The Public Nature of the Private Sphere:

Women and the Issue of Child Care
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by

Lisa Macdonald

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Sociology Department, The Faculties
All source materials used in the research and writing of this thesis have been properly acknowledged. This thesis is my own work.

(Lisa Macdonald)
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TO MY PARENTS
ABSTRACT

Child care is an issue which is crucial to all women. Yet the form and content of this "women's work" has rarely been critically examined in social scientific research. This study argues that if we are to understand the meaning and implications of this kind of labour for women, then our analysis must come to terms with the broader material and ideological structures surrounding the sexual division of labour both within and beyond the Western family home. By discussing child care in the context of the workforce and domestic images and ideologies surrounding the role of women in our society, the study provides an analysis of child care as a form of work, the performance of which is intimately related to the broader structure of labour relations under patriarchal capitalism.

The central concerns of the study revolve around three interrelated areas. Firstly, it is shown how the ideology of the nuclear family is fundamental to the exploitation of women as both paid and unpaid labourers. Secondly, the role of the capitalist welfare state in the maintenance and perpetuation of this ideology is explored. Thirdly, through an empirical analysis of Australian family welfare policies, it is demonstrated that state intervention in the private sphere of the home has consistently operated to reinforce notions of child care as the sole responsibility of women, and as labour which is worthy of neither community support nor financial remuneration.

It is argued that, ultimately, the provision of free, good quality child care on a universal basis is a necessary precondition to women's liberation. In so doing, the study presents the issue of child care as a key site for future feminist research and political activity.
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Walking down the street with her suitcase, she was even glad to leave her children. Why should she have been poked into a house, mopping floors from daybreak to sunset, while the paint was drying on her unfinished masterpiece? Because she was a woman, and they had said to her, you have to have this job, and you are forbidden another, and no man will help you; now get to work. It was so unjust, she wanted to murder all men, to march on authorities until the juice ran from their wounds, and to lock them into domestic residences with whole armies of babies, and nappies to change. In rebellion, on behalf of all women, in fury, she marched from the house she had cleaned over and over again in the same places, in the same way, which forever again dirtied; the scene of so many useless gestures which in no way had benefitted posterity, or left a mark of any description.

(Keesing, 1977:174)
CHAPTER ONE

THE PROBLEM OF CHILD CARE
1. STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

As a subject of social science research, the issue of child care has traditionally been studied from the point of view of children - their needs, desires and personal wellbeing. Psychologists, for example, have written extensively on the emotional needs and development of children (cf Piaget in Aelbi, 1950; Bowlby, 1953); health workers and medical experts have documented the physical needs of children; educationalists have debated the intellectual needs of children (cf Hunt, 1961) and, more recently, sociologists and legal experts have begun to investigate the social environmental needs and rights of children (cf Chisolm, 1980; Goodnow and Burns, 1980). While there is little doubt that these research endeavours are important and useful, the fact that they have been pursued in the absence, and maybe to the neglect of, an equal consideration of the needs and wellbeing of the child carers is both socially and sociologically significant.

With the exception of a small but growing body of very recent work (cf Oakley, 1976; Wilson, 1977; Harper and Richards, 1979; Barrett, 1980; Hargreaves, 1982), the question of child care has not generally been examined as one which is primarily about adults and predominantly about women. Put differently, child care has not often been perceived or examined in social scientific analysis as a form of labour. Consequently, the extent, effects, meaning and implications of this labour for the labourer - as opposed to the object of the labour - have been left largely unconsidered.

This study, by examining the issue of child care in terms of the ideological and material construction of women as, first and foremost, mothers in our society, attempts to move beyond the narrow boundaries of past research to provide an analysis of this social practice as a form of work, the performance of which is intimately related to the broader structure of labour relations under patriarchal capitalism.
In order to obtain a thorough and analytically coherent understanding of child care as a form of labour, it must be investigated not simply as a series of individual practices routinely organised and performed for the benefit of children and the survival of the human race, but rather in terms of its wider historical context as a social activity which has a form and content significantly determined by the structural imperatives of the capitalist social formation. At the level of analysis, and in the context of the previous research in this area, this requires that a number of linkages be forged between bodies of sociological work which have, until recently, remained quite distinct. Specifically, this study attempts to link together various bodies of research regarding the concrete and ideological development of the Western household, the form and content of women's work in our society, and the nature and organisation of the welfare state and family policy in contemporary Australia. While all of these areas of concern have been, to various degrees, debated and discussed in the sociological literature, they have not yet been brought to bear in a detailed and systematic fashion on the question of child care. It is in bridging this gap that the major contribution of this study to the growing body of research on child care may be found.

By way of making these analytical linkages, a number of empirically and conceptually interrelated theses are presented for examination in the study. While these theses constitute the central and specific aims of the research, they nevertheless generate many tangential questions and considerations.

Initially it is proposed that the ideology of the nuclear family, premised as it is on a sexual division of domestic and waged labour and responsibilities, is a foundation structure of advanced capitalism and of the exploitation of women as both paid and unpaid workers in that system.

Secondly it is contended that the capitalist welfare state, via the
formulation and implementation of historically specific and variable family welfare policies, generally operates as a powerful transmitter of the ideological and material conditions which allow and maintain the exploitation of women's labour as domestic and paid workers.

Finally and most significantly, it is proposed that the form and content of Australian child care policy has, over the past decade, and consistent with the broader activities of the Australian welfare state, persistently assumed and operated to reproduce the sexual division of domestic labour and responsibilities at both the concrete and ideological levels. In so doing, these policies have both reflected and reinforced the prevailing notions of child care as the private responsibility of women and, therefore, as being not 'real' work worthy of either community support or financial remuneration.

2. METHODOLOGICAL CONSIDERATIONS

The substantive focus of this research on child care service provision and policy in Australia was both engendered by and conducted within a feminist perspective on Western social life. As such, a central assumption of the study is that women, as a social category in relation to men, are exploited and oppressed in patriarchal capitalist society. To provide a comprehensive and generalisable definition of the term oppression or exploitation is a difficult task. Indeed, as has become increasingly clear in the growing body of relevant literature (cf Summers, 1975; Davidoff, 1976; Barrett, 1980; Gowland, 1983), the oppression of women, being socially constructed and therefore historically specific, takes various forms and is manifested in various ways according to particular and changing social conditions. For the purposes of this study which investigates the exploitation of women as mothers in contemporary Australia, the term oppression may be broadly defined as having reference to the disadvantaged position of women in their access to and possession of those social and personal resources which are relatively
highly valued in our society, and which condition the standard of physical and personal wellbeing of people living in patriarchal capitalist societies. In particular, these resources refer to private property and all of those things which allow the acquisition of property such as education, workforce experience, self-confidence and so on. A fundamental feature of this lack of access to those resources deemed valuable by our materialistic society is the relative powerlessness and lesser self-determination of the female sex in almost all spheres of human social life in the West. It is this which constitutes their historically specific oppression. On the basis of this world view feminist research proceeds in an effort to identify, document and explain the specific dimensions and effects of this oppression and, ultimately, to counteract them.

As a theoretically informed method of inquiry which employs sets of interrelated concepts developed and utilised in light of particular analytical and concrete problems to be explained, a feminist methodology precludes an assessment of social reality in which the 'facts' speak for themselves. Rather, the application of this method in social scientific analysis requires that a self-conscious political choice be made regarding the specific focus of and evidence to be used in research.

Historically, the development of feminist theory and research has been most fundamentally informed, not by abstract philosophical concerns, but by the daily and generational experiences of women in a male dominated society. Since a large part of women's lives in most societies has revolved around the family home, it is not surprising that this institution has become a key focus of feminist concern.

For a number of years now feminist researchers have identified and investigated the Western family household as a principle site of the exploitation of women both as individuals and as a social category whose disadvantaged position in society is reproduced from generation to generation (cf Gavron, 1966; Foremann, 1977; Rapp et al, 1979; Barrett and McIntosh, 1982). In particular,
the sex based differentiation of domestic expectations and experiences has prompted a strong feminist critique of this institution as a site of considerable dependency, exploitation and suffering for women. This differentiation of the roles and responsibilities of men and women in the home, it is argued, does not serve to benefit all people but in fact operates to subjugate the greater emotional, physical and intellectual interests of women to those of all other family members. Indeed, the simple fact that many of the numerous women involved full-time in the unpaid, invisible and undervalued domestic duties of Western family life come to devalue themselves as 'merely housewives' is evidence enough of the oppression experienced by women in our society.

Within this general perspective on Western family life, women cannot be posed in analysis as self-determining, individual family members alongside men and children. Rather, they must be analytically conceived of in terms of the roles, life chances and statuses ascribed to them (exclusively) by the family form in our society - that is, as primarily wives, mothers and housekeepers. In making this point, I am neither ignorant nor disrespectful of the long and important struggle of women to be acknowledged and treated by others as full individuals in their own right - not simply as appendages to men, children or houses. It is nevertheless necessary to come to grips analytically with the observation that women are not disadvantaged as individuals any more than men or children are. Instead, they are exploited in their socially prescribed roles as mothers, wives and housekeepers; that is, as gendered subjects in a male oriented and dominated society.

The analytical distinction between women as a biological category, immutably distinguished from men in terms of their sex, and the female gender as a socially constructed category which exists in a flexible and historically specific relationship to other social categories and institutions is a crucial one for feminist research (see Oakley, 1972 for elaboration). For, as will be detailed throughout this study, there is nothing inherent in domestic roles or
responsibilities which define them as belonging most 'properly' to men or to women. Thus, while the female sex has a singular claim on child bearing, it is only by conceptualising the social structural location of women in terms of the construction of gender identities that women's almost exclusive role as child carers and domestic labourers in our society can be explained.

These basic identities of women as wives, mothers and domestic labourers are, by their very nature, intimately interrelated in both theory and practice. At the level of popular ideology, all three roles have generally been defined in industrialised societies as deriving directly and equally from women's 'natural' instincts and inclinations. To differentiate women's role as mothers from their other domestic roles is then, in one sense, to make a false distinction. Yet, this distinction is only partially false for these roles also operate in ideology and in practice relatively independently to influence the domestic lives of women. The life chances and experiences of childless wives, for example, are likely to differ substantially from those of married mothers. Similarly, the situation of single mothers is generally quite different from that of married mothers. Further, as investigated in detail by Oakley (1974) and as expressed by Brophy (1975:329):

What the experts do not seem to realise is that bearing a child is one thing, rearing it is quite another, and neither has much to do with the third aspect of women's role, housekeeping, although all three functions are lumped together as though they comprised a single entity. I found housekeeping and child rearing to be mutually antagonistic pursuits. Presumably, the additional time and energy consuming duties of wifehood would sometimes exacerbate these tensions.

On this basis then it is proposed in this study that while there is no doubt that these three threads in the domestic lives of women must ultimately be tied back together in analysis to provide a complete picture and explanation of women's situation in the family home, they can and should be teased out and examined independently to allow a more focussed and precise
understanding of how each role, with its attendant labours, responsibilities and returns, influences other aspects of women's lives. It is within this context of a broader and most fundamental concern with the total life conditions of all women as they are affected by the structure and content of the contemporary family, that the focus of this research on the role of women as mothers and child carers in our society is located.

The choice of specific focus on women's domestic role as child carers as opposed to, say, their role as wives in this study was neither arbitrary nor theoretically informed. Rather, it presented itself empirically in research I had undertaken previously and which raised a number of questions regarding the relationships between the child bearing and rearing activities of women, and their common experiences in various other spheres of social life (Macdonald, 1981). The data collected in this prior study of the marital power relations of forty married couples in the Australian Capital Territory clearly indicated that the nature and the extent of women's domestic duties and responsibilities were variously related to many other aspects of their lives including, amongst others, their rate of participation in community organisations and activities, their financial status, their marital decision-making power, their mental and physical health, and their employment and recreational expectations and experiences.

Within this context, one of the most interesting revelations of this study was that the maternal status of the women interviewed constituted a major factor in these women's explanations of their own spheres of interest and influence both within and beyond the conjugal home. Indeed, of all the relationships investigated between the factors listed above and other variables (eg age, ethnicity, socio-economic status and stage of life cycle), the correlation between an absence of children in the family concerned and the wife's degree of participation and/or power in these various spheres was most strong and direct.
While this last observation was not pursued in any depth in the writing up of that research, it provided both an inspiration and a substantive focus for the more detailed examination of women's domestic situation that is undertaken in the present study. Beginning with this 'interesting' relationship observed in the daily practices of Australian families in the 1980's then, this research has developed over time to acknowledge and accommodate the necessity of a broader analysis of family life and ideologies as key sites of the individual and collective exploitation of women as mothers in our society.

In attempting to investigate at the empirical level both the concrete nature of child care needs and practices in contemporary Australia, as well as the ideologies which surround these practices as they are manifested in public welfare policies in this country, this research draws upon both primary and secondary sources of data. The resulting data base is comprised of two parts.

Initially, statistical information collected and compiled by Federal Government authorities, independent research institutions and community organisations was used to construct a general picture of the contemporary and rapidly changing demographic character of Australian families. Against this background, official data indicating (either explicitly or implicitly) the child care practices and needs of Australian families was examined in more detail in relation to the public demand for and availability of child care facilities beyond the private home.

Having developed a general picture of the material conditions of family life and, in particular, child care in this country, Federal Government reports and policy documents bearing upon family and household matters were examined in some detail to provide an account of the assumptions, objectives and practices of the Australian welfare state in its intervention in the domestic domain. Insofar as no document and no reading of documents pertaining to family welfare can be objective or value-free, it would be reasonable to say that those reports selected for detailed examination in this study were
selected, not because they were more factually 'true' than other documents on this issue, but because they reflected more truly than other documents particular sets of ideas and assumptions regarding the structure and content of the family household which are exploitative of women in present day Australia.

As a subject of empirical inquiry, the issue of child care is not a readily accessible one. Indeed, the dearth of systematic and comprehensive statistical information on this question is striking and would seem to indicate that child care, while it may be a significant social problem for some, has largely been relegated to the status of a 'non-issue' in the collection of official statistics and information. The fact that detailed and comprehensive information regarding the child care practices and requirements of Australian families is not yet available can, in itself, tell us much about the structure of and ideologies surrounding this work. Specifically, it seems reasonable to assume that the data collections commissioned by government and its bureaucracies are ultimately geared towards more or less specified national, state or local planning ends and, as such, cover areas of special concern for governments. Extending this line of reasoning, we can then conclude that the area of child care has not yet been officially deemed as one of particular or pressing public concern. For the researcher in the area of child care, these conditions result in a 'Catch-22' situation. For, until the work of child care is popularly perceived as a public issue and/or responsibility, it will likely continue to be neglected in the collection of national social statistics. Yet, until comprehensive and systematic information is available on the issue, it is very difficult to produce detailed, historical and policy related analyses of child care which can attest to the relevance of this issue in national planning and development.

Clearly some progress has already been made with respect to this problem. The growing interest and concern of certain sectors of the community with this issue has prompted the establishment of nation wide child care surveys which are now conducted on a regular (four yearly) basis. There is, nevertheless,
still much to be done. By providing an analysis of the data that is available at the present time in terms of the wider material and ideological structures within which the social practice of child care is constructed, this study aims to provide, not only an explanation of why child care has to date remained a 'non-issue' in official statistics, but also a theoretically informed programme of action by which the question of child care may be put onto the official agenda of public concern.

3. THE STUDY

Having presented the central aims of this study in terms of their empirical and theoretical points of departure, a more detailed and systematic outline of the path taken to fulfill these aims can now be provided.

Following the introduction, Chapter Two, The Family As Ideology, will provide a critical review of the functionalism which has dominated most social science accounts of the Western family form in past research. It is argued that the use of this framework has led many family researchers to fail to adequately distinguish familial ideology from the material reality of household life under patriarchal capitalism, each of which has developed in different ways, at different rates and often in contradiction to each other. As a result, the experiences of women who are located at the centre of this disjunction between the ideological, or ideal, and the real Western household form have only recently been acknowledged and investigated in family research. Extending this critique, and drawing on some of the more recent feminist analyses in this area, the chapter concludes by arguing that 'the family', as it is popularly understood in our society, is, first and foremost, an ideological construct which exists and operates relatively independently of the lived family form.

Having identified for analysis the ideological character of the Western family, Chapter Three, The Ideology of the Family and the Sexual Division of
Labour, goes on to examine in more detail the nuclear family ideal as a fundamental structure of patriarchal capitalism. In this chapter it is argued that the sexual division of labour which forms the basis of the nuclear family ideal and which, thereby, mediates men's and women's relationship to the public sphere of waged work and the private sphere of domestic work, is a foundation structure in the exploitation of women's labour both within and beyond the family home. In a society divided into the visible, valued and paid world of public work, and the relatively invisible, unvalued and unpaid world of domestic work, women - via the sexual division of labour - are increasingly frequently caught in a contradiction between their ideological location in the private sphere of the home, and their actual, additional location in paid employment. In illustrating the centrality of the sexual division of labour to the patriarchal capitalist social formation, this chapter argues that the private sphere of the family is, in fact, anything but private. Rather, it is inextricably intertwined with the public world of capitalist production, control and exploitation.

Chapter Four, *The Australian Welfare State, Family Policy and the Nuclear Ideal*, constitutes an attempt to illustrate empirically the falsity of the ideologically constructed division between the private and public spheres of industrialised society and, thereby, to reveal for analysis some of the processes by which the nuclear family ideal allows and perpetuates the disadvantaged position of women in waged and unwaged labour. Taking off from the small body of feminist work on this question, this chapter examines in some detail the relationship between the welfare state, the family and women in Australia. It illustrates that the welfare state, as an institution of public life, plays a crucial role in the ideological and material maintenance of the nuclear family form based on a rigid sexual division of labour and responsibilities, and concludes that the sheer extent, as well as the nature of the welfare state's intervention in Australian family life, clearly attests to the very public nature of the private sphere under patriarchal capitalism.
Finally, it is argued that if our understanding of women's position within
the patriarchal family is to be extended, this distinction between the public
and private spheres must also be overcome heuristically.

Having developed the analytical framework within which the question of
child care may be considered, Chapter Five, The Case of Federal Child Care
Policy 1972-1982, aims to further specify and concretise the processes
detailed in Chapters Two, Three and Four as they relate specifically to
women's labour as mothers. By tracing the past decade of child care policy
development in Australia, focussing on the extent and direction of Federal
funding in the context of the accompanying rhetoric and policy guidelines, it
is argued that child care policy in this country has largely been determined
by conservative assumptions regarding the ideal (ie nuclear) family form and
the proper roles and responsibilities of women within and beyond this family
home. It is illustrated that while these observations have held irrespective
of the political party in Federal office, the recent decline in economic
conditions has been accompanied in child care policy by a more rigorous and
explicit promotion of the nuclear ideal and the 'natural' responsibilities
of women as mothers.

Following the documentation of these trends in the formulation and
funding of children's services provision in Australia, Chapter Six, Child Care
Policy and the Concept of Need, examines in greater detail one of the specific
means by which the welfare state has both promoted and legitimated a conservative
policy on child care in the face of the growing needs and expectations of
women for publicly funded child care facilities. Focussing on the concept of
need as it has been formulated and implemented in Federal reports on child
care services, it is argued that this concept has not only been crucial as an
administrative device for reducing the levels of funding for children's
services, but that it has also operated ideologically to mystify and conceal
the real level of need for these services in Australia. It is concluded that
the Australian welfare state, by imposing a normative conception of limited need upon objective conditions of dire need for child care services, has operated to minimise its financial and moral responsibility for the labour of child care. It has, thereby, effectively promoted the conditions for the continued exploitation of Australian women as both waged and unwaged labourers.

Chapter Seven, *Child Care in Context: The Reproduction of the Nuclear Ideal*, provides a summary of the data presented in Chapters Five and Six. These observations are then considered within the broader theoretical context developed in Chapters Two, Three and Four. This discussion, by locating Australian child care policy development in terms of an historically specific sexual division of labour and familial ideology, allows us to create an analytically coherent picture of the potentials and limitations of present as well as future welfare state activities in this sphere of public welfare provision. In addition, and in the context of declining economic conditions accompanied by a growing need and demand for the public provision of child care, this analysis clearly reveals the contradictory nature of the welfare state under patriarchal capitalism. For, by considering from a feminist perspective the major ideological and operational concept of need which has been employed in the development of Australian child care policy, it is revealed that the welfare state has, contrary to its popular image of benevolence and social justice, played a key role in maintaining the dependent status of women as mothers in our society.

Finally, Chapter Eight, *Mothers As Workers: A Strategy for the Australian Child Care Movement*, locates the issue of child care firmly in the political arena. It is argued that, given the contemporary situation and the effects of current child care policy on all women, any improvement in the conditions and social relations pertaining to women in their role as mothers is not likely to be achieved without a major struggle on the part of all women. Posing as the central question the validity and possibilities of feminist struggle within the welfare state itself, it is concluded that, while this site of
struggle continues to be a necessary one, the very nature of the welfare state as documented in this study requires that, if women are to achieve greater gains in the sphere of welfare provision, they must establish strong linkages with the Australian Women's Movement in all its forms. Only by doing so can the prevailing notions and reality of child care as the private, unpaid labour and responsibility of women be directly and effectively challenged.
CHAPTER TWO

THE FAMILY AS IDEOLOGY
The aim of this chapter is to investigate the Western family both in its popularly conceived form and as it is conceptualised in social scientific analysis. Specifically, I will attempt to show that the nuclear family - popularly understood as a homogeneous and 'natural' unit of social organisation in the West - may be best understood in analysis as an ideology which corresponds only variously with material reality and which has a social significance distinct from the lived family form.

A critical review of social scientific analyses of the family reveals that, until very recently, the profoundly ideological character of the Western family form and content has remained largely unconsidered. As a consequence, I will argue, the location of women at the centre of this contradiction and thus their constitution as an oppressed social category, have yet to be systematically and comprehensively investigated in social scientific work.

Drawing on some of the more recent feminist analyses in this area, it is concluded that, only by way of acknowledging and examining in theoretical and empirical detail the nuclear family as primarily an ideology can the experiences of women both within and beyond the private sphere of the home be more adequately explained.

1. THE 'MODEL' FAMILY: HARMONY, LOVE AND A COMMON CAUSE

Throughout our lives in Western societies we are confronted with images of the ideal family. Consisting of a husband, his wife and their biological children (all living happily under the same roof), the form and content of this nuclear ideal faithfully reflects a conservative ideology of the family which is not only readily identifiable but is also relatively unchanging and apparently ubiquitous.

As it is conceived and presented in the media (Millum, 1975), the law (Brophy and Smart, 1980), political rhetoric (Sawer, 1982), popular
literature (Millett, 1971), advertising (Goffman, 1979), and in fact most spheres of Western social life, a number of central features of this dominant ideal may be identified to provide a general picture of the 'model' or ideal family of the Western world.

Fundamentally, the ideal family is premised upon a heterosexual, monogamous relationship between two lovingly and legally married, and cohabiting adults. This couple, having established their own private home in preparation, eventually bear children, two or three in number evenly spaced over a period of up to six years. During the following fifteen to twenty years of eating, sleeping, working and generally living together, the physical and social needs of both generations are fulfilled via the mutually co-operative and supportive relations that prevail within the family home. The husband/father, being 'naturally' best suited to succeed in the aggressive and materialistic sphere of paid labour, is responsible for the immediate and longer term financial security of his family. As the household breadwinner and its link with the outside world, the father/husband is a figure of authority, knowledge and protection for other members of the family. The wife/mother, responsible for the running of the home itself, shops, cleans, minds the children and attends to the day-to-day business of transforming her husband's pay packet into a healthy, comfortable and stable family life for all. As the household cook, cleaner, babysitter and nurse, the mother/wife epitomises the nurturing, caring and loving associated with family life.

Undoubtedly, adult women form the cornerstone of this ideal family. Whereas the 'head of the household' enters the domestic scene only briefly (to provide the 'dough', consume the purchases of his wage and discipline the children), it is his wife who actually runs the show - who keeps the towels soft, the floors and dishes sparkling, the cupboards full and the children hygienic and happy. Furthermore, because these wifely and motherly duties are an expression of her maternal instincts - her innate drive to nest-build and nurture - they are performed with tender loving care, with a
remarkable disregard for self, and with a great deal of pride at work well done.

These respective roles of men and women within the 'model' family are, simultaneously, mutually exclusive and perfectly complementary. Together, the male's instrumental role and the female's expressive role constitute the ideal family as a smooth running, efficient and harmonious unit of social organisation and one which not only fulfills the more mundane material and social needs of those individuals living within it, but also gratifies (and in fact is a consequence of) the different innate desires and needs of men and women. This ideal, while it may vary in detail according to the medium and objective of its presentation, (eg husbands/fathers may not be able to provide well for their families, or frustrated mothers may beat their children), nevertheless remains essentially the same despite these occasional deviations. As will be detailed in the following section, the significant lack of correspondence between this model of love, harmony and personal fulfillment for all in family life, and the real experiences of women as the linchpin of the nuclear home, renders the very pervasiveness and persistence of this ideal remarkable.

2. WOMEN IN THE FAMILY: DISILLUSION, CONFLICT AND A DIFFERENT CAUSE

Writing over two decades ago, American author Betty Friedan made history with her pioneering attempt to deal systematically with "the problem that has no name", the problem which:

lay buried, unspoken, for many years in the minds of American women. It was a strange stirring, a sense of dissatisfaction, a yearning that women suffered in the middle of the twentieth century in the United States. Each suburban wife struggled with it alone. As she made the beds, shopped for groceries, matched slipcover material, ate peanut butter sandwiches with her children, chauffered Cub Scouts and Brownies, lay beside her husband at night she was afraid to even ask of herself the silent question: 'Is this all?'

(1963:13)
Now variously labelled as the 'feminine dilemma', the 'captive wife syndrome', or 'suburban neurosis', this problem is the most compelling reason for any feminist to examine more critically the Western family ideal and the 'natural' and exclusive location of women within it. The sheer unhappiness so many women suffer while trying to live their ideal roles can no longer be disputed or ignored. Extensively documented in autobiographies, in fiction, in medical, psychiatric and personal journals, and in a rapidly growing body of sociological studies (cf Gavron, 1966; Oakley, 1974; Snare and Steng-Dahl, 1978), the same story is repeated over and over again. It goes something like this:

A film made of any typical morning in my house would look like an old Marx Brothers' comedy. I wash the dishes, rush the older children off to school, dash out in the yard to cultivate the chrysanthemums, run back in to make a phone call about a committee meeting, help the youngest child build a block house, spend fifteen minutes skimming the newspapers so I can be well-informed, then scamper down to the the washing machines where my thrice weekly laundry includes enough clothes to keep a primitive village going for an entire year. By noon I'm ready for a padded cell. Very little of what I've done has really been necessary or important. Outside pressures lash me through the day ...

... many of my friends are even more frantic.

(Friedan, 1963:25)

A more recent statement, tapping a slightly different dimension of the same problem, notes:

Until the age of eighteen I was somebody's daughter. From then until now - at the age of thirty-nine, and with one daughter of twenty-one and another of thirteen - I am still not me, but Gina and Tanya's mother. I have spent twenty years defending my right to exist as a person, and I am exhausted with the fight.

(Keesing, 1977:16)

The dissatisfaction expressed in these two accounts is repeated innumerable times in print alone. And, while the sentiment may be conveyed in different forms, with different emphases, and via different mediums, the message remains clear and consistent. It attests to the fact that, for
many women, the 'enriching' experience of marriage and motherhood - the fulfillment of their needs and potentials in family life - is little more than a myth. This myth is, nevertheless, a powerful one; one which still dominates the desires and lifestyles of many young women and which persists in spite of the overwhelming living evidence that marriage and motherhood are not all they are supposed to be for all women. In the words of one Australian housewife:

In considering the gradual development of my disillusionment I can only marvel at the thoroughness of the indoctrination which convinced me, and evidently many like me, that I could look to marriage to provide all my social, intellectual and emotional needs, and which led me to blame myself when the reality of my situation fell far short of the theory. Yet, she continues:

...if marriage and family are to be all of a woman's life, then these are the expectations she must bring to it. Neither I nor anyone else marries to be miserable.

(Brophy, 1975:323-4)

This disjunction between the happy, contented and houseproud ideal mother, and the desperation and depression that is actually experienced by so many mothers cannot simply be explained away as a consequence of the false consciousness of women, or in terms of a massive 'con' which has been perpetrated on the female sex in our society. Even the most disillusioned of mothers and wives will attest to the real joys and satisfactions to be found in motherhood and conjugal life. And certainly, the patterns of interdependence and support which accompany household life can facilitate the fulfillment of real human needs.

Given the more pleasurable aspects of family life, however, we are still left to explain the loneliness, boredom, fatigue and diminishing self-esteem that is experienced by so many women in the performance of their domestic roles. In order to do so, it is necessary to shift from a documentation of the far from idyllic family experiences of women towards a systematic and theoretically informed analysis of the contradiction between these
experiences and the nuclear family ideal.

towards this end the following sections will provide a brief and critical
review of the progress made so far on this question in the main body of
social scientific research on the family. It will be argued that, while
a strong tradition of functionalist analysis in family research has meant that
this contradiction has been theoretically and empirically neglected in this
work, the more recent work of feminists in the area of the family has begun
to lay the foundations for a systematic examination of the disjunction between
the ideal and the real Western family form.

3. THE FAMILY IN SOCIAL SCIENCE

social scientific investigations of the form and content of the Western
family have, until recently, been dominated by a tendency towards
functionalist and determinist description and analysis. Variously explained
as being functional for the capitalist production process (Creighton, 1980),
for the socialisation of adults and children (Parsons and Bales, 1956), and
for the modern individual's mental health and stability (Goode, 1963), the
family is portrayed in such research as a largely non-contradictory site
for the reproduction of existing social relations. 5.

functionalist analyses of the family in social science have often been
conducted on quite distinct theoretical terrain ranging from the social
psychologists' emphasis on the family's role in personal development and
wellbeing, through Parsonian accounts of socialisation and normative
systems, to Marxists' focus on the family's role in the reproduction of cheap,
compliant and flexible labour power for capital. Despite the differing
perspectives, concepts and vocabularies employed, the underlying assumptions
regarding the historical development and character of the modern family
which have informed these analyses are remarkably similar. In brief, there
now appears to be a widespread consensus amongst family researchers that
the nuclear family developed alongside and as a consequence of the process of industrialisation. With the growth of the factory and urbanisation, it is argued, the social production formerly carried out within the feudal household was removed to the public sphere of waged work leaving the private home as a sphere of consumption only. Simultaneously, the growth of urbanisation necessitated the deconstruction of the traditional extended family which was both relatively immobile geographically and which exerted considerable social control over individual family members who, if they were to survive in the free market sector, must be unrestrained by strong kinship obligations. Thus:

The conjugal family with dependent children, which is the dominant unit in our society, is, of all types of kinship units, the one which is probably least exposed to strain and possible breaking-up by the dispersion of its members both geographically and with respect to stratification in the modern type of occupational hierarchy.

(Parsons, 1954:79)

This analysis of the minimisation of the family unit and the separation out of the domestic sphere from the economic is further developed by a number of Marxist theorists who argue that the socialisation of the production formerly carried out in household units created the idea of the family as a realm of 'personal life' undetermined by the public world of social production (cf Zaretsky, 1976). The accompanying growth of ideologies of domesticity and femininity, and the consequent relegation of women to the role of child carers and domestic labourers within this sphere is then claimed to have led to the devaluing of household work and the constitution of women as a secondary source of waged labour. The male head of household thus became the primary breadwinner, the point of exchange between the private and public spheres of social life.

In sum, this split between the public sphere of production and the private sphere of consumption is said to provide an integrated and coherent system for any or all of, the socialisation of well adjusted children and
adults, the cheap reproduction of labour power, the reduction of worker alienation, or the maintenance for capital of a constantly available and flexible pool of excess labour. The nuclear family, distinct from the world of productive labour, and evolved as the exclusive domain of women, is historically specific and necessary to the industrial capitalist mode of production.

