizenship.

What matters most for this view of citizenship, and which is key throughout my paper, is that there is a difference between formal and substantive citizenship as noted in the third opening quote by the Canadian Research Institute for the Advancement of Women (CRIAW). As feminist authors point out, extending the ancient, androcentric forms of citizenship to women (liberal notions of negative freedoms from the state), can only provide simple, formal equality and fall short of substantively changing society in ways that will allow women to act as citizens with gendered identities (Lister 1997). Presumably identity-less norms of citizenship, based on "falsely universalizing one particular group's practice of it," reject claims based on difference (Jones 1990: 784; Trimble 1998). By stressing goals of substantive, active citizenship that guarantee social rights, authors such as Dietz and Jones strive to ensure that women bring their differences into the public sphere, beyond mere formal citizenship. Thus, formal (or liberal) citizenship merely conveys equal (legal) rights on citizens. Citizenship based on substantive equality looks deeper to address the systemic barriers created by patriarchal (or colonial, or racist, or class-based, etc.) legacies and is more concerned with equal outcomes than citizenship based on formal equality (Dietz 1987; Jones 1990). I argue, below, that this inherently liberal blindness to difference is even greater under neoliberalism and globalization.

Neoliberalism and Globalization

Before beginning, I will briefly describe what I mean by neoliberalism and globalization.

I use McBride and Shields' definition of neoliberalism as a "neo-classical (liberal) economic orientation . . . that has been dominant in Canadian national politics since the early 1980s" (1997: 12-13). This "ideological direction" for changing society is based primarily upon factors such as the internationalization of trade and government policy (Doern, Pal, and Tomlin 1996), a redefinition of citizens as "customers" (Pierre 1995), the use of New Public Management (Nelson and Patten 2005), and changes in the sites of democracy (Clarkson and Lewis 1999; McBride and Shields 1997). These will be further developed in my following case study of Canada.

Globalization is also an integral part of this political-economic system. Doern, Pal, and Tomlin differentiate between globalization and internationalization, defining the former as a:

> technological and economic process driven by the revolution in telecommunications and computers, massive increase in the movement of capital around the world, greatly expanded capacities for flexible world-wide production sourcing by firms, especially multinational corporations, and growing ecological interdependence and environmental spillovers. These forces dramatically affect business, investment, and society in general, and thereby force governments to change their policy and policy processes (1996: 3).

This has a significant social, or cultural element. Internationalization, meanwhile, is defined as "a process by which various aspects of policy or policy making are influenced by factors outside national territorial boundaries" (1996: 3). However, I will use the term "neoliberal globalization" because I believe that the social and cultural changes taking place are relevant to the political-economic debate, especially in consideration of the effects of neoliberalism and globalization on women.

Finally, there is a less discussed, but possibly more positive, force based on new developments in technologies and mobility. The improved communications technologies and increased movement associated with globalization may have the potential to open new doors for some people including those seeking refuge from neoliberal assaults on public services. I will refer

to this force as "technological globalization." But first, I will consider the effects on citizenship by of neoliberal globalization's political-economic model.

I. Some General Effects of Neoliberal Globalization on Citizenship Rights in Canada

To begin, I will look at Marshall's three citizenship rights in reverse "historical" order as most of the research on the topic of globalization is on *social* citizenship rights. This is because they are seen as the basic foundation of modern citizenship rights and have also been the most affected by neoliberal globalization. For example, Patten says that "since civil and political citizenship rights are of little meaning or utility to the socially and economically dispossessed, social citizenship rights are essential to fostering meaningful democratic citizenship" (2003: 97).

Traditionally, in Canada, "the fullest expression of citizenship requires a liberal-democratic welfare state" which helps people claim their essential social rights to security (Kymlicka & Norman 1994: 354). However, Canadians' social rights, which were once supported by governments, have given way to a new "market citizenship" (Bakker & Gill 2003: 29). Influenced by the economic paradigm of transnational organizations like the WTO, this new market-based outlook favours global economic restructuring that puts financial interests first and is based on the "pillars" of privatization, decentralization, individualization (Brodie 2002: 99). State governments also attempt to apply business concepts (New Public Management) such as "performativity" or efficiency to public governance (Brodie 1997: 234). Today's citizens are therefore seen as *consumers* or *customers* of the state. This post-welfare state period "marks the ascendancy of the market *over* the state and *inside* the state and, thereby, atrophies the public, closes political spaces and further marginalizes the already marginalized" (*ibid*. 235, emphasis in original). "Good citizens" are those who recognize and accept the limits of the state's ability/desire to provide for

Canadians. Instead of maintaining social solidarity as a public good, substantive citizenship itself is called into question as people must provide for themselves and secure their *own* futures without relying on the state. As an example, Albo and Jenson note how many NAFTA opponents see that citizens' security-based right to health care is under threat and we may be forced to find alternatives (1997: 233).

