Dominique Marshall, *Aux origines sociales de l'État-providence: Familles québécoises, obligation scolaire et allocations familiales 1940-1955* (Montréal: Les Presses de l'Université de Montréal 1998).

It is surely no accident that historians' interest in the formation of welfare states has waxed at the precise moment that western nations have witnessed the dismantling of these welfare states and seen promises of universality rescinded. In recent years, scholars have examined the state through new lenses (gender, in particular) and have interrogated old concepts such as citizenship and entitlement. Dominique Marshall's *Aux origines sociales de l'État-providence* is an important contribution to this by-now substantial body of work. Her study of the creation, implementation, and impact of social welfare legislation in postwar Québec highlights the promise of the "new political history" and the "new political economy" while enhancing our understanding of the province's social history in the years following the Second World War.

Marshall's focuses are the provincial compulsory schooling act of 1943; federal Family Allowances, established in 1944; and laws regulating child labour: measures that promised Québec children "new universal rights" and helped to produce new conceptions of citizenship. Demands for these universal, child-centred policies were not new in the 1940s but, as Marshall shows in her first chapter, the context of war provided the impetus for their implementation. Compulsory schooling was desired by the provincial government's "managerial reformers," but also by clerical elites concerned about rural depopulation; employers who wanted an educated workforce; women's groups; and those worried about wartime juvenile delinquency. Military enlistment, moreover, drew attention to the scant education of many recruits. An ineffective provincial family allowances scheme was overtaken by a successful campaign for federal family allowances in 1944. Allowances, Marshall argues, were a way for the federal government to respond to the wage-related demands of unions without upsetting wartime wage and price controls; to reassure big business that purchasing power would be maintained in the postwar period; to show the electorate that federal Liberals were determined to avoid a return to Depression-era conditions; and to persuade women to abandon their wartime jobs. Although compulsory schooling and Family Allowances were the result of demands from a variety of social groups, Marshall does not posit an easy pluralism or a clear-cut wartime consensus. If the state was an arena, it was one to which different groups had different degrees of access.

Chapter 2 examines the application of this new legislation. Although all provinces were dealing for the first time with Family Allowances, Québec was unique in that it was faced with administering them at the same time that it was instituting its own compulsory schooling legislation. This conjuncture produced unforeseen results: the threat of suspended Allowances, for instance, encouraged children's school attendance. Marshall emphasizes the important role of civil servants and intermediary players such as school boards in the formulation and reformulation of social policy. Drawing upon the work of Philip Corrigan, Derek Sayer and Bruce Curtis on state formation,[1] she argues that Liberal premier Adélard Godbout viewed the initiation of compulsory schooling as part of a larger project to expand and rationalize the provincial state through statistics-gathering, a cadre of school inspectors, and the centralization of educational structures. These attempts at rationalization were hindered, however, by budgetary problems; by the opposition of the Catholic high clergy (who feared a state-run, secular school system and defended the autonomy of local school boards) and certain elements of the established educational bureaucracy; and by Godbout's defeat in the provincial election of 1944.

Marshall's third chapter explores official postwar views of poverty, parenthood, and children's new universal rights, while the subsequent chapter considers the ways in which these state conceptions interacted with the workings of the market and family needs to shape children's lives. A shift from assisting disadvantaged children through means-tested social programmes and private charity to providing all children ("normal" children) with that to which they were entitled through universal programmes was accompanied by a shift, albeit incomplete, from social control to social regulation. Working-class parents were to be educated rather than policed, persuaded to adhere to new norms rather than coerced. At the same time, an emphasis on children's individuality and children's rights undermined parental authority and thus made room for professional and state intervention. Parents' spending of Family Allowances, for instance, was closely surveilled. That older methods of control persisted amid new conceptions of entitlement is clear: allowances were suspended if improperly spent, if children were being put to work before they were of legal age, or if children were failing to attend school. Yet criticisms of state intrusions into families came largely from conservative voices, increasingly regarded by the state and liberal reformers as out-of-touch with postwar realities.

Most parents did not need to be convinced of the benefits of schooling. Marshall contends that it was the tangible aid offered by Family Allowances, rather than state propaganda, that produced more widespread and regular school attendance and alleviated the necessity of child and teen labour. In a compelling

discussion, Marshall suggests that the new universal programmes could free children from burdensome family obligations, or could give them a means to signal abuses of parental power to public authorities. Yet Chapter 5 demonstrates that exceptions to children's universal rights not only existed, but were officially tolerated. Poor children continued to miss school and to go out to work when their parents needed them to. The reduction in youth labour between 1940 and 1955, Marshall argues, "fut irrégulier et réparti inégalement." (236) The unpaid labour of farmers' sons and workers' daughters, in particular, became officially sanctioned lacunae in the administration of new rights. Moreover, in the context of postwar economic improvement and more rigid norms regarding children's entitlement, those children who did work for pay or leave school were more marginalized than before.