The above account is a simplification of sometimes complex and controversial analyses within the main body of family research. Nevertheless, it does represent a perspective on nuclear family life and development which has gained considerable currency in social scientific analysis and which is all too often simply assumed as fact. A critical examination of some of these claims not only reveals the empirical, conceptual and explanatory inadequacy of this accepted truth, but also directs us towards research questions and considerations which may lead to a less simplistic and more comprehensive understanding of the present state of the Western family.

Initially, and at an empirical level, it is necessary to acknowledge that the popular claim that the nuclear family form developed as a result of industrialisation has now been seriously contested in a number of recent intensive, demographic and descriptive investigations of the pre-industrial and industrial households of nineteenth century Europe and America (Laslett, 1972; Aries, 1973; Medick, 1976; Stone, 1977). In a significant repudiation of this claim, Laslett (1972) has argued that the nuclear family structure in fact characterised a large portion of the rural working class population of America long before industrialisation. Aries (1973) too, focussing on the concept of childhood, and tracing in great detail the history of the family form in Europe from medieval times to the present, claims that the development of the nuclear family alongside industrialisation was not so much a change in structural form as a transformation of the subjective content of the family. Medieval family life, argues Aries, was not predicated on the categories of childhood and adulthood as we know them today. It was not
until the advent of industrialisation that the family:

ceased to be simply an institution for the transmission of a name and an estate - it assumed a moral and spiritual function... (which) removed the child from adult society and mediated the transition from childhood to adulthood.

(1973:412-3)

The work of Laslett and Aries is significant in that it raises the possibility of assigning an autonomous social significance to the family in scientific analysis; an autonomy which, whatever its dimensions, effectively challenges the prevailing assumption of total functional interdependence between the nuclear family form and advanced industrial society in family research. In other words, these works lead us to conclude that the family cannot be thought of as a simple cause or effect of industrialisation. In the words of Harris:

Industrialisation no more deprived the family of its productive economic function than the development of the family as a unit of consumption caused the spread of industrialisation. To speak of one change presupposes the other and neither can be understood in isolation.

(1977:405)

Extending the logic of this reasoning and moving from the past to the present, we can observe that the sweeping claim, or assumption, in functionalist family analyses that the nuclear family form is the dominant unit of organisation in industrial capitalist societies has also been recently contested in concrete investigations of contemporary family life. Most notably, the observations of Young and Willmott (1958) who found that the 'pre-industrial' extended family was still a remarkably strong feature of urban English life in the 1950's, raise important questions regarding whether or not we can even speak of the 'modern family' as such. More fundamentally, we may ask whether or not there is in fact a 'family' in general upon which another process such as industrialisation can have effects. In his widely discussed book Approaches to the History of the Western Family 1500-1914 (1980), Anderson proposes the view that "there is, except at the most trivial level, no Western family type" (1980:14).
It is becoming apparent from the recent proliferation of empirical research on Western family life that Anderson's claim is correct. The assumed unity and homogeneity of the 'nuclear family' which dominated earlier analyses may, it seems, be little more than a sociological myth. The historical work of Poster (1978), and the more contemporary work of Kahn (1979), for example, reveal that the Western family form has been and remains characterised by a diversity of functions and attitudes which vary by class and ethnicity, both over time and at any one point in time. It is these observations which have led writers such as Creighton to conclude that even to attempt a definition of the family "is a fruitless quest since it presupposes that there can be a transhistorical definition of the family - an assumption I do not share" (1980:136).

Given the evidence on the different forms and contents of families in different historical periods and in different social classes and categories, it seems the case that it is no longer useful or appropriate to speak in an unproblematic way about 'the family'. Indeed, to do so would be to perpetuate the naturalistic assumptions which feature in most family research and which have, to date, effectively papered over and restricted our understanding of what now appears to be a very complex social institution. To this extent then Creighton is surely correct. If this is the case, however, how then do we deal in analysis with that institution popularly known as the family?

4. TOWARDS A NEW CONCEPTUALISATION OF THE FAMILY

This problem of defining the family has been explicitly tackled in some descriptive historical research which has employed various strictly bounded definitions of the family in a manner specific to the situation and period under study. Thus, we find the family conceptualised in terms of property rights (Leach, 1961), kinship ties (Berkner, 1972), residence (Laslett, 1972), co-residing kin (Flandrin, 1979), and as units of
production and exchange (Anderson, 1976). The development of this miriad of definitions of the family has been useful in identifying a whole cluster of variables which combine to constitute particular family structures. Nevertheless, while the tools for applying the concept of the family have thereby been considerably refined, the concept itself and its relationship to other forms of social organisation remains problematic and ambiguous at the level of theoretical understanding. In particular, the disjunction between the nuclear family as an analytical ideal type, however defined, and the concrete heterogeneity of family life under capitalism is still not effectively tackled.

In an attempt to escape the deterministic analysis of the family which poses it as either a simple effect of the capitalist production process, or an unproblematic cause of its reproduction, Mitchell (1971) has reconceptualised the family as a relatively constant unit in social history — one which has a certain autonomy and flexibility irrespective of a society's stage of economic development. Providing an extensive account of the history of the Western family from feudal times to the present, Mitchell argues that the family, whatever its objective form, has always belonged to the ideological superstructure, a location which coincides variously with its economic function at different points in time, but which remains relatively autonomous from the economic base. Under capitalism, she argues, and in contrast to feudal society wherein the peasant household formed the material basis of private property, the Western family has become the focal point of the idea of private property, an ideology which no longer coincides with the reality of socialised production and capital accumulation. Mitchell notes:

This is not to reiterate the notion that the family had an economic function under feudalism and today ... has only an ideological one. Quite the contrary, for although the family has changed since its first appearance, it has also remained - not just an idealist concept, but as a crucial ideological and economic unit with a certain rigidity and autonomy despite all its adaptations.

(1971:156)
Mitchell's attempt to reformulate the family as both an independent and dependent variable in analysis is developed in the work of Harris (1977). According to this writer, in order to escape evolutionary and functionalist analyses of the family, we must investigate this institution as an *integral* part of the social formation within which it is *currently* found. On this basis he asserts that we must view the family as industrial society, rather than as simply fitting into this societal form.

As such the family need not be seen as the product of industrial society, but as a social product which, together with other social institutions, constitutes a social formation whose base is one of the modes of production which we call 'industrial'. The family as a product has its own history which is distinct from those of other members of the formation of which it is a part and retains a degree of autonomy with regard to them, the most significant aspect of which is the nature of the kinship system within which it is embedded.

(1977:402)

Harris' point that social institutions such as the family are most usefully conceived of not *merely* as constituent parts of the whole social formation, but as abstracted aspects of the common social life of the members of a population at any given time, is made more clearly by Kuhn (1978). In discussing the dearth of analyses of the historical and operational autonomy of the family, Kuhn claims that this gap has resulted from the attempt in most research to answer a question which is inherently and unavoidably functionalist in nature; that is, "how is it possible for the family to exist?" (1978:45). If we are to escape determinist analyses of the family as merely a repository of the social totality, she argues, we must reformulate this question to recognise that "the family is defineable exactly as property relations and psychic relations...between men and women" (1978:42). By then acknowledging that these relations are informed by and changeable through history, a relatively autonomous effectivity is assigned to the family as a historically specific form of social organisation.

In all of these latter accounts, the family is being analytically
deconstructed to pose it, not merely as a unified social unit which has evolved alongside and in direct relation to changes in the mode of production, but as a contradictory ideological and social/economic structure in capitalist society. Thus, claims Mitchell:

The ideology of the family can remain: individualism, freedom and equality, while the social and economic reality can be very much at odds with such a concept. The contradictions between the ideological intentions of the family and its socio-economic base do not mean that we say the former is false... The family is the most fundamental... form of social organisation. When, under capitalism it was made to embody, as an ideal, what had been its economic function under feudalism, a chronic contradiction took place. (1971:156-7)

This contradiction between the nuclear family ideal and the family as it is lived and experienced by individuals under capitalism can be neither perceived nor explained by a deterministic analysis which does not even differentiate between the two. Thus, while the nuclear ideal may very well have evolved with industrialisation and be functional for capitalism, as noted by Barrett (1980:204):

At an ideological level the bourgeoisie has certainly secured a hegemonic definition of family life... To a large extent this familial ideology has been accepted by the industrial working class and indeed has proven effective as motivation for male wage labour and the male 'family'-wage demand. Yet there is a disjunction between the pervasiveness of this ideology...and the actual household structure of the proletariat in which it exists. Few working class households have historically been organised around dependence on a male 'breadwinning' wage.

Insofar as the family household constitutes a physically bounded and visible site within which goods are consumed, labour power is reproduced, and human needs are met, the family certainly does exist in a real (ie material) sense. Acknowledging also, however, that it is impossible to speak of the family as a constant, homogeneous, empirical reality, it would seem reasonable to then argue that 'the (nuclear) family' is primarily and
most significantly, an ideological construct - both in terms of its theoretical placement in society by researchers, and as a mode of capitalist social organisation and control. This observation is alluded to by Kate Ellis who comments:

The question is: is there anything we all want from the family, be we married or single, straight or gay, male or female, "good" or "bad", right or left? I would answer: Only in so far as "the family" is perceived not as any particular (and thus mutable) living arrangement, but as the institution that can cure all our social and personal ills, a metaphor for some private and public paradise lost.

(Barrett and McIntosh, 1982:34)

As will be detailed in the following chapters, there can be no doubt that whatever its (historically variable) correspondence to material reality, the ideology of the family as a private haven of love, security and procreation is a powerful and pervasive one in advanced capitalist society. Although focussed on the specific institution of the family, the familial ideology permeates the whole social fabric and plays an important part in the organisation of most other spheres of social life. The development and organisation of the church, hospitals and schools, to name a few, all re-create or emulate the ethos of family life based on the principles of paternal authority and control, and maternal nurturance.

As observed by Barrett and McIntosh (1982), the familialisation of our society has proceeded to such an extent that we all find ourselves, irrespective of our self-defined situation, being constantly addressed as a component part of this seemingly ubiquitous social form. (The use of titles to denote marital status - in women, and the usual practice of referring to others as "mother" or "husband" rather than, say, Jane or Jim, serve as minor but pertinent examples of the significance placed on familial rather than other types of relations in social interaction). Thus, argue Barrett and McIntosh (1982:29), the ideology of familialism may be said to constitute a significant and in fact dominant complex of social meaning in our society.
While it is dominant, this ideal of family life is not, however, a static one. For, although it remains valid to argue that the nuclear family cannot be posed in analysis as a self-evident and unitary lived reality which exists without contradiction in a functional relationship to capitalist production, as we shall see, the ideological construction of the family as exclusively a private domain, largely undetermined by the cash nexus, and the primary responsibility of women defines this ideal as one specific to industrial capitalism. In the process of making a distinction between the economic and ideological dimensions of family life, the observable contradictions between the ideal and the 'real' family under capitalism may be explained. By giving analytical precedence to the term "the family" conceptualised as an historically constructed and variable ideology (which has only a partial and fluctuating basis in concrete reality), the following chapter will briefly examine the contradictory effects of capitalism on the family - effects which tend to both maintain and destroy the nuclear household form. Within this broader context, I will discuss how the gender differentiated character of the nuclear family ideal -

(a) forms the basis of the family's contradictory relationship to capitalism

(b) underlies the super-exploitation of women's labour under patriarchal capitalism

and (c) determines that the lived family is, most fundamentally, a site of conflict and struggle between the sexes, not of harmony and love as the nuclear ideal would have it.
CHAPTER THREE

THE IDEOLOGY OF THE FAMILY AND THE SEXUAL DIVISION OF LABOUR
In Chapter Two it was argued that the family must be understood in analysis as both a concrete social form and as a dominant ideology in Western society. For, only by acknowledging and investigating the relatively autonomous existence and effectivity of the nuclear family ideology - characterised by gender differentiated roles and responsibilities in domestic life - can we move some way towards an explanation of the now well documented contradiction between the expectations and experiences of women within the Western home.

Having identified for analysis the ideological character of the family, this chapter will examine in more detail this ideology as a fundamental structure of patriarchal capitalism. By focussing on the sexual division of labour upon which the family ideal is based, it is argued that this division structure, via mediating women's and men's relationship to the private and public spheres of Western social life, is fundamental in the exploitation of women's labour both within and beyond the domestic domain. In detailing the contradictory location of women in paid and unpaid labour under capitalism, this chapter will provide the analytical framework within which the remainder of the study is pursued.

1. THE SEXUAL DIVISION OF LABOUR AND THE CONSTRUCTION OF THE FEMININE IDEAL

Whatever the household form prior to the industrial revolution, there is little doubt that its privatisation or separation from the public sphere of centralised mass production and waged labour was promoted, both ideologically and concretely, with the growth of industrial capitalism during the mid to late 1800's. This process of privatisation can be observed in two interrelated developments which characterised this period in the West. The first concerns the changes brought to the working lives of the labouring classes with the introduction of factory production. The second concerns the development of
the bourgeois family form which, although grounded in the lifestyle of the nineteenth century middle class, developed largely in contradiction with (and therefore independently of) the household experiences of the majority of the population at this time.

Although initially drawn into the production process alongside men during the early stages of industrialisation, women and, in particular, children, were gradually excluded from factory work as the growing numbers of urban workers and government officials agitated on both humanitarian and economic grounds for the limitation of women's and children's hours of paid labour (Markey, 1980). These calls for a halt to the exploitation of child labour and for more jobs for the expanding numbers of landless and unemployed men met considerable opposition from the business sector (Kingston, 1975), and from working class women themselves, most of whom continued, as they always had, to work in factory production in the cities or in family production in the rural areas - always through sheer economic necessity (Curthoys, 1975). In this context, the introduction of the Factory Acts in Britain in the 1840's, and regulative factory legislation in Australia in the 1880's and 90's, heralded a significant victory for male workers both as men competing with women for jobs, and as workers demanding a more humane and controlled system of production.

The extension of the definition of a minor to include women in these new legislations meant that, for the first time, women's participation in work outside of the home was officially defined as 'inappropriate' behaviour. According to Wilson (1977:20), this initial ruling, accompanied by increasing popular support, particularly from men and their unions, resulted, over time, in paid work coming to be seen as an 'unnatural' feminine activity. While factory owners continued to hire cheap female workers then, and while working class women continued to sell their labour on the open market, the ideological and legal foundations for the relegation of women to the home were being laid.
The growth of the concept of childhood (Aries, 1973) and the introduction of a formal state education system during this period operated to consolidate and develop this foundation (cf Smelser, 1969). For, alongside the development of the importance of the child and childhood in the West grew an increasing professional emphasis on the notions of the importance of the family home and family privacy in order that the newly discovered needs of the young for constant and judicious physical, intellectual and emotional guidance could be adequately fulfilled. The identification and popular promotion of these new needs, accompanied by the removal of older children from the home to school, meant that someone else had to remain in the house to care for the younger children. The previous legal (if not actual) limitation of women's waged working lives had laid the groundwork for the constitution of adult women as the most appropriate child carers within the home. It seems likely that it was on this basis that the redefinition of women as the primary nurturers, educators and guardians of children's well-being was institutionalised, and the question of women and children working in paid labour extended from a legal to a moral basis.

From the range of studies so far undertaken on this period of social development in Australia (cf Curthoys, 1975; Kingston, 1975; Ryan and Conlan, 1975; Summers, 1975; Grimshaw, 1980), it can be observed that, by the beginning of the twentieth century, the production of goods and services for all family members within the home had become, and had come to be seen as, the primary task of women. Amongst the working class, these domestic labours were performed by women in addition to the factory and out-work they continued to undertake. Thus there emerged the notion of women's 'dual role' or 'double shift' comprised of firstly, women's domestic role founded on legal and ideological developments concerning their own and their children's place within the private home, and secondly, the waged labour role of women determined most often by economic necessity (see also Oakley, 1976).

The story of urban middle class women was quite different. With the
rapid expansion and increasing wealth of the bourgeoisie during the industrialisation process, these women quickly became a (relatively) leisured class who, in contrast to their working class sisters, did not participate directly in waged labour but rather 'managed' the domestic economy, devoting themselves fully to the performance of their motherly and wifely duties (Hall, 1979; Davidoff, 1976). With the substantial growth in personal consumption amongst the middle class at this time, increasing amounts of time and energy were required to organise and perform this consumption in the household. As mistresses of the home, middle class women, with the help of growing numbers of (female) domestic servants, established for the first time the importance of women as consumers (Galbraith, 1973). Thus, notes Cass (1978:14), the bourgeois household came to provide "the prototype of the division between domestic enterprise and business enterprise". The sexual division of labour was firmly established and the nuclear family ideal epitomised as an example to all.

With the development and stabilisation of the nuclear family form came a "conscious worked up ideology of the Perfect Lady, the 'Angel in the House'" (Wilson, 1977:22). This ideal woman, protected from the "physical and moral taint" of waged labour, pursued her personal fulfillment and displayed her husband's (and therefore her own) new found social status by aspiring to and achieving excellence in mothering, domestic management, moral conduct and public (social) relations.6.

This 'Madonna' role of middle class women in the family was gradually extended to the public sphere within which these women were encouraged to and did engage extensively in voluntary charitable work explicitly geared to the inculcation of the 'deserving' poor with the middle class Christian values of temperance, thrift, diligence and sexual virtue (Summers, 1975:291-316). The prior domestication of women as those primarily responsible for household labour and child care was thereby extended to construct an ideal of femininity as the bearer and guardian of human charity, Christian morality
and public concern.

As should by now be clear, this idealisation of women as wives, mothers and 'Madonnas' was in practice largely exclusive to the wealthy. Certainly, these ideals were largely inaccessible to the majority of poverty-stricken working-class women who were seldom full-time housewives by choice. Nevertheless, this image of the perfect woman and family, promoted by the church, the schools and government did become a powerful ideology - an ideal towards which all should aspire if not achieve (Hall, 1979). Facilitated by the growth of welfare state reforms which provided, at least minimally, a material basis for the working classes' adoption of the nuclear family lifestyle, this ideology was eventually imposed on all social classes (Weir, 1974; Grimshaw and Willett, 1981). This imposition, notes Poster (1978:196) was "one of the unwritten aspects of the political success of bourgeois democracy".

As discussed in Chapter Two, the historical development and consolidation of the nuclear family ideal under capitalism was a long and complex process, one which fluctuated over time, with changing social conditions and across different social settings. This perpetual and fluid process continues today such that, as we will see in this study, the nuclear family ideal is constantly being deconstructed and reconstructed in the productive and social relations of contemporary capitalism. The exact nature of this ideal and its degree of correspondence with the lived family form has been historically variable. However, one structural feature in particular has remained central to familial ideology in the West. The sexual division of labour which, at the level of ideology defines women as those most properly responsible for the private sphere of the home, and men as those best suited to the responsibilities of being the family breadwinner and household head, forms the fundamental basis of the nuclear ideal.

The sexual division of labour, like the family itself, is socially constructed. As such, although it is often expressed and/or experienced as something 'natural' or inevitable in our society, it is neither fixed
nor necessary. Indeed, recent historical investigations of the work performed by women and men in different sectors of the labour force, at different points in time, clearly indicate that there is not and never has been anything inherent in social labour which makes it more appropriately men's work or women's work (cf Ryan and Conlan, 1975; Game and Pringle, 1983). Rather, it has been shown that women and men have, historically, been moved into and out of particular types of jobs in such a way as to maintain a domestic and waged workforce which is hierarchically differentiated on the basis of gender - men at the top, women at the bottom. Thus, while there is nothing fixed in the sexual division of labour itself (that is, in the specific types of labour women and men perform), the distinction between men's work and women's work is fixed and determines that while men's work is relatively highly visible, valuable and therefore paid, women's work is, by definition, unskilled, unvaluable, invisible and therefore either unpaid or poorly paid.

This central concept of the sexual division of labour will be returned to in greater detail shortly. Before doing so, however, that discussion must be located within a broader consideration; that is, within the question of the relative autonomy of women's exploitation via the sexual division of labour, from the class structure of capitalism. The sexual division of labour, as it is embodied in the nuclear family ideal, cannot be understood as being simply or always functional for capitalism. For we have already seen that the (male) working class, in conflict with capital, has played a considerable part in the construction of a gender differentiated workforce. As will be further revealed in the following chapter, the sexual division of labour has, under particular historical conditions, been promoted and consolidated at the expense of immediate capital accumulation.

2. THE LOCATION OF WOMEN IN PATRIARCHAL CAPITALISM

The analytical relationship between gender and class based divisions of
power and oppression in advanced Western societies has been extensively and heatedly debated in the main body of feminist literature for over a decade. Focussing on the relative determinacy of the structures of gender or class in the oppression of women, feminist theorists have argued variously: that patriarchal power (the subordination of women by men) predates the capitalist mode of production and is analytically independent of it being a more fundamental, more uniform and more enduring structure of oppression than the class one (Millett, 1971; Firestone, 1972; Delphy, 1977); that patriarchal power relations have been taken over by, or institutionalised under capitalism such that prevailing patriarchal relations have assumed a form dictated by the capitalist relations of production (McDonough and Harrison, 1978; Eisenstein, 1979; Hartmann, 1981); and, most recently, that patriarchal relations are integral to - a defining feature of - capitalism and as important as class relations for an analysis of this mode of production (Barrett, 1980; Game and Pringle, 1983).

It is not possible here to deal in detail with this complex and controversial body of literature (see instead Sargeant, 1981). A number of comments regarding the relevance and/or utility of this debate to our efforts to reconceptualise the family under capitalism are, however, required.

Most fundamentally, this literature is feminist literature, focussing on the social relations between men and women under advanced capitalism. As such, it poses a new and major challenge to the traditional accounts of class oppression under capitalism which have generally relegated the concept of gender to the theoretical and therefore political sidelines.

In the process of arguing that women's oppression is entrenched in the social relations of production under capitalism, but that we must move beyond the economic to adequately explain this oppression, a number of feminist theorists have adopted and attempted to apply the recent theoretical developments of the concept of ideology (cf Althusser, 1970) to this problem. These attempts to locate women's oppression principally at the level of
ideology (cf Coward and Ellis, 1977; Coward, 1978) have opened up a whole new area of analysis which concentrates on investigating the construction of men and women as gendered subjects, leading, most recently, to attempts to rethink psychoanalytic theory from a materialist-feminist perspective (Mitchell, 1975; Foremann, 1977; Chodorow, 1978).

The analytical elevation of ideological structures to have the same explanatory power as economic and political practices has been very useful as a means of overcoming the economism in much previous work. It is, however, problematic insofar as it ultimately accredits to ideological processes an absolute autonomy in social relations. In fact, no such clear separation can be made between the ideological and economic structures of capitalism (see Barrett and McIntosh, 1979 for elaboration). Rather, the relations between them must be investigated. For, just as the capitalist relations of production, being grounded in a deeply ideological sexual division of labour, cannot be investigated through economic categories alone, neither can the effects of the labour process on the lives of women be excluded from an analysis of their exploitation under capitalism. Returning to the question of the patriarchy in this context, one conclusion might be that the patriarchal ideology which structures gender relations in our society may be seen to both facilitate and be perpetuated by the capitalist social and economic relations of exploitation, and render women, as a social category, subordinate to men in all spheres of social life - including those not readily explained in economic terms alone (eg some culturally specific misogynist practices such as foot-binding, clitorectomies etc.). Irrespective of the origins of women's oppression then, the position taken here is that, whatever its form under other modes of production, under capitalism, the form and content of women's exploitation by men is intimately influenced by the prevailing structure of class relations. Even to make a distinction between these two structures of oppression then is, in a sense, counterproductive for they do not exist side by side in separation.
Rather, they are laid over each other, connected by the sexual division of labour, but shifting constantly on this axis and in relation to each other to produce historically specific conditions of exploitation and oppression. For want of a better term, this composite societal form may be called patriarchal capitalism.

The position proposed here does not overcome or render pointless the question of causal priority or structural determination in women's oppression. It simply allows us to examine in more detail the effects of the present social formation on people who are located in the socially constructed 'categories of both gender and class. Thus, while certain dimensions of women's exploitation under advanced capitalism may not be readily explained in terms of class (e.g., rape), the exploitation of women via the sexual division of labour is specific to capitalism. Within this framework it will be argued in the following pages that the ideology of the nuclear family, as the basis upon which the sexual division of labour is maintained and operates, is the pivotal structure of women's oppression under the capitalist mode of production.

3. THE CONTRADICTION: WOMEN AS PAID AND UNPAID LABOURERS

The sexual division of labour under patriarchal capitalism is ultimately premised upon and operates through a number of dichotomies which relate and refer to the gender differentiated expectations and experiences of men and women. In broad terms, these dichotomies which define women's work as 'natural', non-productive and unpaid, and men's work as social, productive and paid, are grounded in the separation of the 'private' from the public sphere of social life; a separation upon which the nuclear family ideal is irreducibly based.

The allocation to women of responsibility for the private sphere of unpaid domestic labour and child care determines, not only their exploitation
within this sphere (being largely dependent for survival upon the wage earnings of others), but also renders them vulnerable to severe exploitation in the sphere of paid work. As mothers responsible for rearing children, the opportunities for women to participate in paid work are objectively limited. As wives, and thus only secondary family breadwinners, the extent and nature of women's participation in paid labour is limited. In terms of their labour power then, women are doubly vulnerable. It has often been noted that this contradictory nature of women's labour, the fact that they are both domestic and wage labourers, is "the central feature of women's position under capitalism" (Coulson et al, 1975:60). This feature, it is argued, imparts a specific dynamic to women's situation without which their exploitation under industrial capitalism would be rendered analytically unproblematic.

The contradictory location of women in a gender divided structure of waged and domestic labour has been variously described and explained in both mainstream and radical social analyses. Two bodies of work in particular have been central here and require some mention.

The dual labour market theory, exemplified in the work of Barron and Norris (1976), has been fruitfully used to examine in some detail women's wage labour position in relation to men and other social categories in Western societies. This theory, through its emphasis on a segmented labour market within which women and other minority groups are usually located in the lowest sector, embodies a powerful critique of the 'human capital' theories prominent in the social sciences which link occupational status to educational background and qualifications (cf Schultz, 1977). By positing a segmentation of both the labour market and the labour force into primary and secondary levels, and by examining the fit between common female attributes and the characteristics of secondary occupational positions, these theorists maintain that women constitute a readily available supply of labour for capital which is prepared to accept the inferior pay, job security, job status and working conditions that accompany secondary sector employment.
This kind of study has played an important role in acknowledging and mapping the occupational differences between the sexes. They do, however, contain a number of significant problems, particularly at the level of explanation (see Edwards, 1975; Beechey, 1978). Most significantly in the context of this study, it is noteworthy that these works have tended to relegate the question of women's ideological and material location within the family to "the status of an explanatory factor which contributes to but does not in itself determine the differentiation between the sexes in their work roles" (Barron and Norris, 1976:47). Yet, as Beechey has pointed out:

The list of attributes Barron and Norris provide...exactly indicates the importance of the family and of the assumptions which justify the sexual division of labour in determining the attributes with which women enter the labour market. In fact only one of the five attributes...arises intrinsically from the labour market situation of women... Given the salience of extrinsic criteria which derive from women's role in the family and from ideological representations of this role, it is difficult to understand why Barron and Norris attempt to locate their explanation solely within the internal dynamics of the labour market. (1978:180)

A more developed and useful concept in attempts to explain how domestic labour and its relation to capital either limit or facilitate women's participation in the waged workforce has been the Marxist category of the 'reserve army of labour'. Employing this concept in his efforts to explain the contradictory nature of women's paid and unpaid labour under capitalism, Rushton (1979) has argued that, while women in general, and married women in particular constitute a major floating reserve army of labour for capital, women with children and child care responsibilities make up the greatest remaining latent reserve army of labour in today's society. Thus, he claims:

Women's reactions to the labour market are to some extent determined by their domestic circumstances and responsibilities, and, in formal terms, their role as a reserve army will change over the lifespan of the development of these responsibilities. (1979:41)
According to Rushton's analysis then, women's relationship to child care constitutes the major factor in determining their status as reserve labourers under capitalism. This formulation, although not entirely new, is an important one. For, by raising the question of the influence of family structures and life cycles on the quantity and quality of women's paid workforce involvement, Rushton has highlighted the objective limitations imposed on women by the privatised structure of child care (and care for the aged) and, consequently, has raised for investigation issues regarding the possible socialisation of family (read women's) labours and responsibilities.

This category of the reserve army of labour is also employed by Coulson et al (1975) in their efforts to explain the changing effects of the law of value on the domestic domain under capitalism. Having stressed that women are only one among several sources of reserve labour, these authors argue that:

Because housework is a specific labour, the tempo and organisation of which is not in a radical degree affected by the law of value, it has a significant degree of elasticity that gives scope for capital in its expansive phases to utilize the labourers involved more productively. This has explosive consequences for women's position under capitalism. It widens the possibility of economic independence for women, without making this fully or permanently available; it shortens the time available for domestic work, without providing an alternative basis for it; it breaks down the isolation of women, without lightening the burden of her private responsibilities.

(1975:67)

Thus, the reserve army of labour thesis has been important in the early attempts to explain the contradictory location of women in waged and unwaged labour. Most significantly, the application of this concept has both prompted and laid the groundwork for a consideration of what this contradiction means for women as wives, mothers and unpaid housekeepers in the Western family form. The promise offered by this work cannot, however, be left unqualified. For the utility of this thesis in explaining consistently and unproblematically the fluctuating relationship of women to paid labour has been recently questioned -
at least in the form it has taken so far in this literature.

In her historical account of the labour force characteristics of the Australian population during the Great Depression of the 1930's, Power (1980), presents and examines in detail a comprehensive set of data regarding the employment and unemployment rates of both men and women during this period. On the basis of this information, Power concludes that, contrary to what would be expected from a reserve army analysis of women's workforce status, women in fact did not leave, and were not excluded from paid employment to a significant extent during this period of capitalist crisis. Rather, not only did the rate of male unemployment grow sooner and faster than female unemployment during these years, but it also remained considerably higher for the large part of the depression (1980:493-5).

Power goes on to show that, while most women already in the labour force continued working during the 1930's, as the depression deepened, wage levels continued to drop and more and more men lost their jobs, many women who were not previously employed actually took up paid work. It should be noted here that this work was often unstable and poorly paid in nature (e.g. domestic duties and backyard work). It was, nevertheless, waged work and often constituted the only source of income for an entire family (1980:496).

According to this piece of research then, the reserve army of labour thesis provides an inadequate analysis insofar as it is unable to explain the perpetual and large scale participation of women in the workforce during this period of major economic decline. Nevertheless, as Power points out, the thesis is not entirely inappropriate for examining the social and economic imperatives operating at the time. For during this period of depression, the ideological pressures exerted on women, particularly married women, to leave the workforce, make home production more efficient and make way for the masses of jobless men were persistent and strong. This pressure, which was exerted primarily via the media and trade unions (Power, 1980:497-8), was not formally or legislatively grounded or enforced. While it was therefore
limited in its effects, (since the prevailing conditions of poverty and unemployment ensured that women would continue working for as long as they were physically able), the conservative assumptions and objectives concerning women's 'proper' labour role which informed the rhetoric of this time were no less clear or vehement.

The observations made by Power raise a number of important questions which lead us back to a consideration, not just of the material conditions of, and relationships between, women's work within and beyond the home, but also of the role of familial ideologies in determining the extent and nature of women's domestic and paid labour. Under what circumstances, for example, and by what means are the ideological pressures noted by Power likely to be transformed into an effective exclusion of women from industrial production during times of crisis in capitalism? Further, if this does occur, what are the mechanisms and processes involved and what determines the effectiveness of this process. These are questions which have not yet been adequately confronted in family analyses. In order to do so, a much more detailed and concrete historical examination of the structures and processes being considered is required.