As state governments reconfigure themselves to conform to the new economic order, they often put the interests of finances before those of society. Green cites 'right to work' legislation ("legislated union-busting") as a further example of the constraining of social rights in the interest of global market forces (1996: 113). Ultimately, then, Canadians' "social rights are rejected" by the neoliberal state for daring to violate the sovereignty of the market (Trimble 2003: 143). Further examples abound. Brodie describes projects in New Brunswick, Alberta, and the federal social-security review that all shift Canadians from social citizenship to market-based citizenship (1996). Dacks, Green, and Trimble also show how many of the policies of Canada's neoliberal testing ground, Alberta, have hurt citizens' well-being. Here, they cite policies such as deficit reduction, cuts to education and health care programs, and large-scale public sector lay offs (1995: 273). Other provinces have since followed suit.

But is all of this the effect of globalization or is it just domestic, market-driven politics? As already stated, many of such reforms are driven by corporate powers and transnational agreements (Bakker 1996). In criticizing the economic status quo, Bradford credits continental free trade as the "policy Trojan horse" that led to the restructuring of state-economy relations (2000: 67). And although Macdonald does not blame the reduction in some social services as a *direct* result of globalization, they still "occurred in the context of the entrenchment of a neoliberal policy paradigm in which changes in domestic labor market and social policies were

linked with issues of global competitiveness" (2006: 140).

The effects of this neoliberal globalization do not stop here. As international economic competition increases, state actors feel they must change domestic policies in areas such as labour or the environment to attract more corporate investment. This "race to the bottom" occurs where different state policies are "harmonized" (a euphemism) in an attempt to provide the best environments for foreign business interests (Clarkson & Rangaswami 2004: 395). Further, this neoliberal reduction of social policy creates a "new constitutionalism," described in more detail in the next section. States are now getting "locked in" to fiscally-focussed, socially-blind international commitments that restrain what they can do, making them pro-market "enabling states" (Bakker & Gill 2003: 30). This not only locks in present governments (and citizens) to NAFTA policies, but also binds future generations who are powerless to undo these domestic changes (Schneiderman 2003: 251).

All of these factors have negative results for citizens' social safety, the environment, and working conditions. The race to the bottom reduces the standard of living and there is less and less that states can do once their hands are tied by more international agreements. As can be seen, Canadians' social citizenship rights are being eroded by the force of neoliberal globalization.

In this light, I turn to political citizenship rights. Here, Clarkson and Rangaswami warn that Canadians are "surrendering domestic policy-making autonomy" and that governments have "lost their capacity to legislate in their public's interests" as their power is circumscribed (2004: 389). As already stated, deferring to international agreements constrains states and closes political space, restricting access to public governments, as well as limiting citizens' abilities to influence democratic state processes.

Further, in examining how power has been centralized in Canada, Savoie argues that

globalization has enabled the prime minister to strengthen his hand (2004: 154). International clubs for heads of government allow the prime minister to make big deals *outside* of Parliamentary discourse, undermining our political rights of participation. In addition, the pressure for fast resolutions of such deals requires the involvement of as few actors as possible. On this "democratic deficit" and globalization, Patten finds that state power is increasingly concentrated in executive institutions, thus undermining "the potential of democratic citizenship" (2003: 93). Albo and Jenson also agree that deals like the FTA prove that the government is willing to "move its regulatory powers elsewhere" and to let executive bodies and international agreements dictate policy (1997: 217). Borders get redrawn in ways that limit states' own sovereignty. The losers in all of this end up being Canadian citizens whose political rights to participate in government policy-making are decreased while neoliberalism's demand for "efficiency" is used to mute democracy.

