

The Social Origins of the Welfare State: Quebec Families, Compulsory Education, and Family Allowances, 1940-1955 (Studies in Childhood and Family in Canada)

Dominique Marshall



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The Social Origins of the Welfare State traces the evolution of the first universal laws for Québec families, passed during the Second World War. In this translation of her award-winning Aux origines sociales de l'État-providence, Dominique Marshall examines the connections between political initiatives and Québécois families, in particular the way family allowances and compulsory schooling primarily benefited teenage boys who worked on family farms and girls who stayed home to help with domestic labour. She demonstrates that, while the promises of a minimum of welfare and education for all were by no means completely fulfilled, the laws helped to uncover the existence of deep family poverty. Further, by exposing the problem of unequal access of children of different classes to schooling, these programs paved the way for education and funding reforms of the next generation. Another consequence was that in their equal treatment of both genders, the laws fostered the more egalitarian language of the war, which faded from other sectors of society, possibly laying groundwork for feminist claims of future decades.

The way in which the poorest families influenced the creation of public, educational, and welfare institutions is a dimension of the welfare state unexamined until this book. At a time when the very idea of a universal welfare state is questioned, *The Social Origins of the Welfare State* considers the fundamental reasons behind its creation and brings to light new perspectives on its future.



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