One thing which does appear clearly from the research so far undertaken on women's paid and unpaid labour is that the ideology of the family as the proper domain of womanhood, and as a private realm divorced from the public sphere of social life, is contradicted every day in the lives of the majority of women (see eg Land, 1975). Both women and men have in the past, and still do, actively participate in the private household sphere and the public sphere of production under capitalism. Given this, it is reasonable to conclude that this family ideal and the accompanying sexual division of labour can be maintained and perpetuated in the face of daily contradiction only because men and women, as socially constructed (gendered) subjects, relate differently to the two worlds of home and work. In other words, the persistence and effectivity
of the private/public split in allowing for the exploitation of the female sex lies in the very fact that it is 'only' an ideal which does not always correspond to lived reality, but by which men and women construct and assess (differently) their relations to each other and to the society as a whole. It is this general observation which has led a number of feminist researchers to attempt to systematically expose and contest the ideological separation of home from 'work', attempts which have taken a variety of forms and which are, I believe, of crucial importance to feminists in terms of both theoretical analysis and political practice.

4. TOWARDS A RESOLUTION OF THE PUBLIC/PRIVATE DICHOTOMY

The 'domestic labour debate' is probably the most systematic and significant attempt made so far by feminist writers to challenge, at the theoretical level, the ideology that women's work in the home is, in contrast to public work, unproductive. As such, this debate makes a major contribution to the more recent research endeavours by feminists which address the question of family ideology and its impact on the value of women's labour, both within and beyond the private home.

The first analyst to begin looking at the role played by the household and the women within it in the capitalist production process was Margaret Benston. In her seminal paper, *The Political Economy of Women's Liberation* (1969), Benston sets out to establish that women as a group have a "unique relation to the means of production" (1969:16). In arguing that the source of sexual inequality in the home and in capitalist society lies in men's and women's distinct relationship to the capitalist production process, she states:

We will tentatively define women, then, as the group of people who are responsible for the production of simple use values in those activities associated with the home and the family. Since men carry no responsibility for such production, the difference between the two groups lies here.

(1969:16)
The contributions to the domestic labour debate have been many and various since Benston's piece and the discussion that has been generated can reasonably be divided into three positions. These are that:

(a) housework consists of "productive" labour and therefore contributes to surplus value (Dalla Costa and James, 1972; Gardiner, 1975 and 1976);

(b) housework consists of necessary but "unproductive" labour (Secombe, 1973 and 1974);

and (c) housework is neither "productive" nor "unproductive" labour and does not, in fact, fall under the capitalist mode of production (Vogel, 1973; Gerstein, 1973; Fee, 1976).

In brief, the domestic labour debate centres on the question of whether or not the work performed by women within the home contributes to surplus value. On the one hand, it is argued in position (a) above that women's domestic labour, by stretching and increasing the exchange value of the breadwinners wage, does contribute to surplus value and is therefore "productive". On the other hand, it is argued in position (b) above that domestic labour, being divorced from the production process and therefore wageless, cannot contribute to surplus value and is "unproductive".

While this body of literature does at times appear as little more than a circular and semantical debate which, although identifying the concept of production as central to the discussion, employs this concept in a remarkable diversity of ways and with various degrees of clarity, the progress and outcome of this debate must be seen as both relevant and important to the political theory and practice of women's liberation (cf Gardiner, 1975). In highlighting the regulating influence of capitalist relations of production on the labour of those beyond direct capitalist control, the domestic labour debate has forced outwards the narrow boundaries within which studies of the family household have been largely undertaken to expose the analytical and
concrete linkages between the 'private' domestic unit and the broader structures of the patriarchal capitalist formation. In the context of my own study then, this body of work both prompts and allows me to examine the ideological construction and content of the 'private' sphere of social life in a more critical light and to challenge, at least at the level of theoretical investigation, the prevailing definition of child care as non-productive, non-valuable non-work under capitalism.

Even given the significance and utility of the domestic labour debate to feminist analyses of 'women's work', a number of qualifications must, however, be added if the progress made so far in this area is to be advanced. Initially, and compounding the problem of conceptual formulation noted above, is the tendency in these works is to implicitly equate the productive/unproductive distinction with a distinction between "useful" and "useless" labour and, on this basis, to advance political prescriptions regarding the revolutionary potential of unpaid domestic labourers (see especially Secombe, 1974). This equation is somewhat problematic, for, if indeed this theoretical debate has such political implications, then we must heed the words of Hunt (1977:92) who proposes that:

Productive and unproductive labourers share the following important characteristics: they are both exploited through the extraction of surplus labour; they both have antagonistic relationships with their employers; (and) the value of their labour power is determined in the same way, that is by the cost of its reproduction.

On the basis of this statement it appears that, while drawing attention, at an abstract analytical level, to the question of the public/private dichotomy in capitalist society, the utility of this debate for explaining in specific detail the location and revolutionary potential of housewives requires some development.

Secondly, because the domestic labour debate theorists have concentrated on an examination of the relationships between housework and capital, at the
expense of a consideration of women’s waged labour situation, they have consequently failed to explain the historically variable allocation of workers between the domestic and public spheres of labour, or why, under capitalism, it has become entirely legitimate to identify women with household responsibilities.

Thirdly, and at a different level of analysis, this body of work, while providing us with abstract theorisations of the form and content of domestic organisation under capitalism, does not proceed from these bases to document or explain specific and different household forms and ideologies under capitalism. While this debate raises a range of important conceptual points, it has so far failed to argue (and thereby progress towards a resolution of) the debate at a concrete level of analysis.

It is therefore significant that the efforts of these debators, performed at the level of theoretical exposition, have since been complemented and developed by a number of more empirical investigations into the household and working lives of women.

The work of Davidoff (1979), for example, has pointed to nineteenth century women’s participation in a form of 'intermediate enterprise' whereby paying lodgers were taken into their homes creating additional domestic labour but nevertheless bringing in a wage reward. In addition, a number of researchers have conclusively shown that, not only do the characteristics of women's paid work owe so much to their traditional domestic labours as to be almost continuous with them (Alexander, 1976), but that gender identities are not just carried into, but are actually created and recreated within the workplace to be transported back into the sexual division of labour within the home (Cockburn, 1981; Game and Pringle, 1983). Finally, the new area of sociological work which concentrates on documenting the rigidly structured nature of household consumption (eg via the introduction of certain forms of technology into the home) is especially valuable and interesting in this
regard (Vanek, 1978; Bose 1979; Darroch, 1980).

All of those studies discussed in this section constitute systematic attempts to illustrate the 'falsity' of the ideologically constructed split between the public and private spheres of life under capitalism - to reveal the 'private' home as anything but private and thereby to reveal and explain how the nuclear family ideal underlies and perpetuates the oppression of women via a sexual division of labour which is specific to patriarchal capitalist society. As such, these works contest, at its very base, a conceptualisation of the family which locates it in a sphere immutably separated from the public sphere of 'real', productive and valuable work.

Pursuing this line of analysis, the following chapter will investigate the significant role of the Australian welfare state in this regard. It will be argued that, while the content of welfare state activities under Australian capitalism has operated consistently to reinforce the nuclear family form and ideology, the very fact and extent of the welfare state's involvement in Australian family life forms a major bridge between the 'private' and public spheres, thereby contradicting the very ideology of 'privacy' it promotes. In the process of arguing this claim, the dynamic nature of the sexual division of labour which is constantly being created and recreated in welfare state activities will be illustrated.
CHAPTER FOUR

THE AUSTRALIAN WELFARE STATE, FAMILY POLICY AND THE NUCLEAR IDEAL
In the previous chapter, women's contradictory relationship to the private and public spheres of Western social life was examined. It was concluded that the sexual division of labour which is founded upon and operates through the ideologically constructed distinction between the private and public spheres is the fundamental structure in the exploitation of women's waged and domestic labour in our society.

In an effort to empirically document the analytical and actual falsity of the division between the private sphere of the home and the public sphere of economic life under capitalism, this chapter explores in some detail the relationship between the welfare state and the nuclear family ideal. Focussing especially on the formulation and implementation of family welfare policies in Australia, it is argued not only that the welfare state, as an institution of public life, plays a crucial role in the maintenance of the sexual division of labour via its intervention in the private sphere and its support for the nuclear family ideal, but also that this role is in fact central to the purposes of welfarism in our society. By illustrating how Australian family welfare policies have operated in a coercive yet subtle fashion to keep women in their 'ideal' roles as mother/wife/housekeeper, the following discussion aims to show that the ideological role of the modern welfare state has been, and remains, fundamental to the continuing exploitation of women.

1. THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN WOMEN, THE FAMILY AND THE WELFARE STATE

The question of the part played by the welfare state in the oppression of women has only been of academic interest for a short time. Prior to the 1970's, and consistent with those notions of the benign and progressive welfare state which have dominated the Western world since early this century (cf Marshall, 1965; Crosland, 1974; Titmuss, 1976), state intervention
in the lives of women had generally been viewed as either benevolent in nature or simply as non-existent. In recent years, this narrow perspective has been significantly challenged as more and more theorists have come to recognise, document, and attempt to explain the extensive and coercive intervention of the state in the private and public lives of women (cf Wilson, 1977; McIntosh, 1978; Gough, 1979; Land, 1979; Cass, 1982).

Implicitly underlying this new focus of research is the recognition that the welfare system of any country is ultimately founded on beliefs and assumptions about human and social relationships, and about the forces which mould and maintain these relationships. Given this, it is not then possible to understand welfare policies without taking into account the social and political values which have generated and guided their development through history.

As the "creature of a particular mode of production" (Gough, 1979:13), the patriarchal capitalist welfare state is, by its very nature, primarily concerned to guide and promote the reproduction of labour power in such a way as to maintain social order, facilitate capital accumulation, and reproduce and legitimate the status hierarchies which characterise our society and which are principally organised along the lines of class and gender (O'Connor, 1973; Poulantzas, 1973; McIntosh, 1978; Gough, 1979). In order to do this effectively in the specific instance of gender relations, the welfare state must develop and promote a particular set of attitudes towards women and the family. These attitudes, it is argued, are embodied in the nuclear family ideal based on a rigid sexual division of labour and responsibilities, and define women above all else, as wives, mothers and domestic labourers - as the reproducers of labour power on both a daily and a generational basis.

The theoretical and empirical advances made in these more recent investigations of the relationship between women, the family and the welfare state have been considerable, and the questions and issues that have been raised will provide thesis topics for many years to come. While it is not
possible within the confines of this chapter to undertake a comprehensive review of this growing body of literature (see instead McIntosh, 1978), the following discussions, by focussing on the Australian situation, will isolate and develop a major thread of this new work. In so doing, it is hoped that a more concrete and precise understanding of some of those social structures and processes which underlie the disadvantaged position of women in our society will be allowed.

A principle observation made in feminist analyses of the welfare state is that the apparent benevolence of the welfare state towards women has not only misrepresented the actual state of affairs, but has, in fact, operated as a powerful ideology which disguises the fundamentally coercive and repressive nature of the state's relationship to women (cf Snare and Steng-Dahl, 1978; Land, 1978). Being premised on notions of women's exclusive and 'natural' location within the private home, this "coercion of privacy" does not operate in the same way as the more visibly and directly repressive arms of the state (eg the police and the military) which function by violence in their manipulation of individuals and social groups (see Althusser, 1970). Nevertheless, in relying heavily on the construction of a family form which exercises an effective although informal control over the lives of women, it is no less repressive - simply less overt and therefore more insidious.  

This observation, although still only formulated in quite general and abstract terms in this literature, is a crucial one and represents a radical breakthrough in feminists' ongoing attempts to identify and comprehend that complex of social structures and processes which operate to create and reproduce the oppression of women under patriarchal capitalism.

Departing from this analysis which poses the ideological role of the welfare state as a valid and necessary focus for an investigation of its relationship to women, I will, in this and the following chapters attempt to develop this work at a concrete and historial level with an aim to
investigating in some detail by what means and under what conditions the Australian welfare state has operated to sustain, or at least attempted to sustain, the ideology of the nuclear family form. In so doing it will be illustrated that, by understanding the welfare state as both a set of welfare services and provisions, and as an ideological apparatus, we can observe that the Australian welfare state, while generally appearing (and being presented) as the benefactor of the disadvantaged, has actually served consistently, although not always entirely successfully, to maintain and perpetuate the oppression of women as wives, unpaid domestic labourers and, in particular, mothers in Australian society. More specifically, by examining in their broader context particular instances of family welfare policy formulation and implementation, the following discussions will empirically document how this relationship between women, the family and the welfare state is constructed and reconstructed through time.

2. THE AUSTRALIAN WELFARE STATE AND FAMILY POLICY

Systematic and comprehensive examinations of Australian family policy are few. Of the major studies that have been completed, most have been undertaken within policy making organisations and, consequently, have been geared more towards the rewriting, redefinition and 'improvement' of existing policies, than towards developing a deeper understanding of the underlying basis of these policies - the structural conditions, historical processes and social values which have informed policy developments over time. With few exceptions (eg most of the work produced by the Social Welfare Research Centre in New South Wales), the bulk of Australian research into social welfare in general, and family policy in particular, has been quite static and certainly atheoretical. As will become clear in this chapter, this does not mean it has been apolitical. On the contrary:
This lack of theorising is not a politically neutral approach to social policy, as it is sometimes claimed, but an implicit conservative stand for it accepts existing social and economic relationships unquestioningly.

(George and Wilding, 1976:1)

In the process of recognising and investigating the relationships between perspectives on society, the state and social welfare at the level of theory, it rapidly becomes clear that the highly normative nature of Australian family policy formulation and implementation has simply yet to be systematically revealed in the relevant literature.

In an attempt to help fill this gap, the remainder of this discussion will trace the development of Australian welfare state intervention in family life over three periods of this country's history. For each period, a number of major Federal policy developments which have had a significant effect on, or which have embodied assumptions about, or have been directed at the Australian family, will be examined. 13

The first period, from the late 1800's to 1940, focusses on the consolidation of the welfare state in Australia and its role in the construction of the nuclear family ideal in this country. The second period, from 1941 to 1974, examines the expansion and redefinition of Australian family policy in a period of national growth. Finally, the third period, from 1975 to 1982, documents the minimisation of the welfare state and the reassertion of the nuclear ideal in a period of national economic crisis.

While these chronological divisions are useful in allowing some insight into the historical development of family policy in relation to other spheres of social life in Australia, it is important to recognise here that neither the character of welfare state intervention in the family, nor the ideology of the nuclear family, have developed in a perfectly even or linear fashion from colonial times to the present. Developments and changes in each were at times irregular and disjointed. The main purpose of the following account then, is not to provide a year by year summary of family policy growth in
Australia, but to examine the ever-fluctuating relationship between:

(a) changing conceptions of social welfare and the role of the welfare state in this regard, and the relative legitimacy of state intervention in family life, and

(b) the ideological nature of key family policies and their accompanying rhetoric, and the prevailing material conditions of family and feminine life. The resulting picture is unlikely to provide many simple or straightforward answers to specific historical questions. It may, however, allow us a less static and more comprehensive understanding of the complex of institutions, interests and conflicts involved in the relationship between the welfare state and the women of Australia than has previously been provided. More importantly, it will allow us to investigate at ground level the extent to which Australian welfare policy has played a role in maintaining and promoting those ideologies of the family and femininity which characterise all Western societies, as well as to investigate the specific forms these attempts have taken.

(i) The Late 1800's - 1940 : The Emergence of Family Policy in Australia

The history of policies explicitly labelled as family policies is reasonably short in Australia and did not commence in any concerted fashion until the years immediately following World War Two. Welfare policies which have in some way been directed at, or had a significant impact on the family household and the sexual division of labour, however, have a considerably longer and more extensive history.

Following the pattern set in many Western societies during the early decades of the twentieth century, the earliest interventions of the Australian state into family life were largely the result of a self-conscious concern on the part of the new nation with population development and control (cf Kamerman and Kahn, 1978). This concern was a central one in much of the work of the first social and political pioneers and was reflected in their efforts to transform England's convict colony from a number of alienated communities,
(characterised by large numbers of single men, extensive prostitution and alcohol consumption, frequent public brawls and general 'immorality'), into family settlements which would ensure the population and therefore economic growth of Australia, as well as the moral uprightness and social stability of the new nation (see Cass, 1983b).

Throughout the 1800's, considerable government effort in the form of immigration subsidies and bounties had been expended on enticing immigrants of 'good character' out to Australia (Summers, 1975:299). These policies constituted attempts to both alleviate the labour shortage which accompanied the rapid growth of the building, manufacturing and primary industries during this period, and, under pressure from the churches and other social reformers, to equalise the sex composition of the population. The moralistic and racist rhetoric which accompanied these government efforts clearly reflected the concern of the churches and the burgeoning business community in Australia to build a nation which was both morally and physically impervious to invasion by the 'yellow hordes from the north', and sufficiently populous to ensure continual economic expansion and stability. The quickest and most efficient way to do this, it was reasoned, was to establish a strong family structure in Australia.

By the late 1800's, the national population had grown considerably and, by the time the depression of the 1890's struck, unemployment levels and accommodation shortages were already severe. The years during and immediately following this depression, however, brought a marked change in population growth and a counterpart change in government policy. During the decades between 1880 and 1900, for example, and in spite of the growing marriage rate, the birth rate in all colonies dropped dramatically. The fact that the depression had made it virtually impossible for large families to survive seems to fit with the substantial evidence indicating the extensive use of contraception, abortion and infanticide by women during this period (see Summers, 1975:318-341 for details). It was towards this phenomenon that
pronatalist attention was now drawn. The dereliction by women of their duty as the mothers of a new nation was condemned widely and loudly by prominent citizens, medical experts and many women themselves, a common sentiment being that:

Either a woman is a woman and proves it by fulfilling the functions she was sent into the world to fulfill, or she is what? - a nameless thing, a freak of nature.

(Sydney Mail, 1895 quoted in Keesing, 1977:10)

The official government response was also rapid and definite. Following a number of inquiries into the national birth rates and contraception use (Summers, 1975:319-22; Cass, 1983b), the advertising and selling of contraceptives was outlawed and abortion illegalised. Thus, the state, for the first time, intervened directly into the private lives of Australian women in an attempt to both rejuvenate population growth and stabilise and strengthen the growing institutions of marriage and parenthood which would guarantee, not only an expanding workforce, but also a more compliant one. Women, it seems, continued to practice contraception, abortion and infanticide. Nevertheless, the institution of state measures aimed at lessening women's control over their fertility patterns signalled an important stage in the development and perpetration of the nuclear family ideology in Australia, as well as in the legitimation of the state's intrusion into the private domains of the home and conjugal life.

As has been pointed out by Summers in her detailed account of this period, these pronatal policies were accompanied and supported by a mass of puritanical legislation introduced in all states at roughly the same time. These legal initiatives both reflected and reinforced the increasingly powerful notions regarding the desirability of stable family life in Australia and, in particular, regarding the familial and moral responsibilities of both married and single women as dictated by the nuclear family ideal. Amongst other legislations introduced during this period were bills to raise the age of consent of girls, bills to outlaw brothels, and Acts to limit the availability
and consumption of alcohol (Summers, 1975:340). Probably the most significant legislation introduced in the context of this discussion was the Child's Protection Act passed in England in 1899, which legally enforced a father's obligation to maintain his children (Summers, 1975:340-43). This Act in particular seems to have marked the official government acceptance of and support for the nuclear family form and content as the surest foundation upon which to build an economically and morally strong and stable society.

Just as the pronatal concerns of the pre-Federation administration informed the early immigration and 'health' (i.e. fertility) policies of Australia, so too a concern for the adequate reproduction of labour power, both daily and generationally, significantly determined government wages and employment policies in the post-Federation years. These later policies clearly reveal the major role that has been played by government in the maintenance of the nuclear family ideology based on the sexual division of waged and unwaged labour.

This feature of state activity was made explicit for the first time in the establishment of a 'basic wage' in 1907 which was aimed at ensuring a minimum income level upon which the 'average' Australian family could adequately survive (Ryan and Conlan, 1975; Macarthy, 1976). In defining the 'average' family to include an unskilled worker, his wife and their three children, this basic wage may be more accurately labelled the 'nuclear family wage', the implications of which were at the time, and remain today, far-reaching.

In handing down what has come to be known as the Harvester Judgement, Justice Higgins, drawing on the principles embodied in the prior Children's Protection Act, stressed that the onus for the financial maintenance of family units lay with men - the principle breadwinner and head of household. Women, it was argued, were not legally obliged to support their families and, with the enforcement of the basic wage, could thenceforth depend solely and assuredly on their husband's now 'adequate' wage packet for their own
and their children's survival. Accordingly, it was deemed by Higgins that women in waged labour did not require and should not receive equal pay to men, the one significant exception being where the lesser wage rates of women endangered the job security of men who had, or presumably would at some time have a family to support.

With the establishment of the basic wage then, the ideology of the privatised family based on a sexual division of labour and responsibility became firmly entrenched. Women's economic dependence on men was now enshrined in the wage structure with the consequence that their lives became even more firmly tied to the institutions of marriage and family than ever before. Although many women continued to work beyond the domestic sphere and were thus able to secure some degree of financial independence, the disincentive generated by poor wages and conditions for women, compounded by extensive public condemnation of working women, were significant and probably meant that, while most of those women with a choice remained at home, those without this option suffered considerable hardship both in the workplace and in their private lives at home.

Two objectives in particular appear to have informed the formulation of the first basic wage. The first concerns industry's need to ensure a quantitatively and qualitatively sufficient labour force which dictated that, in order to maintain men's incentive to work, and to work in the same job, at the same place, even under poor conditions and for minimal wages, their ideologically designated role as the family provider had to be protected from erosion by women's workforce participation. The second concerns the common need of capital and men to maintain the stability of the nuclear family form such that women's economic dependency within it guaranteed both their constitution as a ready supply of cheap and compliant labour, and their availability and willingness to attend to the (unpaid) domestic servicing of their husbands (and fathers and brothers). Viewed in this light, the basic wage of 1907 can be seen to have laid the legislative groundwork for a history
of family policies which have consistently operated to perpetuate the sexual
division of labour and, consequently, the exploitation of women.

The inherently contradictory nature of the capitalist welfare state is
also revealed in a consideration of the 1907 judgement (see Note 11 above).
There is little doubt that the introduction of a basic wage which, for the
first time legally guaranteed a minimum income for most workers, constituted
a significant and progressive step for the Australian working class in its
struggle with capital. And indeed, this step would seem to justify some faith
in the welfare state as a vehicle for the fulfillment of the needs and demands
of the disadvantaged in capitalist society. Given this, the fact that this
piece of legislation, while enhancing the life conditions of the male working
class, did not guarantee a better standard of living for women, as either
paid employees or unpaid domestic labourers, appears to indicate that the
modern welfare state is irreducibly patriarchal in nature. Certainly, the
further exploitation of women in the context of a working class victory
clearly reveals the specificity of the oppression experienced by women
(irrespective of their class location) under patriarchal capitalism.

Yet this interpretation is still inadequate. For, when examined more
critically, the long term effects of this legislation can also be seen to have
supported, not only the interests of the male sex, but also those of the
capitalist production process. Cass (1981a) for example, has argued that the
implementation of the basic wage, although couched in much rhetoric regarding
changing family needs and the alleviation of poverty and income insecurity,
was primarily determined by the ability of the economy to pay at that
particular time. Had the economy been less buoyant, she argues, there is some
doubt as to whether the basic wage would have been introduced in 1907. Further,
and at a less immediate level, it is certain that by ideologically and legally
legitimating gender based wage inequalities and labour divisions, the basic
wage guidelines probably played an important part in maintaining a work
structure which, under less healthy economic conditions, would ensure both
men's and women's continual incentive to work with less industrial rights, for less pay and for longer periods of time. On these bases it would seem that, although marking a considerable political victory for Australian (male) workers, the introduction of the basic wage can otherwise be seen to reflect the ultimately *capitalist* nature of the welfare state. As a victory for all men (whatever their relation to the labour process), as well as for capital, the first Australian basic wage provides a particularly clear illustration of the integration of and interplay between patriarchal and capitalist structures of oppression in our society - structures which dictate the exploitation of women both within and beyond the sphere of paid work.

Under the influence of the new liberal tradition which emerged in Britain in the late 1890's (Campbell, 1976), the Australian welfare state grew steadily during the first two decades of 1900. The basic wage agreement was shortly followed by the introduction of Commonwealth invalid and age pensions in 1909/10 and, following World War One, the Repatriation Act was implemented (see Jones, 1980:31-40 for more details). During this period, Australia came to be depicted as the 'social laboratory of the world' and was seen to lead the way in social welfare activities and initiatives (Roe, 1976b). Consistent with the liberal political thought which dominated these times in Britain and Australia, the growing welfare state was popularly perceived as a neutral instrument for the achievement of national growth and prosperity, better living conditions for all, and social harmony and cohesion. Not only could the welfare state guarantee economic security nationally and individually but, as a vehicle for resource redistribution towards the needy, the welfare state was seen by many as a means of eventually achieving a more egalitarian society (cf Ritcher, 1964). That these notions contradicted the irreducibly capitalist nature of the welfare state rapidly became clear in the decade that followed.

With the Great Depression of the 1930's, the formerly progressive and expansive appearance of the Australian welfare state was systematically
stripped away to reveal it as primarily an agent of social coercion and capital accumulation. During these years of economic and social deterioration the simultaneous attempts of the welfare state to alleviate the effects of high unemployment and social unrest, and to protect profits and assist capital's efforts towards economic recovery, were generally successful. This 'success', I will argue, was largely made possible by the state's efforts, combined with those of the male working class, to maintain and consolidate the sexual division of labour and the nuclear family ideal. Women, individually and collectively, were constituted as the ultimate scapegoats of the crisis.

Throughout the early 1900's, increasing though still small numbers of women entered the paid workforce and became unionised (Richmond, 1974; Ryan and Conlan, 1975). Their fight for equal pay, however, met with small success. Most male dominated trade unions saw little reason to support an equal pay campaign and concentrated on the task of maintaining and increasing the male basic wage. Employers too opposed the principle of equal pay, arguing that women should be paid according to their (supposedly) lesser productivity levels and their secondary breadwinner status as enshrined in the Harvester judgement of 1907. Consequently, on almost all of the many claims presented to the arbitration courts during the 1920's and early 30's, the former arbitration decision which set the acceptable level of payment to women at 54% of the male basic wage, prevailed (Hargreaves, 1982). The traditional and sexist relations of dependency were thereby upheld and the interests of employers assured for a few more years.

Too late, the far-reaching implications of these decisions became harshly clear during the 1930's, promoting a situation in which all workers, male and female, suffered extensively at the hands of employers and the state. Despite the record levels of unemployment during the Great Depression, the employment rates of women actually increased in many sectors, both in real terms and in relation to the employment rates of men (Power, 1980:493-5). Two factors in particular accounted for this phenomenon and both were features of the
prevailing sexual division of labour and wages. Firstly, unemployment rates during this period were greatest in the male dominated building and construction industries, while employment opportunities in those sectors of the workforce which employed mainly women, such as domestic service and public administration, although considerably reduced, were less adversely affected by the crisis. The second and probably more important factor derived directly from the usual practice of paying women lower wages than men for equivalent and often more hours of work. The opportunity for capital to extract more labour for less cost by employing women in preference to men throughout the depression meant that, while more and more men joined the dole queues, many women continued to work or entered the paid labour force for the first time as the primary breadwinners of families. Already overworked and underpaid, the exploitation of these female labourers, the majority of whom were still ununionised and unprotected by industrial law, reached new heights.

The media and male union response to the lesser unemployment rate of women during the 1930's took two basic and contradictory forms. On the one hand, trade unions began to actively campaign for the equal wage, seeing it as a means of halting the encroachment of cheap female labour into men's jobs (Hargreaves, 1982:17). On the other, the media and most trade unions were unanimous in their condemnation of working women who, it was said, were taking away from men the jobs they required to fulfill their statutory role as family breadwinner and head of household (Power, 1980:497-8). The collusion of many women in this condemnation has been explained by one writer as a fight by Australian women "for the survival of the institution which gave them their special role in society". According to Summers (1975:411), the fact that the majority of married women who worked throughout the depression did not view their jobs as permanent, but merely as a short term means of supporting their families while their husbands could not, meant that:
...the temporary collapse of the male breadwinner role [was prevented from] developing into a permanent erosion of the traditional sex division of labour... women helped ensure that even during a period of economic turmoil some basic form of social cohesion was maintained and that any threat of widespread revolt against the political and economic order which had caused the depression was contained.

The frequent and loud calls for women to vacate the workforce during the depression and return to their appropriate roles as full-time mothers, wives and housekeepers was legislatively endorsed with the passing of the New South Wales Married Women's (Lecturers and Teachers) Act in 1932. This Act required that all married women state school teachers immediately resign from their jobs, and that those women teachers who were single, resign in the event that they married. 

While this piece of legislation remained the only one of its kind, the ideological war against women workers grew more concerted as the crisis deepened. With the eventual introduction of unemployment benefits and food rations, this attack was formalised in welfare policy. For, not only did the manner of distribution of the dole effectively exclude most married and single women from benefit, irrespective of their degree of poverty, but the relative value of food rations allowable to single men, married men, and married men with children during this period, clearly reflected the assumption that women required less food to survive than their husbands or their children (Summers, 1975:401). The fact that many women were, simultaneously, the sole family breadwinner and domestic labourer was apparently disregarded. Instead, the ability and willingness of women to increase their domestic productivity, sacrifice their own needs to those of all other family members, and stretch the household income to absorb the detrimental effects of the economic crisis on individuals was readily assumed. The ideological definition and situation of women as nurturers, unpaid labourers and sacrificial lambs was again affirmed.

This major disjunction between the financial responsibilities of women
during the depression and the assumed and enforced economic dependency of women as welfare recipients (or non-recipients), meant that women were tightly enmeshed in a 'Catch-22' situation. On the one hand, the payment to women of a 'dependent' wage rate quite blatantly contradicted their not unusual status as the sole family breadwinner. On the other hand, the fact that the Commonwealth Government was in no way constitutionally bound to support women in poverty at that time, meant that those women who were not engaged in paid work could not receive, or were granted only minimal welfare assistance and were, therefore, usually dependent for survival upon finding a job. It seems then, that in spite of the material reality, the ideological definition and situation of women reigned supreme during this period of welfare state activity.

The consequent benefits to capital of the playing out of these contradictions are evident, in part, in the economic recovery which followed in the 1940's. Two factors appear to have provided the conditions for this recovery. The first, the continual and increasing exploitation of female labour throughout the crisis assisted capital's efforts to cut costs and boost profits. The second, the political division of the working class by the related factors of gender and employment status in the harsh competition for jobs, played a crucial role in deflecting a potentially major crisis of legitimacy for capital.

The role of the welfare state in facilitating these processes was significant. For, by incorporating assumptions regarding the traditional division of financial dependency and responsibility in the family into selected social policies during a period of massive unemployment, widespread poverty, and an unequal wage and occupational structure, the welfare state was able to influence, to a considerable extent, men and, in particular, women's relationship to the labour force. The nature of the Australian welfare state as a fairly flexible instrument for social control, for the perpetuation and legitimation of patriarchal capitalist ideologies of the proper roles
and responsibilities of men and women, and for promoting the conditions for capital accumulation, are thus revealed by examining critically its activities during the Great Depression.

(ii) 1941 - 1974 : The Growth of Family Policy in Australia

The decade from 1940 saw an unprecedented expansion in welfare state expenditure on the Australian family. The obvious inability of the nation's social security structure to cope, economically or administratively, with the enhanced needs of the population during the depression had disconcerted many social planners and commentators and had provoked considerable public and official debate regarding the orientation and future development of the nation's welfare system (Roe, 1976b).

In response to the concerns being expressed, the Liberal Federal Government established, in 1941, the first Commonwealth Department of Social Security whose role it was to consider, draft and administer a whole range of new and extended social services and income supplementation schemes to be implemented over the following few years.

The prior establishment of a Royal Commission on Child Endowment and Family Allowances in 1927 had set the scene for the introduction of a Federal child endowment scheme as one of the first initiatives of the new department in 1941 (see Jones, 1980:34-7). This legislation, purportedly aimed at enhancing the health and wellbeing of Australian children (Cass, 1981a:59), allowed for the immediate provision of non-means tested financial assistance to families with dependent children which, where practicable, was paid directly to mothers.