In this era of "new constitutionalism," Clarkson and Rangaswami further warn how NAFTA, the WTO, and other interstate agreements act as "external constitutions," limiting both the ability of the state to legislate and citizens' capacity to influence the state (2004: 395). Other regulations, such as balanced-budget laws, keep economic decision-making unaccountable to popular democratic pressure (Bakker & Gill 2003). Finally, political rights like equality, democracy, and the importance of community are "downplayed" by neoliberal interests because free political choices undermine the sovereignty of the market (Trimble 2003: 144). As political parties become more similar, and political options are decreased, the market plays up the less meaningful "liberty" of "economic choices" (*ibid.*).

In the end, national sovereignty and citizenship rights eventually fall victim to "undemocratic and unaccountable international trade panels and corporate boardrooms" (Green

1996: 113). A democratic citizenry cannot influence these bodies. What occurs, then, is a 'hollowing out' of political rights as they become less powerful and less useful. Citizens are becoming unable to act collectively, and to regulate their lives, under neoliberal globalization's grip.

Finally, on civil citizenship rights, Schneiderman describes how corporations have used Charter litigation in Canada to pursue their interests and as another method of challenging domestic regulations. Such court cases represent almost 40 percent of cases targeted at elected officials (2003: 248). Thus, courts have granted civil rights to corporations as if they were individuals and some companies have used "Charter litigation to resist government regulation" such as securing the right to "commercial speech" (including tobacco advertising and limiting government warnings on cigarette labels) and preventing the government from banning MMT, a dangerous gasoline additive (*ibid.* 248-250). Schneiderman says that we "might fairly conclude that, in these cases, the Court has tilted constitutional interpretation in the direction of promoting the values and objectives we associate with economic globalization" (*ibid.* 250).

This demeans Canadian citizens who should, one would hope, have been the ones offered protection by the Charter. Instead, Schneiderman states that corporations have used the Charter and their new civil rights to change government regulation (violating social rights to the security of a healthy environment) and undermining the democratic policy process (hollowing out citizens' political rights by bypassing Parliament). This expanded concept of the new constitutionalism limits state action and "confers privileged rights of citizenship and representation on corporate capital, while at the same time constraining democratic processes" (*ibid.* 251). What is most significant here is that, first, powerful international corporate actors can take the state to court, even using Canadian citizens' Charter of Rights to change policy. Second, citizen opposition to

these corporate cases, mobilized through social organizations, is unlikely to have the same clout as its wealthy adversaries. In short, the global neoliberal climate's effect of granting corporations civil rights as if they were individuals, will further impair Canadians, both in terms of their social security and in their potential for political participation.

Recent developments for the Court Challenges Program are especially relevant here. I will discuss these disastrous changes below, when looking at how women's civil citizenship rights are now being re-shaped in Canada.

II. Citizenship and Gender: Women Citizens in Canada

As can be seen, neoliberalism and globalization have eroded Canadians' social rights, hollowed out their political rights, and by granting civil rights to powerful corporations, have put Canadian citizens in an even more precarious position than before. Many authors leave the discussion there. But those who look at the gendered aspects of neoliberalism and globalization describe how some citizens are even more distressed. They demonstrate how women bear the brunt of problems caused by neoliberal globalization. As Macdonald says, "globalization is not a gender-neutral process" (2006: 137). To explain this case, I will again look at Marshall's three citizenship rights in the same order as above.

The main gap between citizenship rights for men and women arises from disparities in social citizenship rights. Macdonald says that this is because women benefit disproportionately from the social programs provided by the state "given their initial subordinate position" (*ibid.* 132). Yet, her work is interesting to note because she is less critical of globalization than others, stating that, in general, economic restructuring has *not* increased the gap between male and female salaries in Canada (although women, on average, still do earn less than men) (*ibid*. 138).

Macdonald cites Canada's level of unionization (higher than that in the United States) as the reason why the wage gap in Canada has remained steady while it has grown in the US (*ibid*. 139). But while she does not give a prediction of the future of Canadian unionization, one could argue that the current economic environment's hostility toward unions (consider the 2005 Walmart case in Quebec) does not bode well for Canada's (supposedly better) labour situation.

Also, Brodie notes how, in some respects, gender can actually be *less* relevant under globalized neoliberal market citizenship. For example, the feminization of labour (in which jobs have become more insecure) has made male and female work *more similar* in the public sphere.[2] Second, while men's and women's salaries have gotten closer, widening gaps have mostly occurred among *classes* and *racial groups*, allowing some women to exploit the labour of others. Third, as already discussed, neoliberal economic ideology explicitly rejects any relevance of gender. Invoking gender-based claims would fall under the devalued category of "special interests" that are not in the interest of the "majority" or the market. Brodie says that a neoliberal view like "performativity provides no space for making citizenship claims on the basis of difference or structural inequality" (Brodie 1997: 237). This point is discussed more thoroughly under political rights.