In her final chapter, Marshall posits the evolution of a new political culture among postwar families. State formation, she agrees, was cultural revolution: new conceptions of citizenship and new forms of regulation accompanied new political measures.[2] Québec parents, she argues, had adopted the language of economic citizenship and entitlement in order to make claims upon the state. Social welfare legislation of the 1940s had broadened the spectrum of political participation; many citizens felt closer to their governments. The state-centred, neo-nationalist reforms of the 1960s, spearheaded by Jean Lesage's provincial *équipe de tonnerre*, were relatively easily achieved. In part, this was because the populace had come to accept state intervention in social welfare through the federal government's "revanche administrative" (115) and the universal social policies of the 1940s.

The great strength of *Aux origines sociales de l'État-providence* is its complex and nuanced understanding of the workings of the state. On one level, it tells us much about the Liberal administrations of Mackenzie King and Adélard Godbout and about Maurice Duplessis's second rule as premier. Yet Marshall also joins scholars such as Theda Skocpol who insist that the state must be taken apart.[3] Thus we learn about civil servants as well as elected politicians: federal social policy of the 1940s owed much to the "Ottawa men" who had been convinced since the late 1930s of the need for greater state intervention in the economy.[4] Civil servants had greater staying power than many elected politicians: provincial bureaucrats persuaded of the value of Godbout's educational reforms continued to push the project after a hostile Duplessis returned to power in 1944. State employees, moreover, sometimes sacrificed policy to pragmatism when dealing with real families. In dissecting the state, Marshall shows conflict within the provincial state and conflict between the provincial and federal arms of the state. Duplessis, for instance, refused to

provide the federal government with the information it desired about Québec families in order to administer Family Allowances. Allowances helped to consolidate the power that had accrued to the federal state during the war and contributed to its growth vis à vis the provincial state, as representatives of workers and women, in particular, looked increasingly to Ottawa for the rewards of citizenship. Yet Marshall's work departs from the standard account of Québec-Canada relations in showing the occasional collaboration between federal and provincial authorities. Québec's school boards and the Département de l'instruction publique, for instance, willingly cooperated with the Bureau régional des allocations because Family Allowances provided the province's parents with the money they required to send their children to school, and because the threat of their suspension was a means of enforcing the new provincial schooling legislation.

Aux origines sociales de l'État-providence is a history of people as well as of politics and policy. Marshall is concerned to demonstrate the *social* origins of the welfare state: the influence of ordinary citizens upon policy-making and of families upon institutions. She accomplishes this, inasmuch as we see parents writing to state authorities to justify their actions or to demand the proper application of new social policies. The parents who insisted that compulsory schooling would remain ineffective as long as they could not afford to send their children to school, for example, convinced the provincial government to set aside funds to provide children with clothing and textbooks. From the late 1940s through the mid-1950s, parents and workers' organizations demanded that the federal government index Family Allowances to the rising cost-of-living. And parents who wrote for permission to keep their children out of school helped to create the state's official tolerance of child labour. Yet we do not always see the negotiations *within* families regarding new universal rights: although Marshall skillfully draws out tensions between parents and children, the process of decision-making between husbands and wives remains largely obscured. Marshall's claim that Family Allowances augmented women's authority within the family is plausible but difficult to prove. In part, this is due to the nature of her sources. Marshall makes excellent use of documents generated by the state, including records of the Département de l'instruction publique, the bodies administering Family Allowances, school boards, House of Commons debates, the Department of National Health and Welfare and the provincial Ministère du Travail. These sources naturally reveal families at their points of contact with the state: making claims upon it, as the object of official scrutiny, or both. Private activity and decisions made within Québec's households are less easily uncovered. Moreover, Marshall is very good at distinguishing rural from urban

experiences, but tends to minimize cultural and religious differences. While most of the province was ethnically homogeneous, Montréal, at least, consisted of two major language groups and three significant religious communities. Did these diverse cultural groups experience the new welfare state in the same way?

Marshall contends that the universal social policies of the 1940s helped to make Québec families more like families elsewhere in Canada, although some of the distinctions between the two, such as the symbolic importance of numerous children in Québec, were already fading. If Québec has traditionally attracted the lion's share of historians' attention to federal-provincial relations, this book suggests possibilities for the study of other provinces and their management of the welfare state (the final chapter, for instance, notes that various provinces attempted to "repatriate" Keynesian policies in the 1960s: quiet revolutions took place across the nation). Indeed, Marshall's study of Québec speaks to an international literature on state formation, citizenship and the nature of democracy. In the current Canadian climate, where social welfare programmes compete with deficit reduction for state resources, *Aux origines sociales de l'État-providence* is a timely book. A reminder that welfare states are built and rebuilt, it should also serve as a warning that they can be undone.

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[1] Philip Corrigan and Derek Sayer, *The Great Arch: English State Formation as Cultural Revolution* (Oxford 1985); Bruce Curtis, *Building the Educational State: Canada West, 1836-1871* (London, Ont. 1988).

[2] Corrigan and Sayer, *The Great Arch*.

[3] Theda Skocpol, *Protecting Soldiers and Mothers: the Political Origins of Social Policy in the United States* (Cambridge, Mass. 1992).

[4] Doug Owram, *The Government Generation: Canadian Intellectuals and the State, 1900-1945* (Toronto 1986); J.L. Granatstein, *The Ottawa Men: the Civil Service Mandarins, 1935-1957* (Toronto 1982).