As one of the first explicit family support policies, this scheme may be seen to have quite overtly contradicted, at least in principle, both the prevailing ideology of non-interference by the state into the private affairs of families, as well as the persistently strong popular notions of female economic dependency in the 'natural' family form. Upon closer examination,
however, this apparent departure from those gender related ideologies which had previously informed welfare state activities in Australia is not quite so paradoxical as it initially appears.

To begin with, a closer look at the specifics of this scheme reveal that, while eligibility for a child allowance was not tied to an applicant's earned income, the value of this benefit was minimal and, upon its introduction, amounted to only 6% of the basic wage and 4% of average weekly earnings (Cass, 1981b:55). This initially low level of payment was compounded by the failure to allow for the regular indexation of the scheme in legislation.

It is further clear that no significant, long term or universal advantages could accrue to women as a result of the scheme since, not only were illegitimate children and the children of many categories of non-anglo men explicitly excluded from benefit at the outset, but the meagre level of payment ensured that even those women who were eligible did not escape their poverty or economic dependency as a result.

If also assessed in its broader historical context, the sincerity of the rhetoric concerning financial redistribution towards all children and the poor which accompanied the introduction of this policy may be seriously questioned on two counts.

Firstly, if viewed in the context of a powerful resurgence of official pro-family concerns and propaganda which followed the decline of the Australian birth rate in the 1920's and 1930's (Jones, 1980:41), the massive influx of women into the permanent workforce during and after World War Two (Ryan and Conlan, 1975; Beaton, 1980), and the fact that the extremely low level of this benefit likely rendered it less than effective in terms of promoting actual motherhood, it would seem reasonable to conclude that the unprecedented provision of (almost) universal child endowment at this point in time constituted an attempt by the welfare state to rejuvenate and legislatively promote the traditional ideology of motherhood.
Secondly, as discussed in detail by Kewley (1972), the simultaneous introduction of stringent wage control legislation in a period of increasing inflation and high taxes, indicates the possibility that this particular welfare reform was rather more an attempt to forestall demands for, or legitimate the refusal of basic wage increases, than the result of a genuine concern for the social and economic welfare of Australian children (see also Cass, 1983b).

During this period of post-war reconstruction, and in the context of expansionist economic policies under a new Labor Government, public expenditure on a social wage was increasingly deemed economically and politically legitimate as a means of ensuring continued economic growth, full employment and a heightened standard of living for all. By constituting the family unit as the appropriate and necessary recipient of government assistance and the benefits of a rejuvenating economy, the intervention of the welfare state into the private domain was more explicitly acknowledged than ever before.

It was within this economic, social and ideological context that the Federal Labor Government considerably extended family welfare policies under the Social Services Act of 1947. Accompanied by a renewed effort to attract and facilitate the immigration of large numbers of English and non-English speaking families to Australia, the family oriented policies which were introduced or extended by this government (including the universalisation of maternity allowances, the increase and extension of child endowment payments, the introduction of permanent unemployment benefits and the development of health and housing policies to discriminate in favour of large families), can be clearly seen as part of a concerted attempt on the part of the welfare state to rejuvenate the ideology of the ideal family and intra-marital fertility.

The actual effect of this new array of family policies is difficult to assess. It appears likely, however, that the baby boom of the 1950's was more a result of the rapid economic growth and employment security that characterised the post-war period, than a direct consequence of the introduction and extension of social welfare benefits. Irrespective of their immediate material
consequences, however, the point being made here is that the role of these policy initiatives in the ideological promotion of the traditional family form, and in the transformation of the ideology of the welfare state, was significant.

The benefits allowable specifically to mothers under this new Act were both meagre and difficult to obtain. The rate of child endowment, although increased over the years to reach its peak value in 1950, still only amounted to a maximum of 11% of the basic wage (Cass, 1981a:55). Maternity allowances, although universally available and non-means tested, remained minimal in value and were not indexed. And the widows pension was both strictly means tested as well as precluding deserted wives from benefit for the first six months after desertion, or, in the case of the husband having 'just cause' for leaving, excluded them totally (Summers, 1975:128).

Further, while these legislations now allowed the welfare state to provide direct support to women in the carrying out of their motherhood duties, this assistance was neither automatic nor immediate. This fact is revealed in the Social Services Act guidelines which determined that an applicant was not eligible for any benefit:

(a) unless she is of good character
(b) if she is not deserving of a pension
(c) if she directly or indirectly deprived herself of property or income in order to qualify for a pension.

(Summers, 1975:129)

It seems likely that the subjective content and generality of these conditions rendered their enforcement both unsystematic and arbitrary. It also seems likely that the fact that all types of benefit allowable to women under the 1947 Act could be refused or retracted on the basis of a welfare officer's personal assessment of character and need perpetuated rather than lessened the institutionalised economic dependence and social vulnerability of women.

It is significant that those benefits allowable to women under this Act were clearly allocated solely for the specific tasks of child bearing and
rearing. Just as this situation has changed little to the present day, so too the ideology and role of the welfare state as a 'substitute husband' remains intact. In the 1940's, as now, women could expect assistance from the state in their motherly duties only for so long as they were financially destitute and/or remained socially and sexually unattached to another (male) 'provider'. Like a husband, the state will provide for its 'wives' for so long as they procreate and, like a husband, the welfare state "has an evident horror of being cuckolded [and] requires the undying sexual fidelity of the women it is supporting (Summers, 1975:129)."\(^{15}\)

To summarise, a number of key features characterised the expansion of family policies during the post-war years. Firstly, the 'benevolent' intervention of the welfare state into the private lives of the community was consolidated and legitimated. Secondly, the new ideology of the proper role and responsibility of the welfare state with respect to the family was premised upon and reasserted the ideology of the nuclear family form. This point is particularly important in the context of the preceding decades of economic depression and war which unavoidably featured a considerable undermining of this ideology and family form.\(^{16}\) And finally, the 1947 guidelines for the provision of additional support to women as mothers both extended and strengthened the direct control of the welfare state over the personal lives of its female dependents. Despite the universalisation of some benefits, the low level of all types of payment and the total absence of indexation requirements meant that the cost incurred by the Government in this process was relatively low.

It is worthwhile noting at this point that, if examined in strictly economic terms, the ultimately conservative nature of the social welfare expansion of the 1940's is further clarified. In one of the few sophisticated treatments to date of the irreducibly capitalist nature of the Australian welfare state, Watts (1980) makes the significant observation that the Social
Services Act of 1947 was passed at the same time as the Federal Government began instituting massive, across-the-board personal income tax increases which were necessary to pay for the implementation of post-war reconstruction programmes in all spheres of industry and urban and regional development. According to Watts, this new income taxation scheme of the Labor Party's was a particularly harsh and discriminatory one, and constituted a major attack on the standard of living of the entire working class and the very poor especially. The potential for a major crisis of legitimacy for the Government was, therefore, very real.

In the light of the rhetoric which surrounded the introduction of the new welfare measures, stressing the responsibilities of public welfare provision, the positive economic and social effects of universal welfare allocation, and the obvious difficulties encountered by poor families in their attempts to purchase essential services on the open market, Watts' observation is an important one. It does seem feasible that not only did this expansion in the social wage and services sector serve to divert attention away from and/or legitimate the more fundamental attack that was being carried out on workers via the revised taxation structure at the time, but that the extended programme of welfare activity was quite consciously devised and implemented by the ALP to allow for this attack.

Irrespective of the degree to which these welfare state activities were officially and consciously worked out to this end, the final outcomes of the two-pronged (taxation and family welfare) programme are much less debatable. Firstly, the ideology and reality of the nuclear family based on the sexual division of labour, responsibilities and dependencies was supported and reinforced. Secondly, and consistent with official perspectives on the social wage as being "mandatory to compensate for the inadequacies of the market wage, not to compensate for or alter the [gender and class based] inequalities generated by the market", the 1940's saw the implementation and
legitimation of a social security system based on horizontal redistribution within classes which supported the nuclear family form and intra-marital fertility, but which effectively concealed the structures of gender inequality within families and class inequalities between them (Cass, 1982:14). Just as the rhetoric of the 'national interest' is being used by the Federal Government today to divert attention from intra-national conflicts of interest, so the invocation of 'the family' as the worthy recipient of public support following World War Two effectively concealed the (gender based) conflict of interests inherent in the nuclear family form.

Following this decade of welfare policy expansion, the period from 1950 to the mid 1960's saw the role of the welfare state in providing relief and support to the household (at least in theory) recede in both public discourse and practice (see Jones, 1980:60). In broad terms, this was a period of unprecedented industrial and employment growth. Labour organisations strengthened, the birth rate rose dramatically and a general sense of optimism about the nation's present and future prosperity prevailed. Welfare state intervention came to be seen as less necessary. The open market was adequately providing for the needs of people. The ideology of the "lucky country" had taken hold (Horne, 1964). As in most Western countries, these years also saw the consolidation of the 'suburban family' in Australia (cf Birmingham Feminist History Group, 1979). Large housing estates were developed and, for many, the Australian dream of owning one's own home became a reality. Women's ideological location within the nuclear domestic domain was increasingly reflected in their practices, thereby providing a ready market for the rapidly expanding range of consumer goods for the home (Game and Pringle, 1979; Birmingham Feminist History Group, 1979). The regulation and control of fertility and family life-style patterns through the development of further welfare policies was, for the time being, considered unnecessary.

At the same time as women's domestic responsibilities in the burgeoning
suburbia were being confirmed, however, the expanding Australian economy demanded and allowed the increased entry of both migrant and Australian born women into paid labour. By the mid 1960's, women's workforce participation rate had risen to over 40% from an average of roughly 27% during the pre-war years. In particular, the proportion of married women working rose dramatically during the 1950's and 1960's so that by 1970, over one half of all women in the workforce were married (Richmond, 1974:269). The increased labour force participation of women during this period contrasts with the general decline in the number of men in the workforce during these years (Hargreaves, 1982:20).

Despite this influx of women into paid work and the increased level of female unionisation at the same time, female employees generally remained poorly paid. Consistent with the strengthening notions regarding the purely secondary, or supplementary, nature of women's role as paid labourers, most women who had continued or taken up work during the post-war boom had re-entered traditionally female occupations (Cass, 1981b:12), often on a part-time basis (Jamrozik and Hoey, 1981), and at an average rate of pay of 75% of the male wage (Hargreaves, 1982:22). Replicating the events of the 1920's, the concentration of male dominated trade unions on achieving the forty hour week and better wages for their members meant that, to a large extent, women in the labour movement were left to pursue the ongoing equal pay campaign with little support. They did, nevertheless, eventually make some headway.

The winning of the equal pay case in 1969 which granted women equal wages for equal work was the first significant result of this campaign at the Federal level. Despite the fact that most women workers were still concentrated in exclusively female jobs such that the actual benefits of this judgement reached only 15% of working women (Hargreaves, 1982:22), the winning of this case constituted a major ideological victory for women which paved the way for an erosion of the concept of the male breadwinner, and played an important part in bringing the realities of women's rapidly increasing participation
in the workforce to public attention. At a time when the demand for female labour was high and expected to increase further, it was this achievement in particular which laid the groundwork for the series of demands made upon the welfare state during the early 1970's to both encourage and facilitate women's participation in paid work.

Alongside the growth of women's labour force participation and unionisation during the 1960's was an increasingly large and well organised women's movement which mobilised principally around issues relating to the labour conditions and experiences of women workers. This movement was eventually formalised in the establishment of such groups as the Women's Action Committee in 1970, the Women's Electoral Lobby in 1972, and also in the unprecedented convening of women's trade union conferences and caucuses throughout this period (see Mercer, 1975:395-404; Hargreaves, 1982:27-48; Gowland, 1983 for details). The demands made by lobby groups such as these centred on economic equality for women in their increasingly significant 'extra' role as wage earners and sought, not only an extension of equal pay to include the principle of equality of opportunity in employment, but also demanded paid maternity leave, more child care facilities, retraining courses for women, the extension of part-time work to women requiring it, and the implementation of positive discrimination towards women in job hiring practices.

The response to these demands from the male trade union leadership in Australia was mixed although generally negative. In justifying their opposition to the central demand of women workers, it was argued by most union leaders that to disband the concept of the basic or family wage which formed the basis of the differential payment of wages to women and men would, in the long term, undermine those gains already made by and for the (male) working class in former years. The consequence was the development, in most unions, of official policies which served to legitimate yet again the sexual division of waged and domestic labour and the associated ideology of women's 'natural' role as wives, mothers and housekeepers (see Hargreaves, 1982:Chapter Two).
Without the ratification and support of the increasingly more powerful trade unions within which women had concentrated their political efforts, the possibility of effectively lobbying governments and employers was severely reduced. It was not until the election to Federal power of the Australian Labor Party in 1972 that the Commonwealth Government intervened significantly on these and other issues relating to the family and employment lives of women.

While the period of economic expansion between 1950 and 1970 witnessed few changes to that system of family policy introduced immediately after the war, the questions of population growth and the financial status and security of families were again officially raised under the Whitlam administration. The rekindling of concern with the issue of poverty which had occurred in most Western societies, including Australia, in the 1960's and early 1970's (cf Harper, 1972; Hollingworth, 1972:Chapter 1; Jones, 1980:Chapter 6), coupled with an official planning interest in Australian population and 'manpower' trends in the 1970's (cf Summers, 1975:117-40; Cass, 1983b:162-7), resulted in the renewed advocacy and implementation of a range of social welfare commissions and policy measures ultimately geared to the provision of a publicly funded infrastructure for the support of family formation and fertility in Australia.

During the years from 1972 to 1975, public social welfare expenditure was increased from 14.3% of the gross domestic product in 1972/73, to 20.6% in 1975, reaching its highest ever level in Australia's history (Graycar, 1983:4). Among the many family welfare measures introduced or extended during this period were the establishment of a universal health insurance scheme, the increased funding of state education, the increased Commonwealth involvement in housing and regional development, the extension of social security payments to supporting mothers, the introduction of a Federally funded children's services programme, the lifting of the means test on old age pensions, and the introduction of maternity leave provisions for Commonwealth public
This rejuvination of the social wage and social service provision which occurred in the early 1970's basically derived from the Keynesian expansionist approach to the interaction of the private and public sectors which dominated the official political and economic thought at the time. The Federal Government support lent to those trade unions and lobby groups fighting for the rectification of the employment disadvantages faced by women, and which was instrumental in the winning of the 1974 National Wage Case and the establishment of the Working Women's Centre in Melbourne and the Women's Trade Union Commission in Sydney in 1975, also reflected the broadly social democratic orientation which prevailed during these years of state activity. As eloquently expressed by the then Prime Minister:

The quality of life depends less on the things which individuals can obtain for themselves from their personal incomes and depends more on the things which the community provides for all its members from the combined resources of the community.

(Whitlam, 1975)

To recognise the context of social, political and economic thought within which these welfare developments occurred is important. For not only does it allow us to explain, in part, the historical specificity of this welfare services expansion, but more importantly, it assists us to identify and understand the nature and objectives of this expansion. As we shall see, the introduction of these public services and cash supplements between 1972 and 1975 was, once again, likely intended and certainly operated as no more than a means of compensating women for their structurally determined exploitation under patriarchal capitalism. As in the previously discussed post-war period of welfare growth, the dismantling of gender inequality was not on the political agenda of the 1970's.

Instead, the long list of piece-meal reforms instituted by the welfare state at this time served largely to reinforce, rather than undermine, the
economic dependence, poverty, familial responsibilities and chattel status of Australian women. This conclusion is empirically supported in a number of demographic observations, and by examining critically various aspects of those welfare provisions available at the time.

By June 1974, just over 69% of all social security pensioners were women (Morton, 1975:156). These pensions, including the age, invalid, single mothers' and widows' pensions, constituted a long term and sole source of income for most recipients. A look at the distribution of social security benefits in the same year reveals that, of these shorter term provisions which included unemployment, sickness and special benefits, only 35% were received by women with the bulk of payments going to men (Morton, 1975:157). What is illustrated in these figures is that, in contrast to male beneficiaries whose reliance on the welfare state for financial support was generally temporary and supplementary in nature, the increased number of women who received welfare support during the early 1970's tended to be both entirely dependent upon the state, as well as being dependent for much longer periods of time.

While it is undoubtedly true that the growing numbers of women who were eligible for and did receive welfare state support during the early 1970's signalled the temporary alleviation of considerable hardship, the simultaneous observation that the extent of female economic dependency and poverty remained substantially unchanged during these years (Keens & Cass, 1982) - and also that the Australian state did not, via spheres other than the welfare one, attempt to ameliorate this condition - does throw a slightly different light on this period of government 'benevolence' and social reform. It might be concluded then that, while the social wage expansion of the early 1970's constituted a material gain for Australian women, the introduction and expansion of particular types of welfare provisions in particular forms by the Labor Government resulted in the nature and not the extent of women's dependency changing. Less dependent upon their husbands, fathers and so on, increasing
numbers of women became dependent upon the patriarchal state - an employer no less demanding, powerful or oppressive as we have seen. This general claim that the ideological and material extent of women's dependency was not notably altered by the welfare activities of this period is confirmed by a closer review of a number of the specific benefits introduced by the Labor Government.

During the early 1970's, the basic premise upon which public assistance had been allowed to women; that is, only for so long as there is no other man to provide, remained unchallenged. To have received the supporting mothers or widows pension, for example, the applicant was first required to take out maintenance proceedings against her former husband or, if known, the father of her child(ren). Only when this was done and the applicant was still financially destitute did the state take on the status and responsibilities of a substitute husband.

In addition, in order to have received any of those pensions available to women at the time, a woman was required to remain celibate and live alone. As soon as a female pensioner was deemed to be living in a *bona fide de facto* relationship with a man, the pension was withdrawn. Not only was the application of this criterion, which remains today, potentially extremely subjective and, in its invasion of the personal privacy of pensioners, immoral, but the assumption that all men residing (permanently or temporarily) with women will take on the breadwinner role and provide adequately for the woman's needs is unquestionably wrong (see Edwards, 1981). Neither can the further assumption that all women will or should automatically accept any assistance that is offered be supported. In this light, the often voiced conclusion that this criterion for receiving welfare assistance amounts to little more than the institutionalisation of prostitution would appear quite reasonable. There can be no doubt that it effectively relegates women to the singular status of wives, mothers and household dependents.
The role of the welfare state in the maintenance and consolidation of the nuclear family and feminine ideals during the early 1970's is further illustrated in the eligibility and payment conditions accompanying the unemployment benefit scheme introduced at this time. Eligibility for Australian unemployment benefits was, and remains, strictly means tested and is, for all *de jure* and *de facto* couples, assessed on the basis of these individuals' joint income. The effect of this policy in the context of the considerably lower average weekly earnings of women than men (Power, 1976), is that while most unemployed male 'heads of household' are eligible for and receive the full benefit, the majority of unemployed married women are totally excluded from benefit on the basis of their husband's income. Compounding this discrimination against unemployed married women is the fact that when husband and wife are both without work, the payment of the total family benefit is made solely to the 'family breadwinner', usually the man (see Cass, 1981b for details).

This pattern of state intervention which both assumes and perpetuates the economic dependency of women is also visible in the level of those welfare payments made available specifically to women in the early 1970's. The child endowment scheme, for example, although still universally provided under the Labor Government, remained unindexed and was thus allowed to drop steadily in value so as to be almost worthless by the mid 1970's, representing less than 2% of the average weekly earnings (Cass, 1983a:80). The supporting mothers benefit, introduced in 1973, was also worth little and, in 1975, amounted to less than the already low average weekly earnings of women and much less than the family wage. The consequent imperative for women to obtain an additional income in the workforce is clear. In the likely event, however, that full-time, conveniently located, award wage work, as well as child care facilities, could not be found, the single mother was probably better off marrying a working man who could support her and her
children than she was remaining on benefit. 17.

The additional and significant fact that no benefits or pensions were available to married women under the age of sixty which were intended solely for her own personal use and not also for the purposes of child rearing, would seem to indicate that the primary factor influencing welfare state allocation to women was their status as mothers. The simultaneous practice of reducing the level of the widows and supporting mothers pensions once the recipient's dependent children had reached the age of six years (Summers, 1975:127), supports this conclusion and further narrows the definition of women as valid welfare beneficiaries, or 'brides of the state', to a very specific stage of the family life cycle.

In conclusion, it is clear that, irrespective of the actual effects of this range of policies, the expanded activities of the Australian welfare state during the early 1970's were profoundly influenced by conservative assumptions regarding the 'proper' roles of women in the 'proper' family home. As expressed in a Ministerial Statement at the time:

Social policy and planning should be directed towards the maintenance of the family unit. As a society we should give first consideration in planning and resource allocation to strengthening the family... [to] help it to achieve its tasks of personal and social development. The goal of policy should be to keep the family intact and, if it begins to fragment, to assist the remaining section to remain together.

(Child Welfare Advisory Council, 1972:26)

The social democratic concern with resource redistribution via increased social welfare expenditure which characterised the political thought of the 1972 Federal Government did no doubt alleviate some hardship temporarily. 18. To this extent at least it reflected and constituted a response to the needs of women at this time. The almost exclusive emphasis on
this interpretation of the events of these years in oral and written history is, however, both inaccurate and misleading. For, as indicated above, the actual equalising effects of the Labor Party's expanded welfare programme were minimal. Being strictly limited to measures which did not create incentives for nuclear family dissolution, or for the erosion of the sexual division of labour and responsibilities in our society, these reforms were, by definition, conservative and could have no other effect but to reinforce the exploitation and powerlessness of Australian women. While one of the fundamental bases of patriarchal capitalism remained unchallenged, however, the institution of extensive 'band-aid' reforms allowed the welfare state considerable success in both enhancing the conditions for capital accumulation (via the sexual division of labour), and making more palatable the injustices and inequities of the prevailing social, political and economic order. The fact that those superficial gains made by the 'average' Australian as a result of the expansionist and reformist economic and political philosophy dominating at the time were rapidly undermined and reversed in the late 1970's and early 1980's only emphasises the extent to which the welfare state expansion earlier in the decade was inherently limited in what it could achieve on behalf of Australian women.

(iii) 1975 - 1982: The Minimisation of Welfare Expenditure and the Maximisation of the Nuclear Ideal

By the mid 1970's, the effects of the world economic recession were being felt in the Australian economy. High levels of inflation, unemployment, underemployment, interest rates and a decline in national economic growth marked an end to the long post-war boom and the "lucky country" mentality which accompanied it.

This rapid deterioration of labour market conditions was accompanied by the election to Federal office of a conservative government in December 1975. The new Liberal/Country Party coalition government, under the leadership of
Malcolm Fraser, was committed to a contractionist economic policy which, it argued, would curb and reduce high inflation and unemployment levels by re-establishing the balance of market forces necessary for a stable and growing economy. Accordingly, the years from 1975 featured a concerted attempt by government to introduce wide-scale austerity measures, culminating in the Lynch Committee's Review of Commonwealth Functions in 1981 which underlined the Fraser administration's pledge to "limit the role and reduce the power of the state" (Sawer, 1982:13). It was in this political context that government intervention in public life was to be restricted to responding to 'market signals' rather than social needs; an orientation which clearly reflected the predominance of economic over social considerations in this government's market liberal approach to social management.

In contrast to the collectivist policies which were pursued in the early 1970's, more recent years have seen a marked reduction in the level of public expenditure on social welfare which, since 1975, has barely kept pace with the population increase alone (Graycar, 1983:4). Government spending cuts in the areas of education, health, housing and regional development, accompanied by high levels of personal income tax and increased government support for the private sector, severely adversely affected most sections of the Australian population. Not only did the availability and quality of many publicly provided services deteriorate, but the ability of the public to purchase necessary services on the open market was, with the reduction in the real value of wages, considerably eroded.

The reorientation of social and economic policy after 1975 was accompanied by a powerful and consistent official emphasis on the desirability of a minimal state (see Sawer, 1982 for elaboration). This rhetoric, stressing the primacy of the market in providing for human needs, strongly advocated protection of the private sector which, it was claimed, had been crowded out by the welfare state in the recent past. A key argument in the presentation of this new ideology of public welfare was that, under the previous Government,
the welfare state had been allowed to grow beyond the capacity of the Australian economy to support it. Thus:

The balance between the individual and the state has been overthrown. The state yearly seeks a larger share of resources...at the expense of resources available to individuals.

(Fraser, 1975:25)

This assumed antithesis between the state and the individual formed the basis of the Liberal's claim that an 'overgrown' welfare state threatened the freedom and wellbeing of all - a situation which could only be redressed if the general public restrained its expectations of and demands upon the state which was "using up resources it did not have or own" (Fraser, 1975:25).

This line was both reflected and supported by the business establishment in Australia and is epitomised in the following extract from *The Australian* (September 3, 1979:2):

The only real solution is a redistribution of government welfare aid - a proposition so revolutionary that it is almost unthinkable. But it has to be thought about. The proportion of the community reliant on welfare has to be reduced - by stricter means testing and a cut in welfare categories - and the level of benefits has to be cut. This is not to promulgate a heartless, unfeeling policy. It is to recognise hard facts. We are on a slide where more and more people are demanding more and more benefits from comparatively fewer and fewer taxpayers. It is becoming so steep that it is on the verge of being a slide into disaster. At the end of that slide will be a bankrupt country which cannot afford to pay anybody anything.

By tying welfare state expenditure to the nation's ability to pay in a period of declining economic growth, increasing budget deficits and skyrocketing consumer prices, the ideological groundwork was laid for an overriding official concern with the relative cost-effectiveness of public and private service provision and, consequently, for the widespread introduction of the 'user pays' principle in many areas of welfare provision.

This ideological and economic attack on public welfare did not proceed wholly unnoticed or unchallenged by the Australian public. Sustained and
organised resistance to these changes was, however, limited to public sector unions in the Australian Council of Trade Unions, the voluntary welfare agencies, and a number of prominent academics (Sawer, 1982:14). Nevertheless by adding this resistance to the rapidly increasing numbers of potential and actual welfare recipients (from 9.2% of the population in 1970 to 18.2% in 1980), it would seem reasonable to expect that the Government would have faced a considerable political/electoral crisis in its pursuit of these reductionist policies. Yet, the re-election of the Coalition Government with healthy majorities in 1977 and again in 1980 indicates, in part, that the Fraser administration was able, for a time at least, to successfully legitimate to the public its stringent cost-cutting measures in the area of welfare spending.

In the following pages it will be argued that the successful legitimisation of a minimal welfare state in a period featuring increased expectations and needs of the state, increasing unemployment, an aging population and a changing family form (all of which exacerbated welfare needs), was enabled and secured primarily via an official reassertion of the ideology of the nuclear family structure based on the sexual differentiation of paid and unpaid labour.

The explicit and combined efforts of a number of sectors of Australian society to maintain and rejuvenate the nuclear ideal in the late 1970's took a number of forms and involved a variety of processes and institutions. It was, however, a united effort insofar as it focussed attention on the traditional and 'natural' roles of women as unpaid cooks, nurses, child carers and general labourers in the home, as well as the corollary to this, men's primary responsibility for the financial maintenance of their families.

The recent escalation of calls from various sectors of the community for a national family policy seems to constitute both the culmination and a reflection of the increasingly powerful 'normal' family rhetoric of these years. Coming loudest from social workers, religious bodies and policy analysts and being supported by large sections of the media (cf Alford, 1981:205-212),
as well as such nationally based groups as the Festival of Light and the Right To Life Association, these calls faithfully reflect the moralistic and individualistic orientation towards the family and family problems which has characterised much of the academic research and social work practices of Australia and similar countries over the past two decades (see Pemberton and Locke, 1971 for details). The basic claim put forward by these people is that a comprehensive and detailed national family policy would provide the framework for a systematic and long term strengthening of the traditional family form so that it may more adequately fulfill its 'normal' functions and duties of the moral and social education of children and the emotional and physical maintenance of adults. As a consequence, it is argued, the increasing incidence of divorce, juvenile crime, illegitimate births and other such community 'problems' would be alleviated and social harmony restored. A very clear and revealing expression of the conservative ideology informing these calls is provided by Cass (1982:22) who cites part of a speech given at the latest conference on family policy organised by the Australian Family Association:

Increasingly it is argued that the care of small children, the chronically ill, and the aged are public responsibilities to be carried on in publicly funded institutions outside the home...it is thought by many that the mere fact that it is inconvenient for them to provide such care themselves (eg because it interferes with the career of one of the members of a two career family) generates a public obligation to provide or at least contribute substantially to the costs of such care. It is imperative that such a view should be resisted. Instead of removing such dependents from family care and attention, we should be making it easier for them to receive it... It is not just that it is cheaper for such support to be given in the home...far more important is that the underlying principle governing care and attention is mutual affection, and not that of paid employment. It should be part of a national family policy to identify and where practicable, remove those factors which genuinely prevent the provision of care and attention for the needy in the home by other members of the family.

(Italics added)

The message is clear if not explicit. Not only are women in paid employment
selfish, but the very principle of payment is one that should not concern women. Rather, the exchange of affection which (supposedly) accompanies domestic care should be a sufficient reward for their labour. Women after all can live on love alone!

It would appear to be no accident that these conservative ideologies were being more strongly reiterated as economic and social conditions worsened with the depression. Certainly, notions such as those being advanced in the above quotation were politically consistent with and provided valuable ammunition for the Liberal Government's attacks on social welfare expenditure.

Given the expanded and increasingly legitimate intervention of the state into family life during the early 1970's, these later calls for a national family policy do not appear surprising or inconsistent. As we shall see, the continuities between the welfare state activities of the early and late 1970's do not end here. Nevertheless, it is important to note also that the introduction of a range of family welfare policies by the Labor Government in a context of an expanding economy and a social democratic perspective on social welfare has quite a different character from the recent calls for a national family policy in the context of economic crisis, contractionist policies and a free market philosophy.

Since 1975, there has been a fundamental shift in official welfare policy discourse away from viewing the family unit as a valid recipient of permanent or universal welfare assistance, towards a more restricted view of the welfare state as the provider of temporary family support for the purpose of strengthening individual family units so that they may eventually, and more efficiently, fulfill their 'natural' functions and responsibilities independently.

Despite the general decline in Commonwealth expenditure on social welfare since 1975, the Federal funding of social security pensions and benefits has shown a slow but steady increase in relation to overall budgetary expenditure - although it is now beginning to level off (Graycar, 1983:4). This often quoted increase, however, is not quite as benevolent as it first appears.
If these social security figures are examined in detail, it is revealed that by far the greatest bulk of expenditure has gone on the payment of unemployment benefits, supporting mothers' pensions and age pensions. Given the rapidly increasing proportion of the population who are over retirement age, unemployed or single parents, these high expenditure figures cannot be seen to illustrate either an increase in the real value of the payments, nor that they were commensurate with expressed demand. Rather, they may simply indicate a greater number of eligible people applying for and receiving assistance over time. Overall, from 1976/77 to 1978/79, the average yearly rate of increase in social security expenditure was 5.6%, while the average yearly rate of increase in beneficiaries was 7%. This erosion in benefit levels was significant and reflects both the severe tightening of eligibility conditions as well as the failure to regularly index benefits (see Cass, 1981a:71).

The case of unemployment benefits is particularly illuminating in this regard and is worth considering briefly at this point.

The 'dole' does not constitute an explicit family policy insofar as it is not included in social security figures for expenditure on family support. The level of funding of this scheme and the manner of its allocation, however, have had a major impact on the private sphere and patently reveal the Liberal Government's attempt to redefine state and family responsibilities vis-a-vis individual and social welfare.

As in the early 1970's, and for the same reasons as discussed above, this benefit continues to discriminate against unemployed married women. It also, however, particularly disadvantages all unemployed sixteen and seventeen year olds and other single adults without dependents (whose benefit levels, at 1982, had not been indexed since 1975); all unemployed adults with dependent children (whose additional allocation of $10 per week per child since 1975 was only increased in 1983 to $12); and all *de facto* and *de jure* couples who are both unemployed (who automatically lose from 50% to 100% of their benefit if their income exceeds the means test cut-off point by $6-10
or $50 respectively). As has been pointed out by Cass (1982:23-30), the now well documented concentration of unemployment amongst unskilled and semi-skilled workers which persists over generations is both ignored and perpetuated by this system of unemployment benefit distribution. Given the increasing necessity of a two income household structure, as well as the increasing participation of women in the burgeoning part-time workforce (Jamrozik and Hoey, 1981), this same conclusion may be reached with respect to the maintenance of gender based patterns of underemployment. The fact that the precise character and extent of female employment in Australia remains hidden - largely due to the limited and inconsistent statistical material available - makes it very difficult to assess this conclusion with regard to women. It does seem likely, however, that the eligibility conditions for the 'dole' serve to exclude many unemployed married women even before they apply for benefit and, therefore, conceals and significantly understates the real extent of Australian women's unemployment.  