That being said, Brodie and Macdonald, like other gender-focussed authors, do recognize that neoliberalism *does* fundamentally revolve around gender. Although it is a contradiction of the economic order's rejection of the relevance of gender, much of global neoliberalism is founded on the subordination of what society equates with women (care-giving and selflessness) to male-centred concepts (public-sphere work and competition). Feminine qualities are subordinated as

[2] However, we should not, says Armstrong, use the male standard to evaluate women's progress because this only serves to "hide the harmonizing down" of men and the resulting negative effects for women who gain nothing (1996: 30-31).

the market values and *pays for* traditionally male (public) work while it expects citizens (mostly women) to do the private sphere work, such as care-giving, for free (Bakker 1996).

This situation therefore provides additional harm to women's right to social security. The feminization of labour also ensures that women's work is more often part-time, low-paying, and with few benefits. While some women may not feel any effects of market citizenship, "women" are not a homogenous group and *particular* women are in a much worse situation.[3] For example, women are over-represented among single parents and poor seniors and there is a growing gap between *classes* of women (Canadian-born women with university degrees had an employment rate of 86% while recent immigrant women with degrees were employed at 58%) (Macdonald 2006: 138). Thus, Bakker explains that one should not believe that gender is the only important factor in globalization but that it is a vital part of an affected "matrix of identities" (1996: 8).

[3]I acknowledge that my focus in this paper is on the "average" Canadian woman which will privilege the identities of white women over women of colour or Aboriginal women who face additional hardships when it comes to expressing differentiated citizenship (Green 2001).

More generally, though, recent reforms in education, health care, social assistance, "workfare," and privatization are all cited for being disproportionately harmful to Canadian women. As one example, Brodie explains how single mothers[4] are explicitly targeted for losing welfare benefits (1997: 238). Further, by changing Unemployment Insurance to the *Employment* Insurance system, the state has reinforced the concept of citizens as consumers/workers, stressing their potential "employability." Yet, EI benefits have become harder for those in low-wage and contingent "bad jobs" to obtain – a domain that is dominated by women (Macdonald 2006: 141; Brodie 1997: 237; Bakker 1996: 16). Women are more likely to accept part-time or casual employment because they are doing the "second shift" by working in both the private and public spheres (Hochschild 2000). These combined factors also increase the psychological pressures on women (Macdonald 2006: 141). To compound these problems, women's domestic care-giving roles are further increased by reductions in state services.

Thus, one of the greatest factors to be influenced by the change in social citizenship rights is *social reproduction*. This relates to the reproduction of the species, of the labour force, and of provisioning and caring needs (Bakker & Gill 2003: 32). Due to the biological fact that only women can give birth and the patriarchal social tradition that in the public/private division of labour women carry out the majority of care-giving, the economic transformations in social reproduction have greatly affected women and their status as citizens. With the global neoliberal shift, social reproduction has become "reprivatized" and returned back to the private sphere where women are once again burdened with providing for their families without the welfare state's support (Bakker 1996: 4). Care-giving occurs both informally (unpaid child care, caring for sick family) and formally (paid work in the woman-dominated social service professions such

[4]Of whom 61 percent lived in poverty in 1999 (Brodie 2002: 106).

as nursing or child care). Even in the latter case, with cuts to the healthcare system, nurses face more job-related stress and burnout than any other profession in Canada (Brodie 2002: 101). The welfare state had helped women *manage* the second shift by providing better resources for working outside the home. But women's reproductive and caring labour, though essential for society, is now left out of state regulation because the performativity-based economic view sees that this labour has "no market value" (*ibid*. 98). Further, freed from government intervention, a traditional "state of nature" has returned to the increasingly private home (Bakker & Gill 2003: 36). This works to many women's disadvantage because they often end up being hierarchized below their husbands and are in a position of less power. Thus, in addition to describing neoliberalism's view of citizenship as merely "consumption and economic production," Green shows how neoliberalism works with the *neoconservative* ideology that calls for a hierarchal, patriarchal society. These forces "come together to form a powerful alliance that detrimentally affects women . . . through the under-valuation or nonvaluation of our work" (1996: 112).

As can be seen, the erosion of Canadians' social citizenship rights has serious implications for women. They, among other things, end up taking on "new"domestic tasks once state support is cut back. Further, many women find it harder and harder to work in both spheres, to the delight of these neoconservatives who only value the heterosexual, nuclear family.

Numerous factors also show how women are more negatively affected than men in the area of political citizenship rights to participation. First, there are logistical barriers. On the whole, women have less access to material resources (such as money, education, or employment benefits) than men, weakening their impact on government (Macdonald 2006: 137). They also work the second shift, giving them less non-material resources such as *time*. The more cut backs that are made, the more women's role in care-giving is increased and the less they can publicly participate.

Second, as more and more decisions are made by international trade panels and corporate boardrooms, one may wonder how many women are represented in these bodies. Would nearly all-male organizations be interested in women's points of view or just those of the identity-less consumer? As many authors note, in the neoliberal economic climate, those who dissent from the corporate agenda become cast as "special interest groups" that are easy to ignore (Brodie 1997; Green 1996).

When the Mulroney government reduced funding for womens' groups, it weakened women's capacity to influence government. But this cut in funding was not just the result of cost-saving measures. Jenson and Phillips say that it is part of the "full-scale assault on the legitimacy and credibility of advocacy groups" (1996: 124). Even under the subsequent Liberal government, advocacy groups were neglected as the neoliberal paradigm only legitimizes the direct link between the *individual* voter and elected representatives (or the individual consumer and the market). This is despite (or perhaps in light of) women's groups having proven instrumental in past instances such as the free-trade debate or constitutional negotiation (Bakker 1996; Trimble 1998).

Thus, as women's organizations, one of the main vehicles for effective women's citizen participation, face backlash from social conservatives who fear change and neoliberals who want to enshrine individualism, civil society finds itself further depoliticized and the space for democracy has narrowed (Patten 2003: 99; Burt 1999). This has the overall effect of reducing women's political space, substantive equality, and their opportunities to be women citizens. Today's atomistic view of *democracy by individuals* and the redefinition of "citizen" hurts those who found effective political expression through group advocacy.

Further, some women are impacted even more. When performativity is enshrined, the only

good citizens are those who are self-reliant. Those that are not self-reliant, such as single mothers, are "bad citizens." Under neoliberalism, the state can refuse to take seriously those people who do not contribute. The end result is further stigmatization, not only as single mother ("vindictive leech moms"), but as a burden on society (Dacks, Green, & Trimble 1995: 280).

The new "more efficient" state is therefore less willing to *listen* to some people. To explain, many women's groups do not claim to represent all women. The neoliberal government, which seeks to limit the public sphere, is finding it "increasingly easy to ignore the mixed messages" coming from so many different groups (Burt 1999: 410). Burt says that groups will have to work together or else face dismissal by a government that wants to hear simple answers coming from only one single source that mutes diversity.

Thus, globalization's weakening of citizens' political rights has provided additional problems for women. Having found it hard enough to influence the state in the first place, they are further burdened because the market state sees them as "special interests" of no interest to the "ordinary" Canadian. As a result, funding for groups has decreased leaving women even more out of the decision-making process that is led by government and corporate executives who are not likely to substantively represent women's interests.

Lastly, very little was actually written, as of my original version of this paper, on whether women are being are disproportionately hurt by having civil rights granted to corporations. One could reason that as a group that is marginalized from society's main sites of democratic power, women must increasingly rely on court cases to advance their claims. If organizations that fight for women in the courts are now up against large corporations (either against them in class action suits or if corporations demand intervener status in cases against the government), then one has to hope that women's groups have the necessary resources to beat these formidable adversaries. The

poorer status of contemporary women's organizations does not bode well for judicial success. New developments have proven my pessimism founded:

On October 5th, 2006 Conservative MP Bev Oda, then Minister for of Canadian Heritage and Status of Women made her first appearance before the Standing Committee on the Status of Women. As the Official Opposition Critic for the Status of Women, Maria Minna, noted, Oda had already been minister for seven months and had much explaining to do; the Conservative government had recently made two significant decisions that have impacted on women's citizenship in Canada. Oda's testimony before the committee sheds light on much of what I have previously stated about neoliberalism's effects on citizenship and the place of women within this ideological frame. I will focus here on some of the statements made that day.