Three assumptions in particular appear to have informed the nature of unemployment relief in the 1970's and 80's. All reveal this scheme to be a direct, if implicit, attempt on the part of the state to reassert the nuclear family form based on gender (and in this case, generational) hierarchies of responsibility and dependency, and all are erroneous.  

Firstly, it is assumed that the 'average' Australian family household requires only one regular (labour or social) wage in order to adequately survive, yet it has been calculated that by 1980, about one half (46%) of all married mothers in Australia participated in paid work, over half (56%) of these women working on a full time basis (ABS, 19816:5). As will be illustrated and elaborated in Chapter Six, these figures indicate that the two-income family is increasingly a necessity for many Australians.  

Secondly, it is assumed that intra-family wage transfers will properly provide for all family dependents' needs. This assumption is contradicted
in both sociological research which shows that many men do not provide for their family's financial needs (Edwards, 1981), and data which indicates the perpetual and increasing poverty of women and children in Australia (Keens and Cass, 1982).

Finally, it is assumed that the waged family household will, where necessary, supplement the inadequate welfare benefits received by their single children. In the context of the declining value of wages, the increased cost of living and the above-noted concentration of unemployment in particular families, the growing incidence of homelessness and extreme poverty amongst Australian youth would seem to indicate that families are quite often unwilling or, more probably, unable to provide for those needs of their unemployed children that are not fulfilled by the meagre welfare provisions available.

The most important point here is that, while the above assumptions may indeed be invalid, embodied within each is the exploitation of women, as unemployed wage earners, as wives economically dependent upon their husband's generosity, and as the mothers and caretakers of unemployed youth. Once again it appears that, via the restrictive formulation and allocation of this social wage, the welfare state has effectively maintained the dependent status and therefore the disadvantage of women in present day Australia.

To return to a consideration of the Federal social security expenditure component allocated specifically for family maintenance, we see that welfare state spending in this area has fluctuated greatly over time, but has generally declined over the past decade. As a proportion of the total social security outlay, spending on 'family support' (including child endowment, single parent's benefit, widows pension etc.), dropped from 14.2% in 1971 to 5.8% in 1975/76. With the introduction of the family allowance scheme in 1976, the proportion rose to 16.6% but, by 1981, with the Family Allowance Scheme still in operation, expenditure again dropped, this time to
only 10.1% (Graycar, 1983:6). This consistent decrease in real terms of spending on direct family assistance reflects the significant shift in the dependency issue with respect to the family and the state that has accompanied the late 1970's. An examination of the two major (explicit) family policy initiatives introduced since 1975 - the dependent spouse rebate and the family allowance scheme - provides confirmation of my earlier claim that the minimisation of welfare state expenditure on family support has been accompanied and, in fact, allowed by the ideological and material reassertion of the sexual division of labour both within and beyond the domestic domain.

Both the dependent spouse rebate and the family allowance scheme were introduced by the Liberal Federal Government in 1976. Since then, the fortunes of each have been very different, a reflection of the quite different nature and objectives of each scheme.

The family allowance scheme, as an extension of the child endowment scheme still operating federally in 1976, provides for cash transfer to be made to all women responsible for dependent children. In the process of replacing the previous system of tax rebates for taxpayers with dependent children, this scheme benefitted an additional 800,000 children in 300,000 families formerly ineligible for the rebate (Cass, Keens and Möller, 1981:62). Unlike in the prior tax rebate system, however, no provision was made for the indexation of family allowance payments. Consequently, with the exception of a small increase in payments for third and subsequent children in the 1981/82 budget (and then again for all children in the 1983 budget), this cash transfer has not been indexed since its introduction. Since June 1976, the real value of family allowances had deteriorated dramatically by mid 1982, decreasing by 44% for first and second children, 16% for third and subsequent children, and 57% overall (Keens and Cass, 1982:39; Cass, 1982:31). By comparing government expenditures on the family allowance scheme since 1976
with an estimate of the expenditure that would have been incurred over the same period by the tax rebate scheme it replaced, it has been calculated by Cass et al (1981:69) that by 1980/81, the Federal Government had saved approximately $458 million since the introduction of the new scheme.

In contrast, the dependent spouse rebate which is paid to those taxpayers whose *de jure* spouse earns an annual income of less than $3,602 (at 1982), has received very favourable treatment from the Government since its introduction. Between 1976 and 1982, this taxation rebate has increased in real value by 17%, reaching its peak value of $830 per year in 1982 - almost twice as much as the annual family allowance of $442.80 for two children in the same year (Keens and Cass, 1982:37; Shaver, 1983:154). Upon its introduction, this rebate benefitted only 49% of all taxpayers with dependent children, a situation which had not changed greatly by 1981 when less than 60% of beneficiaries had dependent children (Keens and Cass, 1982:36-7). Finally, it is worth noting that, in the period from 1978 to 1980, only 21% of those taxpayers whose income was less than the average weekly earnings received this rebate, compared to 43% of those taxpayers whose income exceeded this level of earnings.

A comparative examination of the histories and contents of these two welfare schemes reveals a clear and persistent government concern to invest in redistributive welfare provisions only in those forms which most explicitly and effectively promote the sexual division of labour at both the material and ideological levels. On the one hand, the observations that the family allowance scheme has operated to facilitate and legitimate both massive reductions in public welfare expenditure generally, as well as the containment of wage levels (Cass, 1983a:83), while both the family allowance scheme and the dependent spouse rebate have been instrumental in promoting an increasingly unequal and discriminatory taxation structure (Cass, 1983a:83; Keens and Cass, 1982:38) are significant as indicators of the economic (cost-cutting) objectives of the welfare state during the late 1970's.
On the other hand, however, the ideological role of these social security and taxation schemes would seem to be equally important. In the case of the dependent spouse rebate, this role is more obvious and straightforward. The payment of this rebate only to *de jure* married couples, for example, would appear to constitute not only a cost saving measure but, maybe just as significantly, an ideological reassertion of the traditional form of marriage and family formation from which Australians are significantly departing. Further, the low income cut-off point for this rebate, considered in conjunction with its increasing value in relation to all other welfare payments, clearly contains an official endorsement of the single income family within which one spouse remains permanently at home; that is, the nuclear family ideal. The fact that this scheme is located within the taxation structure and thereby benefits only those most active within this sphere serves to ensure that the 'spouse' will almost always be female (see Keens and Cass, 1982:24).

In contrast to the dependent spouse rebate, the ideological role of the family allowance scheme is less overt and, apparently, more contradictory. In brief, it appears that while this social wage undoubtedly promotes the ideological construction of women as those solely responsible for child rearing in our society, the fact that family allowances have, since their introduction, been paid to all women responsible for children, irrespective of age, marital status, employment status, or income, has generally been interpreted to indicate the progressive, even radical nature of this scheme. In other words, by transferring payments for child rearing from the 'wallet' to the 'purse', the family allowance scheme is seen to contradict that principle of female economic dependency within the family which has historically informed the formulation of family welfare policy in Australia. If this conclusion is located in its broader context, however, this anomaly appears less significant. For a consideration of the meagre and declining real value
of family allowances - particularly in relation to that of the dependent spouse rebate - clearly indicates that any benefits which may have accrued to women via the formulation of a scheme which undermined the ideology of the nuclear family, were effectively blocked in the implementation and development of this scheme since 1975.21

By way of conclusion then, it would seem that, under the developing conditions of economic and social crisis which accompanied the late 1970's and early 1980's, the Australian welfare state increasingly sacrificed its image of benevolence towards women and the family in order that it might operate more directly as an agent of patriarchal capitalist control and exploitation. If this is so, then it would also seem that the welfare state in this country is heading towards a major crisis of political legitimacy.

As has now been frequently noted (cf Keens and Cass, 1982; Shaver, 1983), the recent transference of state support for the family away from the social wage (eg the family allowance scheme) and towards fiscal - that is taxation based - welfare support (eg the dependent spouse rebate), not only discriminates most heavily against the already poor, but also works to directly subsidise the sexual division of labour and women's economic dependency.22 While this restructuring of support for the family does not appear to be inconsistent with the prevailing ideology of the minimal welfare state, nor that of the 'normal' family form, as has been noted by Power (1981:12-3), it is in one sense paradoxical insofar as welfare policies which penalise the two income family will, if effective in discouraging women's workforce participation, result in a massive increase in poverty in Australia and, consequently, even greater demands upon the welfare state.

By focussing on the ideological role of the welfare state, however, I would argue that this paradox is not as paradoxical as it first appears. For, as was the case in the depression of the 1930's, it is probable that the sheer economic necessity for and thus the reality of women's workforce
participation will continue throughout the present crisis - at least for so long as employers will continue to take on female labour. In this context then, we may argue that, so long as social and fiscal welfare benefits are maintained, albeit differentially, at less than the average weekly wage of women, it will only be within high income families that non-workforce participation will remain a viable option for one spouse, irrespective of the ideological orientation of these welfare policies. On this balance, the welfare state is considerably free to promote the nuclear family ideal with its accompanying notions of the 'proper' roles and responsibilities of individual family members and the family unit as a whole, without seriously undermining either men's or women's incentive to engage in paid work under any type of conditions. The sexual division of labour which allows the constitution of women as both cheap, disposable wage labour and invisible, unpaid social workers within the home is thereby upheld and the subordination of women to both men and capital ensured.

3. WOMEN, THE WELFARE STATE AND THE COERCION OF PRIVACY

The nature of women's dependency under patriarchal capitalism is basically three-fold. In the first instance, women are, by virtue of the public/private ideological division in our society, dependent upon men as husbands and providers within the home. Secondly, and in the event that there is no male to provide, women are dependent upon the state for support. Thirdly, and given that women's needs very often remain unfulfilled by either the state or their husbands, women are dependent upon employers - upon finding paid work despite their ideological status as, primarily, unpaid domestic labourers. Underpinning all three aspects of women's dependency is their location within the prevailing sexual division of labour which defines women's work as unskilled (if not invisible), valueless, and unpaid or underpaid. As the fundamental basis of the patriarchal capitalist social order, the sexual
division of labour necessarily informs the form and content of the family, the welfare state and the labour market, thereby constituting each as a site of female exploitation.

The welfare state, as a mediator of women's dependency between the private and public spheres of economic life, plays a potentially powerful role in either maintaining or alleviating this condition of women's lives. As was illustrated in the preceding pages, the Australian welfare state has operated consistently to maintain rather than alleviate the dependent status of Australian women. While the institution of family welfare payments in this country may, in theory, have allowed women to escape their dependence upon individual men (as in the case of the supporting mothers benefit and the widows pension, for example), a critical evaluation of most of these welfares reveals that either:

(a) the value of the provision has been so low as to promote women's dependency upon finding a 'decent' job or another male provider, or
(b) the eligibility conditions accompanying the welfare have been such as to reinforce women's dependence in the family home with the state acting as the 'substitute husband'.

Either way, we can observe that Australian family welfare policy, while in some cases operating to temporarily (and inadequately) alleviate some of the hardships experienced by women, has been instrumental in reinforcing those very structures which give rise to these hardships in the first place. Specifically, by both assuming and legislatively enforcing the nuclear family ideal, these family welfare policies have played a major role in the reproduction of gender oppression in our society.

While being consistently assumed, the Australian welfare state's promotion of the sexual division of labour has taken various forms over the years. In this regard, it appears that the first decades of this century were typified by both explicit pronatal concerns which emphasised the sexual division of labour in terms of 'motherhood', as well as the development of
state intervention in the 'public' sphere of paid work which promoted the ideology and reality of the male family breadwinner and head of household. (Given the unusual demographic character of the new colony, as well as the particularly rapid growth and consolidation of the Australian male trade union movement, these forms of intervention are not surprising). As the welfare state developed, both notionally and concretely, during the middle of the century, the previous emphasis on intervention in the workplace was complemented with a growing system of social welfare provision which was directed explicitly at the 'private' sphere of the home. Couched in the rhetoric of benevolence and family support, this development of explicit family welfare policy lay the groundwork for the greater, and legitimate, intervention of the state on behalf of the nuclear ideal. In most recent years, we have seen the consolidation of an explicit family welfare system which spans the arenas of wages, taxation and social welfare. While the individual policies encompassed within each arena may be seen to consistently assume the sexual division of labour, it is in particular their form and content in relation to each other which has operated to reproduce the sexual division of labour in paid and unpaid work; an objective which has become increasingly important and explicit as the economic crisis of the 1970's and 80's escalates.

In sum then, the welfare state has been flexible in the direction and avenues of its intervention into Australian family life. Today, this intervention is no longer denied. Rather, it is presented as a necessary and generous 'taking over' of those functions the family is unable to, or has difficulty fulfilling. In other words, the family is 'helped out' by the benevolent and just welfare state. Significantly, it appears that some 'takeovers' are deemed more legitimate than others depending on the prevailing social, economic and political conditions. On the one hand, for example, the institution of the supporting mothers benefit, maternity provisions and unemployment benefits have been the direct result of extensive public
lobbying and the political pragmatism of government which must retain its legitimacy in a context of constant social change. While we have seen that the actual compensatory or redistributive effects of these policies have been seriously impaired by their nature, nevertheless, the welfare state did respond to popular demand. On the other hand, however, there exist large and striking gaps in the welfare state's response to demand. In particular, and as will be discussed in the following chapters, the Australian state's intervention in the area of child care for children under five years of age has remained negligible. This is in spite of its extensive 'take over' of education for five to fifteen year olds. Thus, although the following claim obviously requires more detailed historical investigation, it would appear reasonable to argue that the welfare state does not 'take over' or support those family responsibilities and life-styles which may result in a 'serious' undermining of the nuclear ideal. In terms of analysis, this point is important for it indicates the need for an examination, not just of family policies themselves, but of the silences in the welfare state's intervention in the family.

To date, most analyses of changes and developments in welfare provision over time have been undertaken in political pluralist terms whereby the size of the welfare cake is assumed to be fixed and the extent and direction of welfare support is said to be the outcome of constant negotiation between competing interest groups with specific needs and powers at a particular time. In these formulations, the welfare state is generally assumed to be a vehicle of social progress which is, theoretically, able to respond to any demand so long as that demand is made strongly enough. The determinate role of the economic, political and ideological structures of patriarchal capitalism within which the welfare state was created and is sustained are thereby largely disregarded.

As we shall see in the following chapter, this dominant analysis is to an extent true. Contest over specific welfare expenditures is constantly
taking place and does have a significant bearing on final policy outcomes. Further, as was noted earlier in this chapter, a defining feature of the welfare state is its relative autonomy from the imperatives of capitalism and thus its permeability to the demands of the disadvantaged. Yet this analysis is not wholly true and, as such, is both politically dangerous and limited in terms of its explanatory power.

The alternative explanation offered here is that, by examining the ideological role of Australian family welfare policies, the welfare state is revealed - in contrast to its image as the benefactor and protector of women - as a crucial agent in the maintenance of women's oppression under patriarchal capitalism. By stepping in to maintain and perpetuate the social conditions of reproduction; that is, by operating to promote the nuclear family ideal based on the sexual division of labour, the welfare state has played a major role in sustaining those structures of economic dependency and powerlessness which constitute the oppression of women in our society. As such, it must be seen to be equally, if less overtly, an agent of social coercion and control as those other more directly repressive arms of the capitalist state. The fact that this control is mediated via the institution of the family which is accompanied by its own relatively independent characteristics of human caring, romantic love, privacy and emotional support only serves to further conceal the essentially coercive nature of welfare state intervention in this domain.
CHAPTER FIVE

THE CASE OF FEDERAL CHILD CARE POLICY 1972 - 1982
In the performance of her biologically determined role as child bearer, the 'average' Australian woman in the 1980's could expect to spend approximately two years of her life (in pregnancy). In her socially constructed role of mother, however, she is likely to spend at least fifteen years more. The labour and responsibilities of motherhood in Australia do, of course, vary in their content and duration according to many factors (e.g., family and cultural practices). Nevertheless, in a society within which women's 'natural' and primary role in life is deemed to be her domestic one, their responsibility for child rearing remains paramount forming a measure by which their social and personal worth are duly assessed.

As the 'proper' responsibility of women in the private home, mothers can expect little help from society in the performance of child care. Not only is it assumed that all mothers will want to care for their children on a singular and permanent basis, but, more fundamentally, it is assumed that, from the very beginning, women's 'maternal instinct' will automatically render them 'good' and willing mothers. Thus it is both assumed and expected that women will cope alone and in domestic isolation with the intensive and extensive duties of child care. The observation that many women do not 'cope' well with their ideal role was made in Chapter Two.

Underlying these naturalistic assumptions regarding women's competence and willingness to perform the unpaid, privatised labour of child care is the ideology of the nuclear family characterised by a sexual division of labour and responsibilities. In the previous chapter, the central and coercive role of the welfare state in the reproduction of this ideology was illustrated through an examination of family policy developments in Australia.

In the following two chapters, the former focus on Australian family policy will be maintained. By further concretising and specifying this discussion to focus on only one aspect of contemporary family policy and life in this country—that is, on child care needs and policies—the following discussion will enable us to empirically ground, test and draw together in finer detail the analytical
threads detailed so far in the study. We may thereby obtain a more precise picture and understanding of some of the specific means by which the welfare state operates to perpetuate those social structures which underly the exploitation of women and, in particular, women as mothers in our society.

Specifically, by tracing in some detail the past decade of Federal funding of child care services in Australia, this chapter will provide a general picture of the changing form and content of child care policy in this country. It will be argued that while the Federal Government's concern for the development of children's services has been strong in official rhetoric, the level and direction of material support for these services over the years clearly attests to the minimal and declining commitment of government to the development of these services except in those forms which assume and promote child care as the unpaid (or underpaid) private work of women.

In an attempt to explain the data presented in this chapter in its broader social and analytical context, Chapter Six will then examine in detail the notion of 'need' as it has been used to inform the development of children's services funding in Australia. By examining this concept as it is employed in child care policy guidelines and rhetoric, against a background of inadequate service provision in this welfare sector, one of the means by which Australian Federal Government activities in the area of child care policy have, especially in most recent years, both assumed and attempted to perpetuate the ideology of the nuclear family which defines child care, not as a responsibility of the public sphere (ie the welfare state), but as the private responsibility of women as mothers, will be revealed in some detail. In so doing the following analysis both confirms and develops previous analyses of the coercive relationship between women and the patriarchal capitalist welfare state.

1. THE CHILD CARE ACT (1972)

The introduction of the Child Care Act on November 2, 1972 heralded the Commonwealth Government's investment in the development of a system of
children's services for the first time in Australia's history. The rapid economic expansion and full employment characterising the 1950's and 60's, as well as the accompanying demand for women's workforce participation and increases in social welfare expenditure, had set the scene for the adoption by government of policies which would attract and allow women's participation in paid work. In this context, the introduction of the Child Care Act was guaranteed to be a politically popular move.

Prior to the 1970's, the Federal Government's involvement in children's services was very limited. Commencing in the late 1930's, the Federal Government has provided assistance to a Lady Gowrie Child Care Centre in each state for the purpose of providing a 'model' child health and education programme. Subsequently, during World War Two, the Commonwealth gave temporary assistance to organisations to help cover the additional costs of expanding their services to provide care for the children of women working in essential industries. And, most recently, scholarships were introduced in the late 1960's for trainee preschool teachers, and capital funds were provided to assist preschool training colleges to expand in order to increase enrolments (see Sweeney, 1982a and 1982b: Appendix I).

This history of minimal support by the Federal Government meant that by 1969 there were only 555 child care centres in Australia providing a total of approximately 14,000 day care places, or space for only five percent of preschool age children whose parents were engaged in paid work (Davis, 1983:81). Of these centres, only 55 were assisted by state or local governments, the remainder being operated by the commercial or voluntary sectors with the consequence that child care provisions were generally difficult to find, prohibitively expensive for most parents, and often of a poor quality (see Mathews, 1981:7).

According to Phillip Lynch, the Minister for Labour and National Service in 1972, it was the Federal Government's recognition of these problems which motivated the introduction of the Child Care Bill. In introducing the second
reading of the Bill, Lynch stated that:

child care which was beneficial to the child's overall development was prohibitively costly for the large body of parents and... that childminding arrangements that most parents could afford fell far short of the quality that was required in the interests of child welfare.

(Commonwealth Parliamentary Debates, 1972:2289)

He went on to add that, "only through Government action could the problems that had developed in relation to child care be met within an appropriate time scale".

Thus, the Child Care Act represented a major turning point in the history of Australia's children's services development, enabling the Commonwealth to provide financial assistance to help establish and operate community based, non-profit child care centres on a wide-ranging and long term basis.

The Federal funding allowed under this Act took four forms. First, there was provision for capital grants to be made which were unmatched (ie the states were not required to contribute to capital costs). Second, recurrent funding was provided to help with the costs of employing adequate and qualified staff to run child care centres. Third, a special recurrent grants scheme provided subsidies to allow centres to minimise fee charges to low income and special needs families. And finally, the provision of monies to persons doing research in the initiation and development of methods of child care and related matters was allowed. Under these guidelines it was proposed that users of government subsidised centres would pay fees at a similar level to those charged in the existing private and voluntary based child care centres, but that no-one would be expected to pay the full cost of care. The object was to provide good quality care at an accessible cost to the average Australian family.

Being the only secure legal basis for Federal Government involvement in children's services, the introduction of the Child Care Act represented
an important step forward along the path towards achieving adequate child care provisions in Australia. There was and still remains, however, a number of problems with this Act. These problems, although they do not warrant its abandonment, do render this Act less than optimum as a legislative basis for the national development of public child care services. Most significantly, the overall non-specificity of the Child Care Act which delegates all responsibility for funding and other decision making to the presiding Minister as (s)he deems appropriate at a particular time, means that the Act fails to legally guarantee even minimal set funding levels for either capital (equipment purchase and maintenance of facilities) or recurrent (staffing) purposes. Therefore, while the quantitative and qualitative growth of child care services is endorsed in principle in this Act, it is by no means legally guaranteed. The consequences of this absence of a comprehensive and clearly specified legislative basis for the Federal funding of child care have been far-reaching and have resulted in a great deal of fluctuation and confusion in government child care policy.


The implementation of funding under the Liberal Party's Child Care Act had not commenced before the Federal election of 1972 which resulted in a new, social democratic Labor government. This government, led by E.G. Whitlam, was committed to expansionary economic policies as a means of enhancing social welfare and providing services to the disadvantaged in Australian society.

Of particular significance in a consideration of the respective political parties' policy developments and campaigns leading up to the election of the Australian Labor Party (ALP) in 1972 was the profound impact of the growing women's movement on the Australian parliamentary sphere during this period.
Between 1970 and 1975, the labourforce participation rate of all Australian women increased from 39.6% to 43.0%. The participation rate of married women, and married women between the ages of 22 and 44 especially, accounted for this general increase, rising from 35.2% to 41.1% and 42.2% to 50.4% respectively (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 1980a:117). The great influx of women into the workforce during this period, most of whom were of child bearing age, meant that, among other work related issues, those of convenient, good quality and inexpensive child care became major ones for a rapidly growing section of the population. The lobbying of government for more and better child care facilities by such organisations as the Women's Electoral Lobby, sections of the Australian Council of Trade Unions, and numerous small, community based child care groups grew more concerted and organised as this issue became increasingly popular (see Dowse, 1983:203-5).

In this context it seems that despite the absence of an explicit Labor Party policy on women or child care, the Party's apparently egalitarian ideology held much promise for those working to achieve greater equality for women. As pointed out by Dowse in her analysis of this political period, the growth of an extensive and vocal feminist lobby during the early 1970's appears to have sensitised the ALP to the potential political mileage to be gained from the votes of women. Dowse notes that by 1972, the traditional conservatism of women at the polls had begun to be seen as a thing of the past, resulting in an ALP campaign which made an unprecedented effort to attract the female vote (1983:204). 

Prior to the 1972 election, both the ALP and the Coalition Parties were apparently confident that their respective proposals regarding child care met the women's demands (Dowse, 1983:204) - the Coalition Government because it had just introduced the Child Care Act and set aside $5 million for its implementation, and the Opposition because of its stated commitment to funding child care for working parents as well as its promise to provide one year's free preschool education for every Australian child within six years.
This latter initiative of the ALP was deemed by the Labor leader to be "the single most important weapon in promoting equality and in overcoming social, economic and language inequalities" (Whitlam, 1972:5). Although there is no way of knowing the precise extent to which the ALP's commitment to child care development influenced its subsequent election to Federal office, it is clear that the years of Labor rule that followed had a significant impact on the Australian child care situation, as well as on the women's movement as a whole.

Within ten weeks of taking office, the ALP established an Interim Preschools Committee which was to report to the Government on the measures needed to be taken to ensure that:

(a) the objective is achieved over a period of approximately six years that all children are given the opportunity to undertake a year of preschool education;

(b) child care centres for children below school age are established to meet the needs of children of working parents and underprivileged families. (Brennan, 1982:5)

Before the results of this committee were tabled in December 1973, however, the committee and its report, the Fry Report, were surrounded by controversy. The absence of any representation from parent or women's groups on the committee, and the restrictive terms of reference of the report resulted in the Government coming under increasing attack from sectors of the community who had begun to question the ALP's child care policy and, in particular, the bias in favour of limited hours preschool education as opposed to long day care services which had been embodied in the Government's first main report on children's services (see Fry Report, 1974:3-4).

It was as a consequence of the recommendations of this report that a fundamental contradiction in the ALP's policy orientation towards children's services became apparent.

Prior to the 1972 election, Whitlam had wooed the female vote on the
issue of child care with the statement that:

A woman's choice between making motherhood her sole career and following another career in conjunction with motherhood depends upon the availability of proper child care facilities. The Preschools Commission will be responsible for developing these facilities in conjunction with preschool centres, beginning in areas where the need is most acute.

(1972:5)

This statement, viewed in conjunction with Labor's committment to preschool education for all children as a means of promoting social equality, indicated a major tension in ALP policy. For, while one tendency emphasised preschool education as a vehicle for the redistribution of resources between social classes and categories, the other promoted access to child care as a precondition for the redistribution of resources towards women. This tension in Federal policy directly reflected a major division in the Australian community.

Although exacerbated by the competition for limited funds, this division between the preschool and child care lobbies had been consolidated long before the introduction of the Child Care Act and extended to much more than a question of economics. It was, and remains, an essentially ideological division of considerable importance.

Historically, the parent established preschool/kindergarten system has been the exclusive province of the Australian middle class who have defined this service as an educational one for children, not one intended to free mothers for activities other than motherhood (Spearritt, 1979; Cox, 1983a). Consistent with the new waves of concern with the development of both formal educational advantage and the 'mother-child bond' which swept advanced Western societies during the 1950's and 60's (cf Hunt, 1961; Bowlby, 1953):

[Australian preschool] centre staff and early childhood development professionals sought to reinforce the mother's role at home as being necessary for the needs of the child. The shortened day, divided into two three-hour sessions, was introduced in many centres in the late 1960's
and early 1970's and was justified in terms of the child needing the mother-contact hours to be extended. Children under three were regarded as being too young to attend in most centres, and three-year-olds were regarded as vulnerable, needing to be carefully watched in case separation distressed them.

(Cox, 1983a:194)

In contrast, the development of child care centres during the pre-1972 period was confined mainly to charity and voluntary services with many more of these services than preschools being located in lower income suburbs, and being geared to the provision of a convenient and secure place for working parents to leave their children. In the eyes of the preschool lobby, the widespread introduction of these 'custodial' centres posed a very real threat to Australian child and family welfare. By freeing women, often for full days, to participate in activities other than their naturally ordained domestic and maternal ones, these centres were seen by many to be undermining social health and promoting child neglect (see Spearritt, 1979).

With the rapid growth of women's full-time workforce participation during the early 1970's, these divisions between the two lobbies came to a head. The increasing need and demand for full day, full week child care services could no longer be ignored by government or preschools and, although the latter continued to lobby hard (mainly through the Australian Preschools Association), the likelihood of substantial government expenditures on child care centres seemed inevitable. It is in this context that the contradictions inherent in, and the public condemnation of the Fry Report may be understood.

In response to this condemnation, and in particular the pressure exerted by the Labor Women's Organisation at the ALP's Federal conference in July 1973, substantial amendments to the Party's child care policy were made. This time the emphasis was redirected away from providing an educational service towards the broader issue of providing "community support for women to participate more fully in society" (Australian Labor Party Platform,
Constitution and Rules, 1973:17). Consequently, by the time the Fry Report was tabled in December 1973, the size and direction of the whole child care debate, both within and beyond ALP policy, had been considerably altered.

As a result of their revised policy orientation, two further reports were requested by the Federal Government. These were Project Care, prepared by the Social Welfare Commission (1974), and the Priorities Review Staff paper Early Childhood Services (1974). Both reports contained similar recommendations insofar as they emphasized the urgent need for wide-ranging, community based programmes including not just preschool education and long day care, but also occasional care, outside school hours care, family day care, play groups and support services for private minders. A central principle in the operationalisation of this new set of services was the decentralisation of children's services administration. Local residents, assisted by community workers, were to have the final say as to which services were most needed in their community, while the implementation of this policy was to be the responsibility of local government which was to "initiate community planning, make the final decisions as to which groups [would] be funded, disburse funds and co-ordinate programmes" (Project Care, 1974:6.37).

While both 1974 reports reflected and affirmed the new direction of ALP child care policy, the report Project Care in particular challenged a number of the basic assumptions of the Fry Report. Specifically, this report supported the child care lobby's contention that the greater provision of limited hours education services, as opposed to more flexible full day child care services, would ultimately promote the economic and educational advantage of the already well-off in Australia. Further, the ALP's proposed extension of preschool services to a universal basis was seen to contradict the Party's commitment to the principle of positive discrimination in favour of the socially disadvantaged and would, it was argued, "be inclined to widen the gap between the educational 'haves' and the 'have nots', rather than
lessen it" (Project Care, 1974:4.14). Based on this reasoning, Project Care recommended that the Government not only recognise that "all children in poor families require support from society, not only children of working parents", but that it respond to this fact by directing its assistance to those users most in need (1974:4.45). As will be discussed in more depth in the following chapter, this concept of 'need' has, over the years since 1974, come to have far-reaching and often contradictory implications for child care services and users alike.

Following these initial months of policy negotiation, consultation and debate, and on the basis of the proposals contained in all three Commonwealth reports on children's services, the Labor Government went to the polls in the May 1974 Federal elections with a much more complex and extensive child care policy than it had previously presented. In an attempt to respond to and assimilate the recommendations and demands of all sectors of the child care lobby, the ALP election platform promised a wide range of child care services subsidised according to need, as well as extensive access to free preschool education. This programme, claimed Whitlam, would be flexible and integrated and would break down the rigid distinction between educating children and caring for them. Despite, or maybe because of the more progressive intent and complex formulation of this general policy, however, its implementation was fraught with problems from the very beginning, reflecting, in part, the still divergent and conflicting interests of the many sectors involved.

In June 1975, following the re-election to power of the Labor Party, legislation was enacted for the establishment of a Children's Commission which would be the major policy formulating and funding body concerned with children's services in Australia. This legislation, however, was vehemently fought and delayed by the Opposition in parliament who strongly objected to the devolution of the administrative, though not the financial responsibility for children's services development to lower levels of government, and was not proclaimed before the dismissal of the ALP in November 1975. In the meantime,
the Interim Committee of the Children's Commission which was appointed in
September 1974 and was responsible for the implementation of the Government's
Interim Preschool and Child Care Programme invited State Governments to submit
plans for the funding of children's services in their states. It was intended
under this interim programme that the states would make use of the opportunity
to initiate a wide variety of children's services projects. Instead, a great
deal of conflict between State and Federal Governments, and between different
children's services lobby groups was engendered. The results were the
exposure of the still many structural and administrative problems and
contradictions inherent in the ALP's policy and guidelines, and yet further
changes to Federal policy.