In her opening address, Minister Oda revealed that the new Conservative government "fundamentally believes that women are equal. We believe that women are strong, achievers, leaders in every sector of our society" (Canada, Evidence of Standing Committee of the Status of Women 2006, hereafter "Evidence 2006"). In this light, the government had recently redefined the mandate of Status of Women Canada's (SWC) Women's Program. It had been: "To support action by women's organizations and other partners seeking to advance equality for women by addressing women's economic, social, political and legal situation"(SWC "Funding" 2003). Its objectives were:

- To promote policies and programs within key institutions that take account of gender implications, the diversity of women's perspectives and enable women to take part in decision-making processes.
- To facilitate the involvement of women's organizations in the public policy process.
- To increase public understanding in order to encourage action on women's equality issues.
- To enhance the effectiveness of actions undertaken by women's organizations to improve the situation of women (*ibid.*).

Under the new Minister, the SWC's Women's Program mandate was changed. A 2006 SWC website stated that: "The mandate of the [Women's Program] is to facilitate women's participation in Canadian society by addressing their economic, social and cultural situation through Canadian organizations"(SWC "Funding" 2006). The Women's Program's new objective is:

> To achieve the full participation of women in the economic, social and cultural life of Canada. To do so, the Program supports projects that improve the situation of women in key areas such as women's economic status and violence against women and girls (*ibid.*).

According to Oda, the main purpose of the SWC is now it's Women's Program which is expected to have "measurable outcomes" regarding the "economic self-sufficiency and participation of women" (*ibid.*). The redesigned (curtailed) program specifically forbids funding for "domestic advocacy activities and lobbying" of any level of government (*ibid.*) Under the new regulations, spiritual and for-profit organizations are now eligible to receive funding for promoting the goals of the Women's Program (SWC "FAQ" 2007). Unions and co-operatives cannot receive funding. Finally, groups seeking funding must focus on "the advancement of **all women in Canada** (*ibid.,* emphasis in original). Targeting of specially disadvantaged groups, such as Aboriginal women, is discouraged.

As can be seen, issues of substantive *equality*[5] (or equality in general) were dropped in favour of a mandate that prefers formal equality; women (as individuals, not organizations) are

[5]In 2008, the Women's Program (but not Status of Women itself) was quietly changed by the subsequent Minister. As of April 1, 2008, the mandate of the Women's Program will be: "to advance the equality of women across Canada through the improvement of their economic and social conditions and their participation in democratic life" (SWC "Funding" 2008). Back in Committee, the new Minister was unable to clearly answer whether this re-introduction of equality applies to just the Women's Program or whether it also includes SWC's overall goals as well. No changes, such as funding for advocacy (which the opposition members noted is necessary for true equality), are being made to the Program (Canada "Evidence" 2008).

encouraged to participate more in the current economic, social, and cultural systems (though not political or legal!) and questions about the androcentric foundations of these systems that may prevent women from being women citizens (exercising differentiated citizenship) are ignored.

Reaction to these changes was largely negative. Noting how money for advocacy, lobbying, and research was eliminated, Heather Mallick countered that Prime Minister Harper "even removed the word 'equality' . . . The goal now is to 'facilitate women's participation in Canadian society.' I think he means the feds will shovel ladies' sidewalks" (Mallick 2006). Monica Lysack of the Child Care Advocacy Association of Canada stated that "when you look at this Conservative government's policy it's like, 'Be good girls, be quiet'" and Alia Hogben of the Canadian Council of Muslim Women stated that changes to funding for political involvement and removing questions of equality "makes it very difficult, because if you don't lobby and you don't advocate, you're not going to make systemic changes" (CBC Oct 5, 2006).

Yet, Oda stated that the Canadian government is now committed to "concrete actions" rather than research and "words." The goals of SWC's main program are: economic stability for women and ending violence. These are important goals, but as opposition members pointed out, they will mean nothing without addressing the systemic barriers at play. The barriers for women that Oda described included:

> the need for training and updating skills, the need for personal advice on preparing for job applications and interviews, the need for mentorship in their local communities, or the need for immigrant women to access services. . . . [These] are the real needs faced by women in communities across the country. . . . This government wants to tackle the real barriers that exist (Evidence 2006).

According to Oda, women will be best served by getting jobs. This, again, fails to acknowledge that, on average, women who work now make only 71 cents for every dollar earned by a man and that most women still work the second shift at home (CRIAW 2006). As some opposition

members pointed out, the Conservative government has consistently refused to address pay equity. Oda, on the other hand, stressed that Status of Women Canada "must deliver real, measurable results" (corporate concepts of neoliberalism), and believed that results could best be achieved by "streamlining" the department's administrative budget, closing 12 of 16 Status of Women offices across Canada (CBC December 8, 2006).

With SWC's organizing, advocacy, and capacity building abilities gone, and equality removed from the mandate, SWC can provide little for women whose civil or political rights are hindered. There is little left to help women take a case to court, to address government, or to build a movement capable of addressing the issues raised by neoliberalism and globalization. In response to such accusations, Oda stated that:

> Fundamentally, this government recognizes that it's been 25 years. The charter is there. We recognize that women are equal under the charter and under any democratic society. . . . Every person . . . has the freedom and the support of this government to the freedom of speech and freedom of advocating on behalf of any interests. Women equally have access to all of that (Evidence 2006).

This, of course, assumes women's groups have an equal starting point to the government or to multinational corporations. Further, the government's new goal to deliver employment-related services to *individuals* helps undermine the important role that women's goups play in the policy development process. Thus, the neoliberal, difference-blind, citizen-as-customer-of-state-services model continues to prevail. For the government, it all comes down to economic costs. Oda says that women:

> are not vulnerable and weak; they are taxpayers. They work very hard for their taxes, not only as women but as citizens of this country. Consequently, we believe and we know they support more direction action to help overcome the identified barriers (Evidence 2006).

At the same meeting, Minister Oda also took heat for the government's abolishment of the Court Challenges Program (CCP) on September 26, 2006 "without prior consultation, warning or

notice" (Badiou 2007: 7). The program was put in place after the implementation of the Charter in order to protect civil rights by helping citizens make Charter-based equality or language rights claims against the federal government. It helped guarantee Canadians' civil citizenship rights, and by extension, provided for political and social elements of citizenship, depending on the case in question. Badiou says that the Conservative government rationalized the program's elimination on the grounds that the CCP was "wasteful, not effective and did not achieve results" (*ibid.*). The CCP's 2006/2007 (and final?) Annual Report demonstrates how one of the most common applications it received was regarding equality on the basis of sex and that a large part of its funding went to this area. As the CRIAW stated, "with the help of CCP funding, women's organizations . . . have been able to access the justice system, and present progressive interpretations of the law" (CRIAW, "A Series of Bad Decisions").

At the Committee for the Status of Women, Oda again rationalized the government's decision on the CCP, saying that the Charter, "I think has been there for 25 years. . . [The government] decided to make sure the dollars are used in an effective way" (Evidence 2006). Like Status of Women, the Court Challenges Program was not paying off because it allowed non-average citizens (women) to assert their claims against the government and corporations that violated equality. This violated the neoliberal principle of undifferentiated citizenship and allowed women to bring their gendered identities into the public sphere, challenging the androcentric (and supposedly neutral) notions of citizenship. As another Conservative MP stated in the same committee meeting, "Women are equal . . . Under Canadian laws we are equal citizens, and we can rise to the top if we work hard and if we take those advantages" (*ibid.*). Oda later concurred, saying that "it's [about] Canadians as taxpayers, equally," and that "any barriers that have been suggested around this table are barriers that all Canadians experience" (*ibid.*). This, based on the

above literature review, is not the case. Yet the government refuses to see the systemic effects of neoliberalism and globalization any differently.

III. Positive Forces of Technological Globalization?

Before concluding, one must note some of the possible *benefits* of globalization offered to women. Chief among these opportunities are the "boon" of 'world-wide' information and communication technologies (ICTs) (Kerr 2004: 17).

Focussing on ICTs and political rights[6] (seen here as the ability for geographically dispersed or isolated women to unite into coalitions), Burn calls this possibility of transnational feminism the "silver-lining" of the globalization "cloud" for it has helped women around the world unite in opposition to globalization's negative effects (2005: 185). However, the significance of these movements for women in developed countries like Canada appears to be marginal in comparison to those in developing countries and it fails to attract a lot of discussion in the literature. The substantive achievements of international women's movements are limited to issues that many Canadians take for granted: minimum wage, ending child labour, better factory conditions, and ending human rights abuses such as child prostitution and mail-order brides (a definite concern if Canada is to act as a refuge) (Burn 2005). Thus, while the internet may allow Canadian women to unite with others, it seems that it is more often to the benefit of foreign women.