In brief, the problems surrounding this interim programme centred on two
issues. Firstly, the conservative State-based opposition to the programme
was extensive and powerful. Specifically, the non-Labor State Governments were
strongly opposed to the by-passing of State authority by the Federal Government
in its direct funding of Local Government or community groups. In addition to
threatening to challenge the Children's Commission in the High Court on
this matter, several States rejected outright the Commonwealth's needs priority
and refused to apply it to their own preschool submissions (Brennan, 1982:10).
Secondly, considerable conflict between children's services lobby groups arose
as a result of the Federal Government's direct and indirect discrimination
against child care centres in the submissions and funding race of 1974/75. At
this time, the ALP's subsidisation of preschools extended to 100% of the
capital costs for new schools, as well as 100% of the recurrent costs of
approved staff. In contrast, child care centres funded under the Act received
100% of capital costs but only 75% of recurrent staffing costs. The development
of child care centres was further impeded, as compared to preschools, by the
submissions model the committee employed to allocate funds. Because of their
greater knowledge of and access to government bureaucracies, preschool
organisations and State Education Departments had a major advantage over the
rest of the community in the contest for funds. Their experience in developing programmes and submissions meant that "while the new parent groups were assiduously doing their groundwork, substantial allocations were approved for formal State Government sponsored kindergarten building programmes" (Brennan, 1982:10). In fact:

most states proposed sessional preschool projects exclusively...[and] in at least one state the Prime Minister's emphasis on new priorities and the subsequent fact that the preschool allocation could be used for child care projects not eligible under the Child Care Act was not passed on from the State Department of Education to the State authority responsible for child care.

(Early Childhood Services, 1974:10)

The consequence of all of this was that during 1974/75, the proportion of Commonwealth expenditure on the Children's Services Programme for preschools was 82%, with only 10% going to day care centres and the remaining 8% of available funds going to other types of children's services (Brennan, 1982:10).

Although the Federal Government did not respond directly to these funding inequities before being dismissed from office in 1975 - the submissions model remains today, it did attempt to further implement its stated commitment to wide-ranging children's services by announcing in June of 1975 that, in order to qualify for recurrent subsidies, all preschools would be required to expand their services to provide other types of child care in addition to the standard half-day educational sessions for four-year-olds. In theory, this notion of service integration may have represented a major breakthrough in the Government's attempts to collapse the distinction between education and care in the children's services. In practice, however, it became an ineffective and even farcical exercise. Not only were preschools instructed that service adaptation was not to inconvenience in any way their basic programme, or even the principle of sessional care for four-year-olds, but it was also almost impossible to monitor this integration process. In many instances, this requirement resulted in existing preschools simply tacking an unrelated service
onto the original one with the main aim being to become eligible for the
Government subsidy (Community Child Care Association of New South Wales,
1975:Newsletter No.2).


While the years from 1972 to 1975 saw an unprecedented, although still
problematic Commonwealth commitment to the development of children's
services in Australia, the years following the election to power of the
Liberal Party in December 1975 have seen this growth significantly eroded.
As was discussed in the preceding chapter, the late 1970's and early 1980's
have been characterised by a quite different economic and political climate
to that which prevailed during the preceding decade. The election to power
of a conservative government, as well as the steady decline in economic
conditions featuring high levels of inflation and unemployment, resulted in
a complete reorientation of Federal fiscal and social welfare policy. The
devolution of financial responsibility to lower levels of government, the
abandonment of regular indexation, reductions in real social welfare
expenditure accompanied by the implementation of the 'user pays' principle,
and enhanced government support for the private market sector were all
reflected in the development of child care policy under the Liberal Federal
Government of the 1970's.

Despite their election campaign promise to protect all welfare
programmes against inflation, upon coming to office, the Liberal Government
steadily reduced, both in absolute terms and as a proportion of overall
social security and welfare outlays, the amount of funds allocated for the
Children's Services Programme. The large extent of these cuts can be seen
from Table 5.1.

When this decline in Commonwealth expenditure on children's services is
broken down into the categories of capital and recurrent funding, it is
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*Note: (1) Budget Estimate.*

Table 1.1: Commonwealth Expenditure on Children's Services Programs As A Proportion of Total Budget and Social Security and Welfare Outlays, 1973-1982.
revealed that the bulk of this general spending cut was concentrated in the sphere of capital expenditure which had been increasingly reduced since 1975/76 (see Table 5.2). While it is the case that recurrent funding had been reduced in real terms only after 1977/78, and has decreased less dramatically since then, the dearth of capital funds necessary to initiate real growth in, rather than merely sustain the Children's Services Programme, meant that the child care sector's ability to respond to the demand for services regressed considerably after 1975.

This general decline in the overall funding of the Children's Services Programme is even more strikingly revealed in data documenting the changing levels of Government expenditure on children's services *in relation* to the numbers of children eligible for these services since 1972. It is illustrated in Table 5.3 that Australia experienced a significant decline in the under five-year-old (preschool) population between 1973 and 1980. Had the level of government funding for children's services remained only static over this period, the decline in the main eligible population would have resulted in a growth in the number of dollars available per head of child under the age of five years. Instead, however, we can observe that the funds available per head of these children have actually decreased steadily since 1975, the one exception being in 1979 when a marginal increase in this ratio occurred.

This trend is repeated almost exactly when the population under consideration is expanded to include all zero to fourteen year-olds, although it should be noted that the decline in this larger population has been less marked than in the former.

Finally, when school age children only are considered (including those between five and fourteen years of age), a population which has generally increased between 1973 and 1982, we can observe that the funding levels have usually declined over time per head of child in this category also.

In summary then, not only has Federal expenditure on the Children's Services
Table 5.2 RECURRENT, CAPITAL AND TOTAL EXPENDITURE UNDER THE CHILDREN'S SERVICES PROGRAMME IN ACTUAL AND CONSTANT (1973-74) PRICES, 1973-1982. ($ millions)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Expenditure</th>
<th>% Change</th>
<th>Constant 1973-74</th>
<th>% Change</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Recurrent</td>
<td></td>
<td>Prices</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1973-74</td>
<td>5.423</td>
<td></td>
<td>5.423</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1974-75</td>
<td>23.852</td>
<td>+339.8</td>
<td>20.849</td>
<td>+284.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1975-76</td>
<td>41.611</td>
<td>+74.5</td>
<td>31.104</td>
<td>+49.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1976-77</td>
<td>48.428</td>
<td>+16.4</td>
<td>32.230</td>
<td>+6.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1977-78</td>
<td>57.213</td>
<td>+118.0</td>
<td>33.565</td>
<td>+4.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1978-79</td>
<td>57.617</td>
<td>+0.7</td>
<td>31.332</td>
<td>-6.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1979-80</td>
<td>63.341</td>
<td>+9.9</td>
<td>31.647</td>
<td>+1.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1980-81</td>
<td>69.113</td>
<td>+9.1</td>
<td>31.198</td>
<td>-1.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1981-82</td>
<td>78.954</td>
<td>+14.2</td>
<td>32.753</td>
<td>-8.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Capital</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1973-74</td>
<td>3.551</td>
<td></td>
<td>3.551</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>18.687</td>
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<td>+4.6</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>1977-78</td>
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<td>-25.1</td>
<td>8.204</td>
<td>-33.9</td>
</tr>
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<td>1978-79</td>
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<td>3.382</td>
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<tr>
<td>1979-80</td>
<td>5.885</td>
<td>-5.4</td>
<td>2.940</td>
<td>-13.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1980-81</td>
<td>4.921</td>
<td>-16.4</td>
<td>2.22</td>
<td>-24.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1981-82</td>
<td>1.142</td>
<td>-76.8</td>
<td>0.47</td>
<td>-78.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1973-74</td>
<td>8.974</td>
<td></td>
<td>8.974</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1974-75</td>
<td>45.230</td>
<td>+404.0</td>
<td>39.536</td>
<td>+340.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1975-76</td>
<td>63.970</td>
<td>+41.4</td>
<td>47.818</td>
<td>+20.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1976-77</td>
<td>67.086</td>
<td>+4.9</td>
<td>44.647</td>
<td>-6.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1977-78</td>
<td>71.197</td>
<td>+6.1</td>
<td>41.769</td>
<td>-6.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1978-79</td>
<td>63.836</td>
<td>-10.3</td>
<td>34.714</td>
<td>-16.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1979-80</td>
<td>69.226</td>
<td>+8.4</td>
<td>34.587</td>
<td>-0.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1980-81</td>
<td>74.034</td>
<td>+6.9</td>
<td>33.419</td>
<td>-3.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1981-82</td>
<td>81.100</td>
<td>+9.5</td>
<td>33.643</td>
<td>+0.7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Sweeney, 1982a:21
Table 5.3 COMMONWEALTH EXPENDITURE ON CHILDREN’S SERVICES PROGRAMME AT CONSTANT (1973-74) PRICES PER HEAD OF AUSTRALIAN CHILD POPULATION, 1973-1982.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>0 - 5</th>
<th></th>
<th>5 - 14</th>
<th></th>
<th>0 - 14</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Population (Millions)</td>
<td>% Change in Population</td>
<td>Expenditure Per Head ($0.00)</td>
<td>Population (Millions)</td>
<td>% Change in Population</td>
<td>Expenditure Per Head ($0.00)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1972</td>
<td>1.28</td>
<td></td>
<td>2.51</td>
<td></td>
<td>3.79</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1973</td>
<td>1.30</td>
<td>+1.09</td>
<td>6.90</td>
<td>2.52</td>
<td>+0.20</td>
<td>3.57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1974</td>
<td>1.29</td>
<td>-0.23</td>
<td>30.55</td>
<td>2.53</td>
<td>+0.56</td>
<td>15.63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1975</td>
<td>1.28</td>
<td>-1.09</td>
<td>37.33</td>
<td>2.54</td>
<td>+0.36</td>
<td>18.83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1976</td>
<td>1.24</td>
<td>-3.47</td>
<td>36.06</td>
<td>2.55</td>
<td>+0.39</td>
<td>17.52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1977</td>
<td>1.19</td>
<td>-3.69</td>
<td>34.98</td>
<td>2.57</td>
<td>+0.82</td>
<td>16.25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1978</td>
<td>1.17</td>
<td>-2.49</td>
<td>29.80</td>
<td>2.58</td>
<td>+0.35</td>
<td>13.46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1979</td>
<td>1.14</td>
<td>-2.01</td>
<td>30.29</td>
<td>2.58</td>
<td>-0.04</td>
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<tr>
<td>1980</td>
<td>1.13</td>
<td>-0.88</td>
<td>29.52</td>
<td>2.58</td>
<td>+0.78</td>
<td>12.95</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1981</td>
<td>1.14</td>
<td>+0.62</td>
<td>29.51</td>
<td>2.59</td>
<td>+0.27</td>
<td>12.99</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1982</td>
<td>1.16</td>
<td>+1.32</td>
<td>2.59</td>
<td>+0.08</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Sources: ABS Estimated Resident Population by Sex and Age June 1971 to June 1981
ABS Estimated Resident Population by Sex and Age June 1977 to June 1982
Department of Social Security Annual Report 1980-81: 142
Programme since 1975 declined in absolute terms as well as in terms of total budget and social security outlays, but it has also declined in relation to the population of eligible Australian children - a population which was itself declining during this period. While it seems too soon to safely conclude from the slight increase in expenditure per head of child in 1981 that a significant reversal of this trend in all categories is imminent, it is worth considering that, if the growth evident in the Australian child population since 1980 continues in the absence of an even greater growth rate in the funding of children's services, this trend can only be exacerbated in the years to come.

The particular approach of the Liberal Government to children's services provision that is revealed above is further evidenced at the ideological and political levels in the Commonwealth's decision in 1976 not to proceed with the proposed Children's Commission, but rather, to establish the Office of Child Care within the Department of Social Security. In contrast to the ALP's principle of universal provision of preschool education and the right of all working parents to child care facilities, the main focus of the new Government was to define and administer child care provision as a strictly welfare service restricted to assisting only the 'needy' by way of government handouts. As a corollary to this move, the Government administratively cemented the division between education and care within the Children's Services Programme by dividing the programme into discrete preschool and non-preschool components. At the same time, it expanded the funding responsibilities, though not the available funds, of the total programme to cover a wide variety of projects and services directly unrelated to those of child care or education. By 1981/82, family support services and the youth services scheme - neither of which focussed on the development of child care services - consumed approximately 12% of the total children's services budget (Office of Child Care, 1982b:5).

The altered funding levels and directions which followed this formal division and expansion of the Children's Services Programme clearly reveal the marked shift in Australian Federal welfare ideology and practices which
accompanied the deteriorating economic conditions and the rule of a conservative government during this period. In attempting to detail and understand the dimensions and nature of this shift in its total social context, it is particularly useful to examine the Liberal Government's differential support for various types of child care services. This examination will allow us to identify, at least initially, the fundamental funding principles and imperatives of this government during the 1970's and 80's.

(i) The Withdrawal From Preschool Funding

Soon after coming to office in 1975, the Prime Minister, Malcolm Fraser, announced that:

Many children from needy families... have been not only without the advantage of preschool education but too often without the benefits of basic adequate care. It is essential to concentrate the Government's resources in areas of greatest need, and the Commonwealth wishes to give greater emphasis to child care for children of needy families in the development of the children's services programme.

(Press Release, February 4, 1976)

Standing on its own, this statement appears to diverge little from the previous Labor Party platform on child care needs and priorities. Certainly, the recognition of the educational advantages of preschool training, and the emphasis on the necessity of basic adequate child care, particularly for needy children, did not explicitly contradict former government policy. When viewed in conjunction with the contractionist economic policies and the ideology of a minimal welfare state propounded by the Liberal Government, however, this statement can be seen to have laid the rhetorical groundwork for the isolation and limitation, rather than the further expansion of government funded child care provisions. Further, it would appear that the greater emphasis in this statement on the benefits of "basic adequate care", as a priority over access to preschool, pre-empted the Liberal's concern at the disproportionate amount of funds going to preschool services around the country.
The Australian Liberal Party has consistently regarded preschool funding as the province of the State rather than the Federal Governments and in fact drafted the Child Care Act of 1972 to specifically exclude assistance to preschools by determining that only centres operating for eight or more hours per day were eligible for Commonwealth subsidisation. This perspective on preschool was not, of course, a universally popular one and public sentiment was at the time and still is sharply divided. On the one hand, many community day care lobby groups viewed preschools as competition which, despite their exclusion by the Child Care Act, ate up an excessive share of the Children's Services Programme funds. On the other hand, community expectations regarding Federal support for preschools had been raised by the preceding government and many sectors continued to regard the Labor Party's commitment to providing one year of free preschool education to every Australian child as one the Liberal Government should honour.

Despite these conflicting viewpoints, and in the absence of any formal public debate, the Government went ahead in November 1976 and announced its decision to fund preschools only by way of a fixed annual block grant to each of the States. In turn, State Governments were deemed responsible for the equitable distribution of these funds and for the subsidisation of financial needs unmet by the fixed Federal grants. In so doing, the Federal Government effectively dissolved a major share of its administrative and financial responsibility, but not control over, the funding of preschool education.

This new grant scheme commenced operation in January 1977 and, to bring it into line with the funding levels of child care services, was allocated on the basis of the funds required to cover only 75% of the salaries of approved staff. In addition, a small portion of the total allocation allowed for outstanding capital repayments to be made.

In June of 1978, the block grant to preschools was substantially reduced and, for the first time since 1972, no funds were provided to cover capital costs or inflation. The usual practice of making advance payments for
the following financial year was also dropped. As a consequence of these changes, as well as the fact that recurrent financial assistance to preschools remained static from 1978, the proportion of the total Children’s Services Programme funds going to preschools decreased dramatically from 73% in 1976/77 to 42% in 1980/81 (Brennan and Brien, 1981:6).

The impact on the State Governments of this Federal withdrawal of funds was severe, in particular because of the additional costs incurred by them by way of their requirement under the block grants scheme to extend preschool facilities so that they could be used more widely by the community. To varying degrees, all State Governments responded by assuming the major financial burden for the development and maintenance of preschool education in their states. As can be seen from Table 5.4, each State has provided capital funds for preschools since 1978 and, as the Commonwealth progressively reduced its overall allocation for block grants, the States were also forced to drastically increase their expenditure on the recurrent costs of preschools. It is illustrated in Figure 5.1 that, by 1981/82, this situation had escalated such that every dollar of the $32 million spent by the Commonwealth on preschool education was matched by almost three dollars from State coffers. This figure contrasts sharply with the 60% Commonwealth contribution towards total preschool funding in 1975/76.

(ii) The Redirection of Day Care Funding

In addition to reducing the overall level of funds available to the Children’s Services Programme between 1975 and 1982, the Liberal Government considerably altered the proportional allocation of funds to different services within the programme. In their competition for limited funds, and as a result of their deteriorating funding position, it was often assumed by the preschool lobby that the centre based day care sector of the programme had benefitted by virtue of the cuts to the preschool allocation. To the contrary, however, an examination of the relevant data reveals that in fact
Table 5.4 RECURRENT, CAPITAL AND TOTAL EXPENDITURE ON PRESCHOOLS UNDER THE CHILDREN'S SERVICES PROGRAMME BY STATES AND NORTHERN TERRITORY, 1973-1982. ($ millions).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>NSW</th>
<th>VIC</th>
<th>QLD</th>
<th>SA</th>
<th>WA</th>
<th>TAS</th>
<th>NT</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Recurrent</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1973-74</td>
<td>1.286</td>
<td>1.239</td>
<td>.353</td>
<td>.632</td>
<td>.428</td>
<td>.125</td>
<td></td>
<td>4.063</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1974-75</td>
<td>5.100</td>
<td>6.629</td>
<td>1.552</td>
<td>3.462</td>
<td>2.159</td>
<td>1.052</td>
<td></td>
<td>19.954</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1976-77</td>
<td>7.409</td>
<td>11.618</td>
<td>6.958</td>
<td>5.034</td>
<td>4.710</td>
<td>1.917</td>
<td></td>
<td>37.646</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| Capital  |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |       |
|----------|      |      |      |      |      |      |      |       |
| 1973-74  | .160 | .288 | 1.003| .514 | .166 | .285 |      | 2.416 |
| 1974-75  | 4.819| 2.637| 3.806| 2.773| 1.911| 1.771|      | 17.123|
| 1975-76  | 3.165| 1.345| 2.584| 1.498| 1.441| 1.764|      | 11.797|
| 1976-77  | 6.592| 4.160| .314 | .160 | .144 | .005 |      | 11.175|
| 1977-78  | 3.053| 3.500| -    | -    | .079 | -    |      | 6.532 |
| 1978-79  | -    | -    | -    | -    | -    | -    |      | -     |
| 1979-80  | -    | -    | -    | -    | -    | -    |      | -     |
| 1980-81  | -    | -    | -    | -    | -    | -    |      | -     |
| 1981-82  | -    | -    | -    | -    | -    | -    |      | -     |

| Total    |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |       |
|----------|      |      |      |      |      |      |      |       |
| 1973-74  | 1.446| 1.527| 1.356| 1.146| .594 | .410 |      | 6.479 |
| 1975-76  | 11.824| 12.605| 7.831| 5.831| 5.477| 3.461|      | 47.029|
| 1977-78  | 10.987| 15.744| 6.958| 5.194| 5.110| 1.922|      | 45.994|

Source: Sweeney, 1982a:27
Figure 5.1 EXPENDITURE ON PRESCHOOLS, COMMONWEALTH AND ALL STATE GOVERNMENTS, 1975-1982.

both sectors fared poorly under the Liberal Federal Government.

While it is obvious from Table 5.5 that non-preschool child care services did not suffer the massive reductions in Commonwealth funding experienced by the preschool sector, it is also clear that non-preschool services did not receive the total of those substantial funds withdrawn from preschool services. Indeed, rather than benefitting from the demise of the preschool system under the Liberal Government, non-preschool services themselves were adversely affected by the Government's reorientation of child care policy during these years.

From 1975/76, the non-preschool funding allocation was spread increasingly thinly over an ever widening range of services which now encompasses the entire zero to eighteen-year-old age group (see Figure 5.2). The consequence of this process was that while the Commonwealth funding of the Children's Services Programme as a whole was increased between 1975/76 and 1980/81, that proportion of the non-preschool allocation available to centre based child care services decreased from 78% to 44% during the same period (Brennan and Brien, 1981:6). Given this, it is clear that preschool funding levels did not suffer alone at the hands of the Liberal Government. The effects on the development and growth of the child care sector as a result of the expanded financial responsibilities of the Children's Services Programme were also severe.

Having established the extent of the withdrawal of real Federal support for preschool and centre based child care services during the mid to late 1970's and early 1980's, it now becomes necessary to examine those children's services which experienced a funding growth during this period. For while the former exercise allowed us to confirm the contractionist orientation of the Liberal Government towards social welfare and educational expenditure, the latter will allow us to begin to detail and assess the specific and selective nature of these contractions, as well as the objectives and assumptions which appear to have informed their pursuit.

It is illustrated in Figure 5.2 that the expenditure growth of all sectors
### Table 5.5: Commonwealth Expenditure Trends Under Children's Services Programme for the Preschool and NON-Preschool Sector, 1973-1982

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Non-Preschool Sector</th>
<th>Preschool Sector</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
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<td>1973-4</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1974-5</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>1975-6</td>
<td>37.08</td>
<td>47.03</td>
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<tr>
<td>1976-7</td>
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<td>57.03</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1978-9</td>
<td>32.75</td>
<td>51.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1979-80</td>
<td>33.09</td>
<td>50.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1980-1</td>
<td>31.18</td>
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<tr>
<td>1981-2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1982-3</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| Source: Expenditure figures from Table 5.5, Department of Social Security, Annual Report 1980-81: 142. | **More:** (1) Budget estimate |
Figure 5.2 DISTRIBUTION OF FUNDS WITHIN NON-PRESCHOOL SECTOR OF COMMONWEALTH CHILDREN'S SERVICES PROGRAMME, 1975-76.

Total: $16,819,000

Figure 5.3 DISTRIBUTION OF FUNDS WITHIN NON-PRESCHOOL SECTOR OF COMMONWEALTH CHILDREN'S SERVICES PROGRAMME, 1980-81.

Total: $47,355,000

of the non-preschool children's services was, with only one exception, either minimal or non-existent between 1976/77 and 1981/82. That one exception is substantial and, in the light of the above discussions, deserves particular attention.

Family day care is a child care scheme funded by Federal Government monies and administered jointly by State and Local Government departments. These departments license homebound women to mind up to four preschool age children over the age of six weeks (including their own) on a part-time, occasional, or full-time basis. Each local family day care scheme is funded to employ a co-ordinator and a number of child development staff who not only bring together mothers requiring child care and those who are prepared to mind others'children, but also monitor, supervise and support the caregivers themselves. Family day care minders are not necessarily trained nurses, teachers or child carers as is required in all other forms of government funded child care. Rather, they are selected by the family day care administrative staff on the basis of their stable, warm and caring nature and their love of children - upon which basis it appears to be assumed that these women care for children more out of the 'goodness of their heart' than for financial reward. Recent research reveals that this is not, in fact, the case (Council of Social Services of New South Wales, 1980).

The model upon which present family day care schemes are generally structured was developed originally in 1971 by the Brotherhood of St. Lawrence in Fitzroy, Victoria (Brotherhood of St. Lawrence, 1977:43). This scheme, originally set up as a short term measure to accomodate the desperate need of Fitzroy residents for child care, has, over the years, come to be seen as a principle means of meeting the growing child care needs of working mothers. Family day care has been Federally funded under the Children's Services Programme since 1975/76 at which stage there were only ten schemes in Australia. There are now 215 schemes across the country (Wyse, 1983:3-4).
In the five years to 1981/82, the Commonwealth funding of family day care was increased by a massive 19.9%. The magnitude of this increase is even more remarkable when viewed alongside the real decrease in the proportional funding of day care and multipurpose care centres by 42% over the same period (see Figure 5.2). Whereas the number of places in Federally funded child care centres increased by 1,500 between 1976 and 1981, the number of family day care places increased by 10,000 (Davis, 1983:83).

In the process of promoting and justifying the development of family day care over other forms of child care, this type of care has been officially championed on a number of counts. Among these are the assertions that family day care offers flexibility with regard to the type of care required and the changing age structure of the child population; family day care is more convenient for parents geographically; family day care allows parents some control over the type of care their children receive; and, finally, family day care provides a secure family environment and is therefore better suited to children's developmental requirements, in particular those of very young children.26.

It is not possible here to examine in detail the validity of, or the extensive debates surrounding these claims (see instead Community Child Care Association of Victoria, 1979). In terms of child and community development, and parent support goals, however, people's experience of the quality of family day care, like all forms of child care, has been observed to range from very good to very poor (Gallagher Ross, 1978; Council of Social Services of New South Wales, 1980). On this basis alone it could be argued that the above list of assets of family day care may be rather more an indictment of the standard of Australian child care provisions generally than an indication of the inherent and exclusive virtues of home-based care.

From a more critical standpoint, the family day care scheme can be seen to embody more significant advantages for government than for the users of this service. There are two reasons for this.
Family day care schemes are considerably cheaper to establish and operate than day care and other types of child care services. Because care is undertaken solely in the minder's home, not only is no capital expenditure required of the Government, but many of the overhead costs incurred in providing care are borne by the carer herself (eg electricity, cleaning, insurance and equipment costs). Neither are reasonable wages paid to family day care minders who, according to the 1974 report *Project Care*, are principally housewives and mothers whose participation in the family day care scheme amounts to no more than an extension of these roles and, as such, need not be paid a rate commensurate with out of home employment, but merely a rate for each child minded which does not in any way relate to an award level of pay (1974: 4.27).

The wages and conditions of family day care minders vary greatly from scheme to scheme. Taking the case of Victoria as documented by Wyse (1983), a caregiver minding four children for forty hours per week earns only $140, an amount which is $62 less than the weekly award wage of an untrained (first year) child care worker and often, amounts to less than one dollar per child per hour. Further, caregivers in many family day care schemes receive only a set amount for full day care regardless of the number of hours involved. In most schemes, carers receive a rate of pay which actually decreases as the hours of care increase. Finally, most family day care minders receive no overtime rates or loadings for care provided during weekends, public holidays or unsociable hours; no sick leave or holiday provisions; no workers compensation; and certainly no job security (see Wyse, 1983:8). The isolation and relative invisibility of child carers working in their own homes too, not only restricts the involvement of these women in social intercourse with other adults, but also makes it extremely difficult for carers to be organised, or organise themselves industrially.

The cost saving benefits to the Federal Government of promoting this scheme over other types of child care services, then, are considerable.
There is, however, a further dimension to the family day care scheme which serves the interests of the Australian welfare state. For the family day care scheme, as it is presently structured, can be seen to operate at every level to reinforce the prevailing ideology of domestic labour and child care as work to be carried out by women, without payment, in the private sphere of the home. Under these conditions, the Government need take no long term or fundamental responsibility for the provision of this service.

This fact raises a number of complex and controversial issues for the child care movement, child care workers and indeed all women. Most basically, these include whether or not women should be paid a wage for private domestic labour; whether or not women should work to extend their traditional nurturing and caring roles into the public sphere via volunteer (or largely volunteer) labour; whether or not family day care minders should perceive themselves first as mothers, or first as workers, (or if indeed this distinction is a valid and useful one); and finally, the related question of whether or not good quality child care, as it is variously defined, is compatible with the changing status of child care from a welfare service provided by 'willing mums', to an industry which employs and defends the position of waged workers within a highly bureaucratised structure. Issues such as these are by no means agreed upon by the various sectors of the child care movement. Nevertheless, they are objectively of crucial importance to all women and will be taken up and discussed in their broader social, economic and political context in a subsequent chapter. In the meantime, it is sufficient to note that the marked preferential funding treatment of the family day care scheme by the Federal Government, and the consequent plethora of these services throughout Australia, poses a very real threat to women, both as mothers and as paid workers. Not only does the mass of funding going to family day care effectively conceal the withdrawal of Government support from all other forms of child care service, but the specific nature of family day care serves to both rationalise (economically
and ideologically) and enhance the exploitation of women's paid and unpaid labour.

In summary then, it appears that while the Liberal Federal Government cut back extensively its social welfare expenditure during the late 1970's and early 1980's, it did so selectively, simultaneously promoting the funding position of particular clearly delineated and very limited areas of child care provision. In the previous chapter, this general process was identified in the case of the dependent spouse rebate. In the specific area of children's services, it is clear that family day care is the preferred scheme. Not only does this form of child care pose no challenge to the nuclear family ideal (as do some other forms of child care services, at least potentially), but, as well as conforming to the Government's emphasis on the private, as opposed to public responsibility for child care provision, it also legitimates, at a minimal cost, the Commonwealth's involvement in the children's services. On all of these criteria, the parallels in intent and effect between the spouse rebate and family day care schemes are striking, the ultimate consequence being the ideological and material reassertion of a conservative and exploitative sexual division of labour and responsibilities.
CHAPTER SIX

CHILD CARE POLICY AND THE CONCEPT OF NEED
In Chapter Five the levels and directions of Australian Federal child care funding were examined. The trends revealed in that chapter indicated that, particularly in more recent years, the Government has been concerned to minimise its spending on children's services development. Impelled by the need to cut costs in a period of economic crisis, yet to do so in a manner which did not undermine the legitimacy of the welfare state in the face of the growing demand for welfare provisions, the Australian welfare state has, over the past few years, significantly reduced and restructured its expenditure on child care in a manner consistent with and supportive of the traditional ideology of child care as the 'proper' responsibility of women in the private home.

Having documented these trends in child care policy development, this chapter will be devoted to examining in more depth the specific means by which this process of restructuring has proceeded in practice and has been legitimated ideologically. It will be argued that the concept of 'need', as it has been specifically defined and applied in Federal child care policy, has not only been crucial as an administrative device for reducing the direct funding of children's services, but more importantly, has operated ideologically to mystify and conceal the real level of need for these services in present day Australia. By imposing a subjective, or normative, definition of (limited) need upon objective conditions of (dire) need, the Australian welfare state, through its policy guidelines and rhetoric, has attempted to diminish its financial and moral responsibility for child care.

In order to argue this claim concretely, the following discussion will concentrate on the 'needs' policy of the Federal Government as it has been most recently and comprehensively formulated in the 1981 Spender Report. In the context of a documentation of the real extent of need for child care, as well as the low level of need fulfillment in this area, the discussion will attempt to illustrate the disastrous consequences for all women of the
prevailing concept of need in Australian child care policy of the 1980's.

1. THE NEED FOR CHILD CARE

The fact that almost all Australian families need or desire access to a variety of child care services is both directly and indirectly documented in a range of official government and other reports and publications. This documentation takes both the immediate form of an explicitly expressed need for child care services, and the indirect form of detailing the changing structure and composition of Australian households. On the basis of this available information and the assumption that, at the very least, all two income and single parent families with preschool age children will require some form of child care some of the time, both the high demand for and the perpetual shortage of child care provisions in Australia will be substantiated.

Before doing so, however, it is crucial to note that the following data, focussing as it does on the need for child care by working parents, represents only a portion of those people who may need or desire access to child care services. It is, as such, underrepresentative of the real level of need for these services. Contrary to much popular opinion, it is also assumed in this discussion that workforce participation is not, and should not be, the only reason for the use of formal child care facilities by women. The use of these services for recreational and other personal purposes which do not involve earning an income must be seen as equally valid and necessary - as indeed they are by many mothers (Simpson, 1983:Chapter Six). It is only within this broader context, then, that the following data can be interpreted as being indicative of Australian mothers need for alternative child care provisions.

(i) Expressed Need

Systematic and detailed information concerning the child care needs of
Australian households is sparse. Because of the methodological problems noted in Chapter One (see Note 3), there is little information available which has been elicited directly from the community regarding their changing and varied child care needs and preferences. The information of this type that has been collected is, however, revealing.