On the other hand, increased human mobility (another promise of cosmopolitan, new technologies and international policy harmonization) means that potentially many more women from developing countries will become Canadian citizens. Canadians, then, should have a vested

[6]Arguably, ICTs offer little for civil rights as long as the political and social rights necessary for pursuing, enhancing, and protecting civil rights are under fire.

interest in the conditions of women in foreign countries because they will bring their economic baggage with them. Immigrants to Canada have a much higher poverty rate and increased mobility may exacerbate this situation (Macdonald 2006: 136). One way, then, that new technologies can help women in Canada is to provide services to immigrant women and aid then in forming connections with others. As seen in committee, Oda believed that online resources (especially with closures to SWC offices) are key to improving women's status in Canada. This is especially useful if they are more confined to the private sphere. Yet, one may ask: what level of internet access will these women have? Further Canada-focussed research on this topic is necessary.

Although internet technology may seem to offer advances for women, some caution that we must take it with a grain of salt. Green notes how the global media are controlled by large corporations which can act as "instrument[s] of social control, denying women's right to free communication" (Green 1996: 112). Kerr warns that the internet is dominated by the English language and Western world-view (2004: 18). Lister also rejects the great possibilities offered by new communication spaces in the transnational public sphere. Technological development is market-led and many will lack access. Further proof that only some segments of society will benefit from the internet, she says, is seen in the amount of sexual harassment and racism that it contains (Lister 1997: 55). Griffen echoes that concern, wondering why feminist activism has declined just as ICTs have made it more possible. The fact that the internet seems to contain an overwhelming amount of negative images of women is therefore frustrating (2004: 158).

Thus, Afkhami states that new technologies are *male*-controlled (2004: 59). Criquillion also feels that there is so much information available online that it is becoming too difficult to easily distinguish the useful from the rest (2004: 125). Finally, even if disparate women can unite in cosmopolitan solidarity, this ideal of the 'global citizen' is still an elite, liberal, and inherently

male model, the very "product of the forces of economic globalization" (Lister 1997: 57).

In the end, I believe that the possibly positive aspects of technological globalization are outweighed by neoliberal globalization's overwhelmingly negative effects on Canadian citizenship, especially in the case of women. Not only do the benefits of new technologies fail to be entirely positive, but even if they are such useful tools, they do not seem powerful enough to fight against the near relenting forces of neoliberal globalization. Substantive change and protection of women's citizenship rights is going to take something much better than the internet, something that is not so inherently complicit in global neoliberal advances.

No author is entirely clear on how neoliberal globalization's destructive impact on women's citizenship can be reversed, if at all. But some do offer suggestions for further exploration such as relying on improved women's movements and unions to resist downward convergence (Macdonald 2006), pursuing politics at the more accessible local levels (Green 1996), working with international women's organizations and summits (Lister 1997), taking advantage of budget surpluses while we can to open discussion on social citizenship policy (Harder 2003), committing ourselves to democracy and the values of welfare liberalism such as equality and diversity (Trimble 2003), having a greater presence in the traditional forms of media (Criquillion 2004), ending downward harmonization by taxing personal wealth (Phillips 1996), public education, pressuring government for more resources, making trade deals subject to health, labour, and human rights agreements, consumer boycotts, or taking control of pension plans (Morris 2000). Although globalization is not a new topic, it will take time to see what effects any counter-measures may have.

Conclusion

One can see how neoliberalism and globalization have dismantled citizenship rights in Canada. The foundations of modern citizenship, social rights, have been eroded by government cutbacks. Our sources of participation in governance, our political rights, have been hollowed out and are disappointingly weak in an era when the government is bound by transnational interests. Finally, Canadians' cherished civil rights have been granted to powerful corporations who will use them to further undermine citizens and the state.

The people hit hardest by these effects are those who do not conform to the new citizenship model of the identity-less consumer/customer. The above examples from Canada show how the new definition of neoliberal citizenship particularly hurts women citizens, albeit the heterogeneity of Canada's population shows that different women are affected differently. Overall, though, women's citizenship is adversely affected by neoliberal globalization, especially their social rights, the most vital rights for vulnerable women. The burdens of the second shift and social reproduction have increased while participation through women's organizations has become less promising. Cuts and changes to SWC and the elimination of the CCP help keep women out of democratic sites and further reduce civil citizenship. Although globalization does offer some new tools such as enhanced communication, this *alone* is not enough to restore protection of citizenship rights. Coming years will show how far Canadians are willing to put up with the status quo before new alternatives are more actively pursued to make Canada a place of refuge.

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