One of the earliest studies to investigate in detail the question of women's need for child care was the New South Wales Council of Social Services study *We Cannot Talk Our Rights*. This study found that over 60% of the migrant women surveyed reported that, although they would have liked to take a job, 'they were unable to do so due to inadequate child care facilities (Cox, Jobson and Martin, 1976).

The general direction of these findings was confirmed in the 1977 Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) Child Care Survey which reported that 70% of persons who would have liked to work and were responsible for children under twelve years of age were not looking for work because of child care problems (ABS, 1977:18).

In a further New South Wales Council of Social Services study conducted in New South Wales a year later, it was found that about 5% of women surveyed gave child care problems as their main reason for leaving their previous job (Davis, 1983:82). Simultaneously, a survey of Australian families conducted by the University of New South Wales' Family Research Unit found that almost 30% of single parents in Australia were prevented from using child care centres by the long waiting lists, the geographical inaccessibility and the high costs of these services (English et al, 1978:45).

Additional evidence for the need for child care is to be found in the 1980 ABS document *Social Indicators* which reported that, at September 1979, approximately 14.5% of the 36.9% of unemployed mothers who were responsible for preschool age children and who wanted paid work, would have been in the labour force if suitable child care was available. A further 7.3% of women in this position, but who had children between the ages of six and
eleven years only, gave the same response (ABS, 1980c:145).

Finally, all of these survey results are confirmed in the more intensive survey work of Burns (1976, 1977), who, in her investigations of Australian parents attitudes towards child care, confirms beyond all doubt that the large majority of families in this country desire access to some form of substitute child care during the first five years of their children's lives.

(ii) The Changing Family Form

The above data which attests directly to the immediate need for, and profound impact of child care service provision on the working lives of numerous women may be complemented with data reflecting the changing structure of the Australian household and, consequently, the growing need for child care facilities over time (see also Harper and Richards, 1979; Boss, 1980).

By 1980, 13% (or 534,100) of Australian families were headed by a single parent, usually a woman (ABS, 1981a:5). Of these families, the majority (64%) contained dependent children, while approximately 41% of them contained one or more preschool age child. Between 1975 and 1980, the number of single parents responsible for preschool age children had increased by 60% (Office of Child Care, 1981:5).

In 1980, just over 38% of all single parents were engaged in paid work on a full-time or part-time basis. This figure includes 43% of all single mothers (ABS, 1981a:5). On the basis of this information and the reasonable assumption that single parents in the labour force will require child care of some sort much of the time, it appears that the level of need for child care facilities by the growing numbers of sole parents alone is significant. As we shall see, this need has remained largely unmet.

An equally powerful indicator of Australian child care needs is to be found in the workforce participation rates of women in two parent families containing preschool or school age children. In 1980, a total of 46% of all married women with dependent children participated in paid labour (ABS, 1981a:5).
This figure represents an increase of 11% since 1970 (ABS, 1980a:117). Of these women, just over 240,000 (or 56%) of those who were married and in the age group of 22 to 44 years were engaged in full-time work, while an additional 190,000 worked on a part-time basis only. These figures show an increase from 1972 of 32% and 76% respectively (ABS, 1981b:5), and indicate, not only the rapid growth of young married women's participation in the workforce, but also the significant expansion that has been undergone by the part-time work sector over the past decade.

While the percentage increase of all women in paid work was high between 1970 and 1980, the fact that the growth rate for married women in the prime child bearing age was much higher has significant implications for the state of child care provisions in this country. Once again, the growing need for child care facilities seems clear.

An examination of these workforce participation trends of women reveal that not only the presence of, but also the age and number of dependent children has a significant impact on mothers' involvement in paid work. It is illustrated in Figure 6.1 that the likelihood of persons who are responsible for children under twelve years of age participating in paid work - of which over 99% are women (ABS, 1977:6) - decreases significantly as the number of dependent children increases. Of particular note is the markedly lesser workforce participation rate of mothers of more than two children, as well as the fact that this rate, in contrast to that of working mothers with only one or two children, has actually decreased steadily since 1973.

When the specific age of dependent children is considered, we see that mothers of children under five years of age are much less likely to be employed than mothers of children over five years old. It is also clear that, while the under five/over five age distinction is the most significant as a determinant of the mother's workforce participation, the employment rate of mothers continues to increase as the age of dependent children increases up to fourteen years (see Figure 6.2).
Figure 6.1  EMPLOYMENT OF PERSONS RESPONSIBLE FOR CHILDREN UNDER 12 YEARS OF AGE, 1973-1980.

- All persons responsible for children under 12 years
- Persons responsible for one child under 12 years
- Persons responsible for two children under 12 years
- Persons responsible for three or more children under 12 years

Source: Calculated from A.B.S. Child Care Survey 1980, Diagram 3: 6 and Table 12: 18.
Figure 6.2  TWO PARENT FAMILIES: EMPLOYED MOTHERS BY AGE OF CHILDREN, 1980.

This general pattern seems to hold even for mothers responsible for children in a number of age groupings. Thus, the employment rate of women responsible for at least one under five year old plus one child aged between five and nine years is higher than that for women responsible for under four year olds only, but lower than that of mothers responsible for children aged between five and nine years old only (ABS, 1981a:26).

This data illustrating the importance of the age of dependent children in women's decision, or opportunity to enter paid work is confirmed by information collected in 1979 which indicates that the percentage of those unemployed mothers responsible for children under twelve years old who want paid work varies according to the specific age of their children. In this survey, women with children over six years of age were more likely to report that they wanted paid work regardless of the availability of child care, while women with children under six years of age tended to report more often than other mothers that they wanted paid work only if adequate child care facilities could be found (ABS, 1980c:145).

Unfortunately, no directly comparable data is available regarding these relationships in previous years. Using information collected during the ABS Child Care Surveys of 1973 and 1977, however, it is possible to roughly assess these patterns over time and, on this basis, observe that the various extents and directions of the relationship between the age distribution of dependent children and the likelihood of mothers' workforce participation noted above have been consistent since 1973 (see Table 6.1).

While the relationships detailed above may reflect the choice of mothers to remain other than employed while their children are young, this conclusion is, I think, inadequate. For to assert that women have this choice in the context of the increasing requirement for two incomes in the 'typical' Australian family, the dearth of child care facilities (which is reflected in the long waiting lists at almost all child care centres), and the direct expression by large numbers of mothers of their wish to engage in paid work if
Table 6.1 EMPLOYMENT OF WOMEN RESPONSIBLE FOR CHILDREN UNDER 12 YEARS OF AGE, 1973-1977.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age of Children for which mother is responsible</th>
<th>% of Mothers in the Labour Force</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>One or more children under six years only</td>
<td>26.5 (A) 30.4 (D)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>One or more children over six years only</td>
<td>49.9 (B) 53.3 (E)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>One or more children under six years plus</td>
<td>27.9 (C) 35.2 (F)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>One or more children over six years</td>
<td>(28.3) (35.5)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Calculated from
(A) A.B.S. Child Care Survey 1973, Table 7: 6.
(B) A.B.S. Child Care Survey 1973, Table 2: 3.
(C) A.B.S. Child Care Survey 1973, Table 4: 5.
(D) A.B.S. Child Care Survey 1977, Table 7: 9.
(E) A.B.S. Child Care Survey 1977, Table 3: 6.
(F) A.B.S. Child Care Survey 1977, Table 5: 8.

Note: Figures in brackets give this percentage for all persons responsible for children under 12 years (ie. men and women).
adequate child care were available is quite clearly inappropriate.

By way of concluding this documentation of the need, or potential need for child care provisions in Australia, I will argue that the high level of expressed need, the large and growing number of single parent families, and the enhanced workforce participation of Australian mothers indisputably attest, in unison, to the substantial and increasing requirement for child care services in this country. By examining the availability and patterns of use of child care services in Australia to 1982, the extent to which these needs have been met may be assessed more accurately and the 'needs' aspect of the Commonwealth's child care policy during this period examined in its proper context.

2. THE FULFILLMENT OF CHILD CARE NEEDS

At June 1980, there were approximately 1.13 million preschool age children in Australia, comprising just under 8% of the total population. When all primary school age children were also accounted for, this figure rises to over 3.2 million (ABS, 1981c:30-3). In the same year, the ratio of all places in all child care centres and schemes, plus preschools, to the number of children under five years of age averaged 1:124, ranging from 1:93 in the Northern Territory to as high as 1:343 in New South Wales. When Federally funded child care centres only are considered, these ratios increase dramatically, ranging from 1:553 in the Northern Territory to 1:1776 in Western Australia (Davis, 1983:81). The under two year old population fares particularly badly in this respect since 90% of child care centres in Australia do not accept this age group into care. In New South Wales in 1981, only one place was available for every 2,322 of these children, a ratio which increased to 1:3,298 when all two year olds were added to the calculation (Robertson and Cox, 1981:7). Compounding this nation wide shortage of child care places is the existence, most notably in the most populous states, of a
directly inverse relationship between the availability of Federally subsidised child care places and the need for this service in particular areas (Robertson and Cox, 1981:8-9).

By 1982, only 9.6% of all Australian children under twelve years of age had access to a Federally funded child care service (Community Child Care Association of New South Wales, 1982, Newsletter No.13:7). The social consequences of these statistics are the perpetual waiting lists of well over 100 children at most child care centres in this country.

The absolute shortage of child care facilities and the effects of this shortage on Australian households are reaffirmed and reflected in the patterns of child care use that characterised Australia during the early 1980's.

Examining first the main type of care used by families with children, it is illustrated in Figure 6.3 that in 1980, by far the largest proportion of all children and, in particular, all preschool age children were cared for solely by the parent responsible, usually the mother. Adding to this the proportion of children cared for by other relatives, friends and 'others' in their own home, we see that as much as 80% of all child care used in that year was informal. Only 11.4% of all children received preschool or centre based care.

It has been further estimated by Sweeney and Jamrozik (1981:18) that in 1980 approximately 5,300 children were regularly left alone for extended periods of time. From Figure 6.3 it would appear that these children were usually over the age of five years.28.

Once again, no directly comparable and equally detailed data is available for earlier periods of time, or relating specifically to single parent families. Comparable information is available, however, for migrant families and clearly reveals the particular disadvantage of these families in terms of their access to services for their children. In 1982, the Community Child Care Association of New South Wales calculated that only 0.9% of children under twelve years of age who were born of at least one parent born in a
Figure 6.3  MAIN TYPE OF CARE USED BY ALL FAMILIES WITH CHILDREN, 1980.


Note: Figures in brackets represent the proportions of children under 5 years of age only using these types of care.
non-English speaking country had access to a Federally funded child care service. Of the remainder of children, 81.3% were cared for informally (including care by the responsible person), 11.7% attended preschool, and 6.1% were cared for in a private, non-subsidised child care centre (1982, Newsletter No.14:9). These figures indicate that the position of migrant families requiring child care has changed little since 1977 when only 15.9% (as compared to 18.7% in 1982) of migrant children had access to formal child care facilities (ABS, 1977:20). The additional fact that the mothers of these children are much more likely to participate in paid work than Australian born mothers further increases the need for and difficulties faced by migrant families in their search for adequate child care (Department of Employment and Youth Affairs, 1981:18).

Although sufficiently detailed information is not available as yet to substantiate this claim, it would appear likely that, given their cultural, economic and geographical isolation in Australian society, the situation of Aboriginal children is even worse.

When the types of child care mainly used by Australian families are considered in relation to the workforce status of the parents, a strong inverse relationship between the amount of care provided by the person responsible, and the extent of the combined workforce participation of both parents (or in single parent families, the one parent) is revealed. In 1980, in only 13.2% of those families where both parents were employed full-time did the person responsible provide the main type of care. This compares with 15.4% of those families where one parent was employed full-time and the other part-time, 43.6% of those families where one parent was employed and the other not, and 54.7% of those families where both parents were unemployed (ABS, 1980b:22).

Consistent with this pattern, the proportion of families within which formal child care arrangements predominated generally declined as the combined workforce participation of the parents declined. The one exception to this
trend was in the case of families where one parent was employed full-time and the other part-time, and where the rate of formal care use increased slightly over that of two full-time income families (ABS, 1980b:22). In this case it seems likely that the more substantial use of formal child care facilities is the consequence of both the greater availability of part-time (as opposed to full-time) child care services, most significantly in the instance of preschool care, and the lesser cost of securing formal care for a strictly limited number of hours or days per week.

On the basis of the data presented above, it is possible to reach the general (as yet untestable) conclusion that people primarily responsible for children tend to employ formal child care mainly in the event that they wish, or are required to enter paid labour. Certainly, this information does not indicate a significant use of formal care services by other than working parents, a tendency which could be variously explained (on the basis of economic factors or maternal ideologies, for example) and might usefully be investigated in more detail in future statistical collections and sociological surveys.

Like the positive relationship between the amount of formal child care used by families and the workforce participation rate of the parents, so too the number of types of child care used by families increases as the combined workforce participation of the parents increases. This relationship, evident in Table 6.2, is a particularly strong one and holds for all cases with only one exception. This is that, following the unemployment of both parents, more types of child care are used than would have been the case had one or both parents remained even partly employed. This exception is an interesting one, particularly in the context of the ever increasing likelihood of full household unemployment in the mid 1980's. It is, however, impossible to adequately explain in the absence of more detailed information regarding which types and what combinations of child care are being used most often by these families. Yet again, there appears to be a fund of information which
Table 6.2 NUMBER OF TYPES OF CHILD CARE FOR CHILDREN UNDER 12 YEARS BY EMPLOYMENT STATUS OF PARENTS (%), 1980.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number of types of care used</th>
<th>Both parents working F/T</th>
<th>One parent working F/T</th>
<th>One parent working P/T</th>
<th>Both parents not working</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>One</td>
<td>47.0</td>
<td>64.1</td>
<td>74.2</td>
<td>46.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Two</td>
<td>40.1</td>
<td>29.2</td>
<td>22.0</td>
<td>39.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Three or more</td>
<td>12.9</td>
<td>6.7</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>14.7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Calculated from A.B.S. Child Care Survey 1980, Table 24: 24.

Note: * = Not Significant
has not yet been but might be valuably collected and analysed.

Finally in this section, it is useful to briefly consider the relationships between the level of income of households with dependent children and the main types of care used by these households. By isolating any patterns of effect of family income on child care use, it may be possible to obtain some idea of, not so much the precise child care needs of families with different budgets, but rather the extent to which needs are being met under different financial conditions.

From the 1980 data presented in Table 6.3, we can see that household income does have a significant bearing on the types of child care used by households with preschool age children. Taking formal care use first, it seems that households in the lowest income group (Group A:$0-119) use formal care least of all groups. The use of preschools in particular is very low in relation to other income groups. Although the rate of formal care use fluctuates according to the incomes of households in this group, the overall relationship between income categories and the use of formal child care services is a positive one among households in the low income group. When preschool use and centre based care use are considered separately, the pattern is less clear. In particular, the disproportionately high rate of child care centre use by households in the $0-9 income category is striking.

The use of formal child care by middle income households (Group B:$120-239) is the highest for all income groups. This is especially so in the case of preschool use. The relationship between formal care use and income for these households is, however, an inverse one.

Among high income households (Group C:$240-300+), formal child care use is relatively high although lower than amongst middle income households (Group B). In this group, the relationship between income category and formal care use is clearly positive and, for child care centre use in particular, appears to be very strong.

For all income groups, the use of informal child care excluding that by
NOTE: * = NOT SIGNIFICANT

SOURCE: Calculated from unpublished data collected in A.B.S. Child Care Survey 1980, Table 27: 45-60.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Family Weekly Income</th>
<th>Type of Child Care Used</th>
<th>Type of Care by Weekly (Gross) Income of Households with Preschool Age Children</th>
<th>% of Children in Each Income Group Who Use Each Type of Care, 1980</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Preschool</td>
<td>17.4 15.5 15.4 15.9 17.0 15.4 15.1 13.5 11.2 8.0 9.5 6.3 14.0 15.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$300 +</td>
<td></td>
<td>Child Care Centre</td>
<td>5.9 13.5 14.9 15.7 15.9 14.5 13.2 11.8 11.1 10.0 9.5 6.3 14.0 15.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$240-299</td>
<td></td>
<td>Person Responsible</td>
<td>33.8 27.1 36.2 39.8 38.3 39.9 42.1 44.4 45.7 45.3 44.9 44.5 43.7 44.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$200-249</td>
<td></td>
<td>Other relatives</td>
<td>37.5 35.6 39.2 42.8 45.2 39.3 33.3 25.7 25.0 30.0 34.0 38.0 30.0 31.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$180-199</td>
<td></td>
<td>Other persons</td>
<td>18.8 12.3 19.1 11.1 14.2 9.3 0.4 0.1 9.1 11.1 14.2 9.3 0.4 0.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$160-179</td>
<td></td>
<td>By the parents</td>
<td>11.8 11.1 14.2 9.3 0.4 0.1 9.1 11.1 14.2 9.3 0.4 0.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$140-159</td>
<td></td>
<td>Other children</td>
<td>4.7 0.1 4.4 0.4 0.1 0.1 9.1 11.1 14.2 9.3 0.4 0.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$120-139</td>
<td></td>
<td>Other children</td>
<td>4.7 0.1 4.4 0.4 0.1 0.1 9.1 11.1 14.2 9.3 0.4 0.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$100-119</td>
<td></td>
<td>Other children</td>
<td>4.7 0.1 4.4 0.4 0.1 0.1 9.1 11.1 14.2 9.3 0.4 0.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Under $100</td>
<td></td>
<td>Other children</td>
<td>4.7 0.1 4.4 0.4 0.1 0.1 9.1 11.1 14.2 9.3 0.4 0.1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 6.3

Each income group who use each type of care, 1980.
the person responsible follows a quite dissimilar pattern which cannot be as clearly differentiated by income. Among low income households, the use of informal care arrangements appear to follow no particular pattern by income category, although the use of informal care is clearly the lowest (of all low income categories and all income groups) in the $0-9 category. With the exception of this category, the use of informal care by low income households is significantly higher than the rate of use in the other income groups and is concentrated in care by other relatives.

In the middle income group, the rate of informal care use holds fairly constant by income category with care by other relatives again showing the highest use. In relation to high and low income households, informal care use by middle income households is generally low, although the difference between middle and high income households in this case is minimal.

Among high income households, the rate of use of informal care appears to increase in relation to income and, in the highest income category in this group, begins to approach, although is still lower than, the rate of informal care use by all households in the low income group. In particular, and in contrast to the patterns of informal care use in all other income groups, care by other persons is as frequent in high income households as care by other relatives.

To summarise these details, it seems that when informal and formal child care use are examined by income, two similarly U-shaped, but inverse distributions emerge. In the case of formal care, this distribution travels, in relation to increases in income, from a low rate of use, to a high rate of use, back to a low rate of use. In the case of informal care, this distribution is turned on its head, reaching its lowest point amongst the middle income range. These trends are only approximate ones and, since comparable data is not available over time, cannot be readily generalised. Nevertheless, they do provide a general picture with which we can work.

Turning now to examine the rates of child care by the person responsible, an altogether different use pattern is revealed. Of all income groups,
care by the responsible person is consistently and markedly highest amongst middle income households. A very clear positive relationship between care by the person responsible and income is evident for almost all households with weekly incomes of between $10 and $299. Only when the two extreme income categories are considered (ie under $10 and $300+) does this positive relationship not hold. In these categories, the rate of care by the person responsible is almost equivalent and about average for all households.

Finally, but maybe most significantly in this context, the rates at which children are left alone without care must be examined by household income. The resulting distribution is an interesting but alarming one.

By far the highest rate of children being left alone occurs in the income category of less than $10. The rate in this category (11.8%) is nine times higher than the next lowest rate which occurs in households with an income of between $80-119. Overall, it seems that children from low income households are left alone more frequently than those from any other income group. The rates of children being left alone among the middle and high income groups are lower and similarly distributed. At an average of 0.4%, this rate is, however, still significant. The only clear relationship evident between these variables is an inverse one between income and the rate of children being left alone in households with incomes over $200.

It is clear that household income is significantly related to the type of care used by households. In attempting to explain this relationship, however, the absence of data regarding the labour force status of the parents, the number of parents and the duration of care use (by income, by type of care), severely limits the validity and generalisability of the conclusions reached. Most importantly, it is never clear from the data available as to what extent the type of care used by households is determined directly by the financial resources available to them for child care expenditure, or whether the types of child care used are determined primarily by the amount and the specific nature
of the time spent by the parents in the labour force. These two factors of time spent in the workforce and available finance are, of course, often positively related. Nonetheless, the fact that they are not always related in terms of their effect on the type of child care used by parents (as in the case of shift workers, for example) does warn against interpreting child care use patterns as a function of resources alone.

Given this point of caution, it seems that a number of tentative conclusions can be reached on the basis of the limited data available. In brief, these are that:

(a) the lesser use of formal care, the greater use of informal care, and the very high rate of children being left without supervision, all testify to the immediate need for, but lesser access of low income households to convenient, inexpensive child care services

(b) the particularly high rate of preschool care (and to a lesser extent centre based care), and the generally low level of use of informal care by middle income households would seem to indicate the greater economic access of these households to formal child care facilities. Considered in the context also of the very high rate of care by the person responsible, as well as the inverse relationship between income category and formal child care use in this group, however, this conclusion does not seem sufficient. In order to understand the more complex situation of middle income households better, it is clearly necessary to know also the relative amounts and periods of time spent by middle income children in formal care and in care by the person responsible. It may then be possible to deduce the extent to which the child care needs of these households are being met.

(c) finally, and in contrast to low income households, the greater rate of use by high income households of both formal and informal child care (other than by the person responsible), considered in conjunction with the relatively low rate of children being left alone in these households, seems to indicate the
greater personal resources and thus the relatively advantaged position of these households in obtaining suitable child care facilities. In addition, the positive relationship between income category and formal child care use which is evident in the high income group may further illustrate the real and positive impact of greater financial resources on access to formal child care. By way of tempering this 'rosy' picture of the position of high income households, however, it should be remembered that this data refers only to preschool age children. The fact, therefore, that 0.2%, or 1,055 children in these relatively well-off households were left alone, many of them for up to twenty hours per week, seems to indicate that the child care needs of even these households are not being adequately met.

In the previous pages, the significant level of unfulfilled need for child care services in Australia was documented. From the data available it was concluded that, in particular, the needs of single parents, migrants, working mothers and low income families for child care were not being adequately met. These observations are important insofar as they point to those areas of greatest need and discrimination and, therefore, to those areas which require special consideration in the future planning and allocation of children's services in this country. Once again, however, it must be emphasised that these particular areas of need are relative and cannot be properly understood outside of their broader context of overall need in our community. While, therefore, the requirements for child care of working class and other disadvantaged categories of women may be especially urgent and high, this observation cannot in reality, and must not in analysis, detract from the fact that all women, as mothers and potential mothers, need the support of publicly funded child care services. It is this context that we may now return to an examination of the 'needs' policy of the Australian Federal Government's Children's Services Programme.
3. THE SPENDER REPORT

As provided for under the Child Care Act, extra subsidies have always been paid by the Federal Government direct to services to cover the extra cost of care for some categories of children. This Special Needs Subsidy was intended to allow access to child care services for children from poor and lone parent families, for handicapped and migrant children, for aboriginal children, and for children at risk of maltreatment or who would particularly benefit from the services under the Children's Services Programme. Yet, as is illustrated in Table 6.4, despite the growing numbers of children who fall into one or more of these categories of need, the total number of children who are using child care centres on a regular basis has actually dropped in the decade to 1980.\(^1\)

It has often been asserted by parent and community child care lobby groups that the Liberal Government had no intention of ensuring that the groups nominated as 'needy' had access to subsidised child care services, but rather that it:

merely [sought] to ensure that [those in need were] represented amongst the miniscule fragment of the population who [did] receive access... given the widespread distribution of the needs characteristics throughout Australian society it would be almost impossible to fail to do this.

(Brennan, 1982:26)

The striking inconsistency between the Government's explicit definition of who in our community should have priority of access to subsidised services, and their failure to financially facilitate the application of this definition, certainly affirms the above contention. It further appears that the needs basis of Federal Government support for children's services in Australia is not only ineffective, but is in fact regressive in terms of providing services to those most in need of them.

From 1975, the Commonwealth Government conducted two major reviews of
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<thead>
<tr>
<th>State</th>
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<tr>
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<td>676</td>
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<td><strong>TOTALS</strong></td>
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<td><strong>13,406</strong></td>
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Source: Brennan 1982: 35.

Note: (i) 1980 figures include children attending Family Day Care schemes.
the Children's Services Programme - initially the *Programme Effectiveness Review* in 1979 and then, in 1981, the *Spender Report* which relied heavily on the recommendations of the former. Neither report was released to the public although the *Spender Report* was widely leaked and extensively debated in public forums and in the media. It is significant that the *Spender Report* was prepared as part of the Review of Commonwealth Functions. Accordingly, it recommended the need for a strengthening of Commonwealth control over various aspects of children's services, as well as the introduction of extensive cost saving measures into the Federal programme.

Because this report is, to date, the most recent, explicit and comprehensive statement of Australia's Federal child care policy, (the report has not yet been shelved by the 1983 ALP Government), it is important to examine the document in some detail. In the context of this discussion, the needs policy which is advocated by this report is of particular concern although other, complementary aspects of the report will also be discussed at the end of this chapter.

*(i) The Definition of Need*

The central principles upon which the *Spender Report* rests are that:

Basic financial responsibility for children lies with their families, who should pay for the services they use in accordance with their means... Government expenditure should be contained wherever possible.

(1981:2)

Following the release of the report, the then Minister for Social Security, Senator Chaney, took this reasoning one step further maintaining that "parents able to pay for the full cost of care should do so" (Press Release, August 24, 1981).

The ideological context within which these statements were made is clearly identified in the preamble to the Terms of Reference of the *Spender Report* which state that:
The Government has a clear commitment to the family as a fundamental part of Australian society. Provision for the family in the area of benefits and taxation concessions acknowledges the broader social significance of individual obligations in this area. At the same time, the Government does not believe it can or should impose a pattern for people to follow in the way they live and arrange their affairs.

In matters affecting the family, this Government sees its role as identifying both the needs of families and the most appropriate means of meeting those needs where these cannot be met from within family resources or by other levels of Government which have a more direct responsibility.

Government also believes that the basic financial responsibility for children lies with the family. Where functions are undertaken which improve the quality of life of a family, it should pay for services in accordance with its means.

(1981:1)

These statements are quite blatantly and logically inconsistent with the whole purpose of the introduction of the Child Care Act in 1972 which acknowledged the necessity of Commonwealth involvement in children's services provision precisely because, "the child minding arrangements that most parents could afford fell far short of the quality that was required in the interests of child welfare" (Commonwealth Parliamentary Debates, 1972:2289).

Further, since the Spender funding recommendations provide no firm guidelines regarding the conditions under which families will be considered to be in 'need' of subsidisation, child care users are left at the mercy of the Commonwealth's apparently arbitrary application of the criterion of need.

For example, the Spender Report states that:

Categories of social need cannot be closely or rigidly defined. They must remain open to meet needs as they arise or are revealed. The impossibility of giving a greater degree of definition to the subject than it inherently permits is correctly recognised by the Ministerial discretion to extend priority of access categories...

Often, whether a particular child falls into a specified category of social need is a question of individual judgement... so is the decision as to which of those children should have access when their numbers exceed the number of places available. A child from a poor family may be
a very happy child and not in need of any access at all; conversely, a child from a wealthy family may be a most unhappy child and one who would benefit greatly from access.

(1981:7-8)

Such a statement provides little hope that the definition of "need" will ever be anything more than arbitrary, at least until this report is discarded.

After admitting that the accurate assessment of need was beyond their resources (1981:34), the Spender committee suggests that those families eligible for disadvantaged status under the 1981 health arrangements should also be eligible for the full service rebate in the child care sector. Partial rebates could be claimed by those families whose total income amounted to less than the average male weekly earnings. Then, in spite of the loudly voiced and widespread opposition to the Spender Report, and in the absence of an official announcement that the report had become official policy, these recommendations were put into effect, primarily via the 1982/83 Federal budget.

(ii) The New Guidelines 1982/83

In the 1982/83 national budget, announced under the slogan 'Things are looking up for Australian Families', the Commonwealth Government allocated a total of $70.4 million for expenditure on children's services. This figure represented an increase of $22.7 million, or almost 50% over the 1981/82 allocation and would, it was claimed, enable the Government to:

(a) continue to support existing services and, where necessary, increase grants to maintain their viability

(b) fund new projects to meet high priority needs for children's services

(c) direct additional assistance to those people in the community who need it most, through revised funding arrangements for day care services.

(Office of Child Care, 1982:2)

Late in September 1982, the Department of Social Security circulated to all child care centres and organisations a copy of the new funding arrangements for day care services which, it was argued, "will ensure that economically
needy families are not denied access to care because they cannot afford to pay the fees" (Department of Social Security, 1982:2). Accompanying this document was a covering letter which stated:

You will be aware that the financial year of 1981/2 was a year of consolidation and review for the Children's Services Programme. In this context, the Government has made a number of decisions regarding the future direction of the programme... The review included an examination of the extent to which Commonwealth subsidies provide access to child care for children whose parents would otherwise be unable to afford it. As a result of the review, the Commonwealth has decided to redefine its approach to recurrent funding for day care services, placing greater emphasis on assisting those in need.

(1981:1)

As the focus on need in this statement indicates, the new guidelines constituted, in effect, an implementation of many of the key recommendations of the *Spender Report*. Most significantly, they heralded a wide-spread introduction of the 'user pays' principle and a strengthened emphasis on cost-effectiveness in children's services provision.

A. The Special Economic Needs Subsidy:

Central to the needs focus of the 1982/83 funding package was the introduction of the Special Economic Needs Subsidy (SENS) which replaced the Special Needs Subsidy previously in operation. This subsidy scheme (which has not yet been rejected by the 1983 ALP Government) has several crucial implications for the state of child care services in Australia. Four points in particular warrant consideration.

Firstly, it is important to note that under the former Special Needs Subsidy system, although priority of access to special needs children was required by all child care centres, these services could themselves decide whether these subsidies were to be administered direct to parents in these categories regardless of income, or redistributed to all parents using the centre according to income. Under the Spender guidelines, however, SENS is
paid only for those children determined by the Government to be in economic need and who attend the centre on a regular basis. The service, via the application of a sliding scale income test, is now compelled to distribute the subsidies, through lower fees, solely to these families. Child care services have thereby been effectively stripped of all decision making responsibility and autonomy regarding who using their service really needs and will receive subsidisation.

Secondly, and in contradiction to their stated aim of assisting those children in particular financial need, the 1982/83 SENS formula can be seen to have especially and severely disadvantaged those users of child care centres who live in low income areas. Under the new arrangements, the number of children who can be subsidised in each particular centre is limited by the set amount of SENS payments allocated to that centre. The maximum level of this allocation is called the 'Assessed Upper Limit of SENS' and is calculated for each centre on the basis of the total number of children using the service multiplied by (at the end of 1983) $10 for centres and $8.75 for family day care per week. This amount, say $500 per week for a centre with 50 children, is paid in advance per quarter, any amount not spent in that quarter being held over for the following three months. In the context of a deteriorating job market and rapid increases in the cost of living, child care centres, most particularly those located in working class areas, are likely to be swamped by people who require care for their children but who are unable to afford the full cost of care. In this situation, the Assessed Upper Limit of SENS forces centres to either give only a small and decreasing number of families subsidies - regardless of the number that need them, or to entirely rescale their fees such that more users are paying the maximum fee. In a centre where the bulk of users are low income families and therefore in need of subsidisation, either of these options would place an unbearable financial burden on an ever increasing number of parent users, likely forcing more and more of these parents to withdraw their children from care.
Thirdly, a likely consequence of the new subsidy system would seem to be that eventually, social disadvantage and need will come to be defined in economic terms only, thereby excluding from benefit, and probably from care, many genuinely needy families. The extra costs incurred from providing priority of access and appropriate care for migrant or handicapped children, for example, whose parents are not considered (officially) to be in economic need and who are therefore ineligible for subsidisation, will have to be born by the centres themselves. Via this route, the ultimate outcome of the SENS formula would likely be to force another increase in child care fees and yet more of the financial burden onto the backs of users.

Finally on the matter of SENS, the suggestion was made in the new guidelines that services should subsidise the cost of care for some families by asking the parents to pay only half of the fee due for second and subsequent children in care. This idea seems to have arisen from the Government's recognition that the cost of having two or more children in formal care is prohibitively expensive for the large majority of parents. Rather than introducing a Commonwealth subsidy to cover this rebate for subsequent children, however, the services themselves would be expected to meet this cost. In order to do so, centres would have to further raise their fee charges, thereby passing this extra cost onto the users once more.

In sum, it seems clear that the introduction of the SENS system by the Liberal Government did very little to redress the prevailing inequities in child care provision in Australia and may, in fact, have only served to ensure that those most in need had less and less access to these services.

B. The Income Test and Sliding Scale of Fees:

In order to receive SENS payments under the 1982/83 funding guidelines, all child care services were required to develop and submit to the Department of Social Security income tests and a sliding scale of fees relevant to the community they serve. Since these tests and scales, which in some cases are
still being refined, must be approved by the Department before eligibility for SENS is granted to individual centres, the formulation and application of these income tests comprise an integral component of SENS and of the whole new child care funding package developed by the Fraser Government.

At the time of release of these new guidelines, no firm Commonwealth decision had been made regarding the income level at which families would require child care fee rebates, or about the amount of rebate to be granted according to a progressive scale of income levels. Rather, it was stated that, with the aid of community input throughout the year, a final set of guidelines on income testing policy would be produced by the Government by the end of 1983. Community aid in this context meant that:

Each service will be required to develop and introduce an income test and fee scale, to provide details of these to the Department of Social Security and to monitor the effects these have on enrollment patterns and fee rebate expenditure. During the year the Commonwealth will also seek information on...the costs of care and the numbers of users in economic need.

(Department of Social Security, 1982:4)

As was reported by the Community Child Care Associations of Victoria and New South Wales, the amount of time, expertise and energy which was required in order to fulfill these requirements was enormous and placed a great strain on most child care centre committees and parent groups who were already struggling just to maintain their service. Because of the inadequate funding levels of most centres, this additional workload was largely carried, without appropriate reimbursement, by already overworked and underpaid employees or volunteers who were now required to research, develop, monitor and assess the new system in operation. It seems that, not only did this system provide the Government with a very cheap means of getting their administrative work done, but the unprecedented and unparalleled administrative complexities involved severely mystified the practical application and implications of the new guidelines.
Purportedly to facilitate a comparative examination of the fee scales and income tests developed by individual services throughout the year, the new guidelines required services to use a standard format for the development of their tests. Having calculated the maximum fee that needs to be charged, (by subtracting all funding received from the total cost of running the service and dividing the result by the number of users), the formula to be used by centres to assess users' income for means testing purposes was as follows:

Assessed Family Income = Total Weekly Gross Family Income

   a) less actual housing costs up to a ceiling
      (eg $100 per week)

   b) less an allowance for each dependent child
      (eg $30 per week)

On the basis of the Assessed Income of families and the sliding scale of fees developed by each service, the fee level to be paid by users is set.

Although the amounts specified in the above formula were claimed to be for illustrative purposes only, the introduction in early 1983 of interim funding arrangements set these levels at a maximum of $100 per week and $30 per week for housing costs and the child allowance respectively. In addition, upper and lower income limits were officially set within which the sliding scale of fees could be developed. These limits specified that all families using day care centres whose income exceeded $65 per week (after housing costs and child allowances had been deducted) were not eligible for the full fee rebate, while those families whose income exceeded $250 per week were required to pay the full cost of care. A closer examination of this funding formula and the income and cost limits set by the Liberal Government reveal that both are inadequate and inequitous.

Firstly, no indexation of any of the variables involved was suggested in these guidelines (neither does it appear that indexation is inevitable under the new ALP Government). The inescapable consequences of non-indexation of
the cut-off point for income allowable for subsidy, as well as the actual amount of subsidy payable, is that, over time, a constantly increasing number of families will be required to pay the maximum fee for child care services.

Secondly, this formula provides no guidelines regarding how to assess the average housing costs of families using the centre in their area. Since rental costs, mortgage payments and local council rates vary enormously according to a number of factors, these measures could not fairly be used to accurately calculate average housing costs in any area. In this light, the possibility that a necessarily rough and generalisable assessment of housing cost ceilings may not cover all of the users' actual costs must be seriously considered.

Thirdly, and most importantly, the specified income limits within which full and partial rebates may be received, as well as the housing and child rearing cost deductions specified, are unrealistically low. On the basis of the cut-off point for any rebate being $250 per week, it can be calculated that families of two adults and two children with a gross weekly income of $410 per week would be expected to pay the full child care fee. It has been calculated by the Family and Children's Services Agency of New South Wales that the absolute minimum income upon which a family could reasonably exist was, at December 1982, $320 per week. Adding a 10% component for inflation, this figure would now approximate $350 per week, an amount which does not allow for savings, child care, recreation, loan repayments, holidays, gifts, tobacco, alcohol, linen, furniture or insurance (Community Child Care of New South Wales, 1983, Newsletter No.15:9). The present cost of child care in Government subsidised centres now averages between $60-70 per week (Cox, 1983b:5). On this basis, the real situation of those families required to pay the full costs of child care is as follows:
Gross Weekly Income $410
Net Weekly Income $333
Minimum Weekly Budget $350
Child Care Fees (one child) $60

$410

This would leave the family in debt by $77 per week and the option of child care for one child, let alone two, entirely out of the question.

Clearly, the income levels within which child care fee rebates are allowable are totally unrealistic. On the basis of these levels, approximately 60% of Australian families are ineligible for subsidisation, while a further 85% will be required to make a significant contribution towards the full cost of care (Brennan, 1982:38).

By way of providing a context for these shortcomings in the 1982/83 guidelines, it is interesting to note that the standardisation of income tests via this system and formula was explicitly justified by the Government because:

* income tests should be as objective as possible
* the level of gross family income (ie before taxation and other deductions) should be the major determinant of eligibility for a fee rebate
* certain variables need to be taken into account e.g. housing costs which vary on a regional basis, and the size of the family. Income tests which include extensive deductions to obtain a family's disposable income are too subjective and should be avoided.

(Department of Social Security, 1982:6)

Although it is not explicitly stated in the guidelines, these 'justifications' quite patently disregard the workings of the Australian taxation structure which operates to benefit higher income, single breadwinner families with few children (see the previous chapter). To use a family's gross income to determine eligibility for subsidisation in this context, severely
discriminates against those middle and low income families requiring care. In addition, to define a household's disposable income as subjective, and therefore an invalid measure of their ability to pay the costs of child care does not only appear illogical, but is blatantly unjust and clearly testifies to the Commonwealth's lack of real commitment to funding child care services for the benefit of all families who need them.

4. IMPLICATIONS FOR CHILD CARE

Having documented the great extent of need for child care, as well as the dearth of services available to meet these needs in Australia, the recent Commonwealth responses to this problem may be seen to be totally inadequate. Not only are they inadequate, however, they are, in fact, regressive and attest to the Federal Government's commitment to minimise social welfare expenditure and, as an integral component of this process, to redefine child care as the proper responsibility of the individual family unit which must either purchase this service on the open market, or perform the labour itself without public assistance.

This process of redefinition which was embodied in the Liberal Government's extremely restrictive conception and funding of need was further confirmed and promoted in a number of other recommendations of the 1981 Spender Report. For example, the proposals to:

(a) subsidise "modest income" families to use commercial child care centres (1981:29)33.

(b) consider the discontinuation of payments to child care centres for a proportion of the cost of employing adequate and approved staff which, the report argues, "commits the Government to an open ended funding arrangement" linked to staff award wages (1981:14)

(c) promote the Government funding of the family day care scheme on the basis that:
We acknowledge that in an ideal world it may be preferable always to offer a choice between centre based day care and family day care. We also acknowledge that there is a body of opinion in favour of day care being provided in day care centres with fully trained staff, and that in some areas and for some groups family day care may not be possible - due to the unavailability of carers - or may not be the most appropriate form of care... [however], given the considerable operational subsidy differential and the low capital costs of family day care compared with centre based care, in our opinion the programme should emphasise the development of family day care thus achieving the greatest number of "care places" for the same outlay.

(1981:27)

and (d) repeal the 1972 Child Care Act since:

Any rationalisation of funding mechanisms for the various components of the Children's Services Programme is dependent on legislative change. We think the sensible course is to repeal the Child Care Act (and the Children's Commission Act of 1975 which has not been proclaimed) and for expenditure previously authorised under the Child Care Act to be authorised under Appropriation Act No. 1... Apart from other considerations this course would accord with measures recently adopted by the Government in an effort to reduce the volume of legislation.34.

(1981:34)

All of these proposals seem to confirm the Government's emphasis on the quick, cheap and expedient development of children's services and their commitment to a market system of child care whereby the private sector takes control and the private family takes responsibility for the provision of child care.

To this point, it appears unlikely that these policy priorities of the late 1970's and early 1980's will be reversed under the newly elected Labor Federal Government led by R.J. Hawke. Having been in office for almost twelve months, the ALP has done little to enact its pre-election promises to increase the funding of public child care services and to conduct a review of the previous system of service access and allocation. While national consultation between the Federal Government and child care workers and users was instigated by the Minister for Social Security, Senator Grimes, in late 1983, subsequent
progress has been less than promising for the Australian child care sector. The 1982 *Spender Report* has yet to be substantially reviewed or amended and the first budget of the new Government passed in August 1983 appears to have largely upheld the prior system of welfare provision in this country (eg the value of the dependent spouse rebate was maintained while the family allowance scheme was increased in value only minimally and remains without provision for indexation).

In short, it would appear on the record of the ALP so far that the conservative ideologies, as well as the emphasis on cost-benefit assessments which accompanied the welfare system of the late 1970's are being maintained and promoted by the Labor Party of 1983/84.\(^\text{35}\).

After a very brief and turbulent history then, the Commonwealth Government's support for child care provision in Australia has already been curtailed and redefined in ways that effectively reduce the access to child care of a substantial number of families. While the need for appropriate, convenient and inexpensive child care services is now greater than ever and still increasing, not only has the percentage of children who have access to child care improved little since Federal funding was introduced in 1972, but it seems that this percentage may actually decline as a result of the most recent funding report and guidelines.

Few Australian women will be left untouched if this crisis in child care policy continues. Most women require help with child care at at least some stage of their life cycle. The changing structure of the Australian household, as well as the present cuts to the value of wages and the social wage, and thus the growing numbers of women with dependent children who will have to enter paid labour, means that the amount of help with child care that is required by women will likely continue to grow. If the cost of formal child care is not reduced but actually increases also, it is quite feasible that a situation will develop in which only the very wealthy will have any access to public child
care services at all. (On this point we might note that very few women, irrespective of their husband's or father's financial status, are wealthy).

For the large majority of women, the options, if they can be called that, are few including a return to cheap, poor quality 'backyard' care; the use of voluntary care by willing friends or relatives; or, as is already required of many families, leaving children alone without care when others cannot be found to assist. The implications of this scenario for women as workers and mothers, as well as for children, are severe to say the least.

In summary, it appears that the concept of 'need', as it was defined and implemented via the Spender Report, was instrumental in the restructuring of Australian Federal support for children's services in the early 1980's. While its implementation in policy guidelines enabled the Government to significantly reduce its expenditure on child care, its simultaneous promotion in policy rhetoric effectively obscured from view the fact that all women require child care services, as well as the sheer extent of unfulfilled need for these services in Australia. Along this route, the labour of child care was reasserted, except for an ever-diminishing few, as the private responsibility of mothers who must either perform this labour themselves without pay or, if they are able, purchase it on the open market.

By examining this concept of need against a background of inadequate service provision, we have also been able to observe in its detailed and concrete form the contradictory and flexible nature of the patriarchal capitalist welfare state in its relationship with women. On the one hand, the very fact of state intervention in the area of child care has constituted a legitimating response to growing public demand. On the other hand, however, the particular (exploitative) assumptions regarding the nuclear family and the sexual division of labour which have generally, and particularly recently, informed and been perpetuated in Australian child care policy have operated to minimise the financial and moral responsibilities of the welfare state in this area of service provision. As a mediator between the fact and the content of the
Australian state's response to the requirement for child care facilities, the concept of need as discussed above has been instrumental in the state's efforts to balance its contradictory functions under patriarchal capitalism. Consequently, this concept has lent considerable support to the maintenance of the sexual division of labour and, thereby, to the continued exploitation of women in our society.
CHAPTER SEVEN

CHILD CARE IN CONTEXT: THE REPRODUCTION OF THE NUCLEAR IDEAL
In Chapters Five and Six an examination of data pertaining to the requirement for and the Federal provision of child care services in Australia revealed a number of basic features and patterns of development in this sphere of public welfare.

In this chapter, a summary of those findings will be presented and then discussed within the broader theoretical context developed in Chapters Two and Three; that is, in terms of the sexual division of labour which forms the structural foundation of the nuclear family ideal and, therefore, of women's exploitation as unpaid domestic workers under patriarchal capitalism.

By interpreting the empirical observations made above in terms of an historical and theoretically coherent analysis of social organisation in advanced Western societies, it then becomes possible to extrapolate from immediate trends in Australian child care policy to provide an 'informed' picture of the potentials and limitations of future state activities in this sphere of welfare needs and provisions and, in the process, provide a detailed and concrete account of some of the specific means by which the welfare state has practiced its coercion of privacy upon Australian women.

From this point we may then formulate a specific response to these trends and practices, a task which will be undertaken in the final chapter of this study.

1. A SUMMARY OF AUSTRALIAN CHILDREN'S SERVICES DEVELOPMENT

Among the many features and trends evident in the past decade of Australian Federal child care policy development, four in particular appear most fundamental and clear.

Initially we have seen that the extent and nature of welfare support for children's services in this country has fluctuated considerably since 1972. In terms of levels of funding for these services, we can see that, despite the
perpetually high demand for these services over the same period, Federal expenditure on both preschools and day care centres has, since 1975/76, been steadily reduced in real terms (Table 5.4), in relation to the eligible population of children (Table 5.3), and as a proportion of both total budget outlays and social welfare outlays specifically (Table 5.1). Breaking these funding trends down further, we can observe that both capital and recurrent expenditure levels have declined in real terms, although the former has decreased much more dramatically (Table 5.2). When the direction of child care funding is considered, it is clear that a massive decentralisation of government responsibility for the funding of children's services has occurred in the past eight years (Figure 5.1). This has been accompanied by an expansion in the range of family oriented services which are now supported under the Federal Government's Children's Services Programme (Figure 5.2).

Turning to the question of the requirement for children's services, we have seen that the need for a wide variety of child care provisions in Australia is high and has increased considerably since the introduction of the Child Care Act in 1972. The growing number of single parent families and two income households in particular during this period has meant that public child care services are now more often required for the purposes of parental workforce participation. This observation is confirmed by data indicating a strong relationship between women's labour force status, the number and ages of children for whom they are responsible, and the types and range of child care services being used (Tables 6.1 and 6.2).

In the context of the growing demand for children's services, we have also seen that, despite the explicit intervention of the Federal Government into this welfare sphere in the early 1970's, public child care facilities have remained extremely expensive while Australian's use of the facilities that are available has increased little over the past decade (Table 6.4). The high levels of expressed need, the long waiting lists at most centres, and the
significant rates at which children from all types of households are left alone without any form of care (Table 6.3), all attest to the perpetually high level of unfulfilled need for child care services in Australia. The particularly inadequate access of certain categories of household (eg low income, migrant and single parent families), is especially striking.

Finally, an examination of the policy guidelines and rhetoric within which these funding patterns have developed reveals that, since 1972, but particularly over the past eight years, the Australian welfare state has consistently assumed and actively promoted a conception of child care which defines this work as, ultimately, the private responsibility of the individual household. The application in policy of restrictive definitions of need and access, and the preferential funding treatment of forms of child care which have reinforced, ideologically and materially, women's primary social role as unpaid (or underpaid) mothers in the home, attest equally and in unison to the residual welfare ideology which has dominated state activities in the area of public child care provision.

Having identified and summarised these central empirical threads in Australian child care policy development, we may now embark on a theoretically informed discussion of these findings in their broader social, political and economic context.

2. AUSTRALIAN CHILD CARE POLICY IN CONTEXT

The explicit reassertion of child care as the private responsibility of the family in recent Federal policy amounts to no more and no less than a direct reaffirmation of child care as women's unpaid labour. While it is true that the work of child care has never been popularly defined as anything other than women's work in our society, the growth of the Federal funding of children's services in the early 1970's did nevertheless place some of the financial responsibility for child care onto the public and did, to a small degree,
acknowledge and allow for the payment of wages to some child care workers. To this extent then, the ideology of child care as women's unpaid responsibility was undermined. The recent selective funding cuts in the children's services sector, however, combined with government rhetoric emphasising the 'natural' family form and responsibility for child care, have largely reversed the progressive, albeit limited, developments of earlier years.

The sexual division of labour which characterises patriarchal capitalist societies and which determines that women's work is, by definition, unskilled and valueless, provides the social structural foundation upon which this recent redefinition of the labour of child care can proceed and succeed. As discussed in Chapter Three, the private labour and responsibilities of the family household are, irrespective of women's paid labour force participation, primarily the responsibilities of women. Further, because domestic labour, including child care, is the 'proper' responsibility of women in a gender differentiated society, it is not considered real, value producing work. Rather, it is defined as an expression of the maternal and wifely instincts of women, performed out of a natural inclination to love and nurture other people. As such, women's domestic work is deemed not to necessitate financial remuneration. Instead, this labour of meeting the needs of others in the family home is presumed to contain its own inherent sources of gratification which not only serve as compensation for women's time and effort, but also consist of women's incentive to unfailingly perform this labour. Thus, as was reasoned in the promotion of the family day care scheme in Australia, not only is adequate economic remuneration unnecessary, it is in fact undesirable insofar as it threatens to undermine the moral and emotional basis of child care and the virtuous and efficient performance of this work by women.

The particularly entrenched nature of child care as the private, unpaid responsibility of women would seem to derive from the biological fact that women bear children. In the context of a social system hierarchically divided on the basis of gender, the extension of women's child bearing role to the
labour of child caring has been very successfully invoked on the basis of biological inevitability. This assumption of biological determinism has informed justifications for the exclusion of women from most socially valued and powerful spheres of Western social life, especially from certain sectors of paid work. The assertion of women's (supposed) biological destiny and responsibility for child care is given even more force when coupled with a powerful ideology of feminine nature as inherently emotional, caring and loving. These attributes which are considered particularly important in the rearing of socially adjusted children have meant that women's biological character has been much more readily extended to encompass a responsibility for child care than for other forms of domestic activity. Therefore, while it appears to be more popularly accepted that men cook, clean and shop for other family members (cf Hoffman and Nye, 1974; Stafford et al, 1977), women's responsibility for child care deriving from their 'natural' skills in this work, has remained almost totally intact.35.

These prevailing ideologies of the natural feminine character and family form both derive from and perpetuate women's historic role as the primary child carers within and beyond the family home. The sexual division of labour, however, is not an inevitable structure of human social life. It is a structure which is constantly renegotiated and reconstructed in relation to other changes in society. It is therefore not unshakeable or without contradiction at any one point in time. It was illustrated in Chapters Three and Four that the sexual division of labour is always challengeable. Indeed, the above examination of Australian child care policy development which documents some of the processes and conditions which have been involved in the public and welfare state construction of the ideology of motherhood clearly reveals a number of the conflicts and contradictions inherent in this historical process and indicates that, under particular social conditions, the sexual division of labour is especially vulnerable to attack. The present period of economic crisis is, I
will argue, a case in point.

Since the performance of child care, by whom and under what conditions, is a fundamental axis and manifestation of the sexual division of labour, the work of child care is inevitably a focus of concern and activity during periods of reconstruction of the sexual division of labour. The prevailing conditions of economic depression, necessarily accompanied by significant changes in the labour process and thus the composition of the labour force, render the question of child care a crucial one at the moment - politically, ideologically and economically.

In the last three chapters, the significant role of the Australian welfare state in the maintenance of the sexual division of labour was examined. It was illustrated that state intervention in the family, set up as a response to expressed need in our society, has done little to ameliorate the fundamental needs of women because it has not (and, indeed, cannot) undermined the foundations of women's inequality in our social system. Thus, both despite and because of its involvement in family welfare, the sexual division of labour and the exploitation of women's work within and beyond the home have been maintained by the irreducibly patriarchal capitalist welfare state.

With the intervention of the welfare state into the sphere of child care services, its role on behalf of an increasingly threatened status quo becomes more important. As was detailed in Chapters Five and Six, this role has, in recent years, been typified by conservative assumptions and objectives regarding the 'proper' domain of child care and women's roles. Even given these policy measures taken to promote the ideological and material reality of women's responsibility for child care, however, it is also becoming clear that the Australian welfare state of the 1980's is not in a position, as it was in the 1940's, to explicitly proclaim the logical conclusion of its present policy on child care that all women must return to the home to care for their families on a full-time basis, thereby vacating positions in the workforce for the
increasing numbers of unemployed (male) breadwinners. The social, political and economic character of Australian society has changed dramatically since World War Two. More women are, and are expecting to participate in paid work for longer periods of time, a situation which has been increasingly dictated by economic necessity on the part of households (see Chapter Five). In this context, the withdrawal of large numbers of women from paid labour would confront the state with a major crisis as the proportion of families living in poverty escalated. Additionally, the participation of middle class women in paid work has become more acceptable to many in our society as a normal way of life. And, while these women are increasingly frequently entering the workforce with specialised skills and experience valuable to employers, the majority of female workers, unskilled or semi-skilled, still constitute a considerable and assured source of flexible and compliant labour for capitalist production. The political power and influence of women, too, has developed over recent years. An increasingly vocal women's representation in trade unions, the government bureaucracy, political parties and community lobby groups can no longer be ignored so easily (cf Hargreaves, 1982). Finally, the resurgence of professional and academic interest in child development and education over the past decade or two has meant that, while notions of maternal deprivation and 'latch-key children' prevalent in the 1940's and 50's are still strong, institutionalised child care is now more often seen and portrayed as a positive practice which is beneficial for all children (cf Langford and Sebastian, 1979).

These changes that have occurred in Australian society have resulted in a situation in which it is much more difficult and hazardous for the welfare state to simply push women back into their traditional roles of full-time mother, wife and housekeeper. The likelihood of considerable economic problems accompanied by a major crisis of political legitimacy if such an attempt was made, has forced the welfare state to adopt alternative means of reasserting
and consolidating the sexual division of labour. These means are many, ranging from the widespread advocation and introduction of permanent and casual part-time work (most of which is performed by women in Australia), through to the introduction and promotion of public welfare and taxation schemes which particularly benefit the traditional nuclear family (some of which are discussed in Chapter Four).

Each of these developments require careful examination and analysis with regard to the unique and contradictory location of women in a society experiencing economic depression. In the documentation and analysis of how such developments have been formulated and implemented within the specific area of child care policy, this study contributes towards this task. In particular, the discussion of the concept of 'need' in the preceding chapter provides a detailed example of the directions being pursued by the Australian welfare state in the 1980's in its relationship with women. From that discussion alone it is clear that much detailed empirical work still needs to be done if these latest developments are to be fully understood in terms of their ideological and material foundations, and their prevailing and potential impact on women as 'brides of the state'. (The appendix to this study, for example, provides a brief discussion of another such development which is having a growing impact on the nature and direction of public welfare provision for women and the family, and which would seem to justify further investigation). To this end, some additional considerations surrounding the notion of 'need' as it is presently being implemented in Australian child care policy are worthy of note.

The extremely limited and changeable definition of need as it has been employed in the funding of children's services in recent years was illustrated in Chapter Six with particular reference to the 1981 Spender Report. The consequences of the application in policy of this report's apparently arbitrary and clearly limited conception of service need are many, extending far beyond the fact that many genuinely needy people are not formally classified
as such and are, therefore, denied access to publicly funded facilities.

Most fundamentally at the political level, the limited concept of need employed by government policy writers, both rhetorically and in the implementation of welfare funding, serves ultimately to reinforce notions of social welfare as a privilege rather than a universal right. Not only does the definition of need in terms of relative rather than absolute deprivation deny and conceal the real and various extents of need for such services as child care, but it also operates to divide all needy people, setting them up against each other in competition for a greater share of an officially limited cake. As a result, the fact that the welfare funding cake is not inherently limited is often forgotten or not recognised and the inevitable social conflict over the shortage of funds is directed inwards rather than at the foundations and supports of social inequality of which the welfare state is a part.

Not only are recent official conceptions of welfare need limited, they are also quite vague and flexible. The definition of need advanced in the Spender Report is a good example. By leaving open the definition of what constitutes special need for the purposes of assessing people's rightful access to public welfare services, the Government is able to, and has, officially altered the meaning of need according to changing conditions in the economic, social and political spheres. In this way, and as was exemplified in the introduction of the Special Economic Needs Subsidy in the 1982/83 child care funding guidelines, the Government can respond in a politically expedient manner to both the public's demands for more and cheaper welfare services, and to its own requirement for expenditure reduction. In the special case of child care policy, and due to the historical fact that formal child care services have rarely been viewed as an 'objective' or valid welfare requirement in our society, this limited concept of need is a particularly flexible and effective weapon of the welfare state in its drive to reassert the sexual division of paid and unpaid labour.
A significant consequence of the Government's 'open' definition of 'relative' need in child care policy has been that need must be regularly renegotiated by all parties concerned - the Government, the services, the users. Thus, child care services receiving funding are bound to provide proof of need in the form of funding submissions and other bureaucratic requirements at least once a year. While it would be foolish to suggest that no accountability should be required of funded child care services, it does seem reasonable to argue that the time and energy consuming task of dealing with ever changing official requirements and definitions of need does detract considerably from child care services' and users' ability to engage in direct political lobbying and organising on the basis of their non-negotiable need for, and right to, publicly funded child care facilities.

A further major consequence of the prevailing concept of special need and access in child care provision is the isolation and labelling of 'special need' families as somehow different from other families using child care. Via their categorisation by and relationship to the welfare state, subsidised families are clearly differentiated from full fee paying families and consequently stigmatised. In a context of high need and inadequate services, such a distinction is likely to, and has resulted in antagonism between groups, all of whom require cheaper child care and whose long term interests are, therefore, objectively united. Again, the conflict is directed inwards and the child care movement divided.

This process of division between welfare and non-welfare recipients is further exacerbated by the manner in which the welfare bureaucracy relates to welfare applicants and recipients generally. Most significantly, the welfare system tends to deal with the welfare needs of individuals rather than social groups such that each person's (or family's) different requests for assistance are dealt with by different personnel in different departments (eg health, housing, child care). Because their different needs are processed independently, the real nature and extent of individuals' total social situation
is often diffused and blurred, both for themselves and for the bureaucrats 'managing' their needs. More fundamentally, the persistent patterns of welfare needs and access along gender, class and racial lines remains well hidden.

3. CHILD CARE AS A POLITICAL ISSUE

In this study it has been argued that the exploitation of women as paid and unpaid labourers is founded upon and allowed by the sexual division of labour in our, society. We have seen that the welfare state, as a product and agent of patriarchal capitalist control, has played a central role in the reproduction of this division of labour and, thereby, in the oppression of women in their primary roles as wives, mothers and domestic labourers. In its formulation and implementation of child care policy, the Australian welfare state has, over the past decade, both assumed and operated to perpetuate an ideology of the family and femininity which defines child care as, most properly, the privatised, unpaid work of women.

Welfare state activity in this sphere has taken a number of forms. Most recently, the strong reassertion of conservative notions of need and access in child care provision have not only allowed the cost-cutting objectives of the welfare state to be met, but have also promoted the political and ideological subservience of women as welfare recipients and as a total social category.

By demonstrating the objective inadequacies of Federal child care provisions and structures in relation to the fundamental needs of all Australian women, this study has highlighted the irreducibly political nature of child care in our community. Clearly, the contemporary situation and the effects of current child care policy on Australian women signals that an improvement in the conditions and social relations pertaining to women in their role as mothers is not something that can be achieved without a major struggle on the part of all women.
In the following and final chapter, it will be argued that the role of the welfare state in the reproduction of the oppression of women renders it a key focus of this struggle. On this premise, the possibilities and limitations of feminist activity within the welfare state will be discussed and the analytical foundations laid for the development of a systematic and effective political response from the Australian child care movement to the present welfare crisis.
CHAPTER EIGHT

MOTHERS AS WORKERS: A STRATEGY FOR THE
AUSTRALIAN CHILD CARE MOVEMENT
1. THE NEED FOR A RESPONSE

The present period of crisis for the welfare state as it attempts to cope with growing social welfare needs and demands, without seriously undermining the sexual division of labour or its support for capital accumulation, has resulted in a significant reorientation and restructuring of social welfare responsibilities and provisions in Australia. Since it is during these periods of crisis and redefinition that the structural contradictions in the capitalist system become most visible, however, the present is also a period of considerable vulnerability for the welfare state. In particular, and in the context of capital's constant requirement for cheap labour and the growing need for a second wage in most Australian households, the welfare state's unwillingness to expend resources on the development of an infrastructure which would facilitate and support women's participation in paid labour serves ultimately to clarify the extent and nature of the exploitation suffered by women via their contradictory location in paid and unpaid labour. The centrality of the sexual division of labour to the capitalist system is thereby better revealed and women's constitution as the scapegoats of the crisis clearly identified.

At the level of sociological analysis then, it is clear that the very nature of the present crisis as the cause of the enhanced exploitation and suffering of women at the moment also renders the foundations of this exploitation especially open to demystification and attack. The practical application of this analysis in the form of situationally specific and concrete understanding and action, however, is a much more complex matter. Focussing on the area of child care, numerous questions arise which must be dealt with in this process, including how the specific child care situations and needs of women might be properly identified and understood; how women's perceptions of their situation and needs might be transformed into actions which will
alleviate and/or fulfill these needs; on this basis, what are the most promising/effective actions the child care movement might take; what are the short term and long term effects and implications of these actions; and how are these related? These are questions which cut across dichotomies such as worker/unpaid worker, mother/non-mother, young/old, black/white and English speaking/non-English speaking amongst all women. For, although the particular location of women within these categories is crucial in determining their access to life chances under capitalism (e.g., some women clearly have greater child care needs than others), these distinctions are only given relevance when encompassed within the recognition that the questions listed above are universally relevant to women living in a patriarchal society based on a sexual division of labour. Further, although these questions, as well as the answers we arrive at, are derived from a particular theoretical perspective on society, within which the sexual division of labour is given analytical prominence, they are questions which can only be tackled and resolved at ground level in the day-to-day practices of women in their various individual and collective social situations.

It is during periods of crisis and attack on public welfare expenditure that the welfare lobby must work hardest to maintain its funding position. It must both fight to prevent cuts to the funding of their services and, in the apparently inevitable event of these cuts, it must find ways of lessening the detrimental effects of reduced funding on the users of their services. Given the particular vulnerability of the welfare state during these periods, this defensive battle on the part of the welfare services must, I would argue, be transformed into an offensive one if the concept of public welfare is to be successfully defended in the longer term. This is a tall order for services struggling just to survive. It is nevertheless the conclusion that is unavoidably reached in this analysis. On this basis, I will argue that the objectives of the child care movement in the present crisis conditions should be twofold. These objectives are both analytically and empirically
interdependent and cannot be effectively pursued at the political, economic or social levels in isolation from each other. Thus, the first, the short term goal of maintaining and improving publicly funded child care facilities for all mothers, must be located within the longer term objective of redefining child care as real and valuable work, as a socially necessary service, and as the proper responsibility of all people, not solely women. Whereas fulfillment of the former goal would alleviate the hardships experienced by many women at the present time and, for some, open up doors to greater opportunity and independence, the latter strategy constitutes a direct attack on the sexual division of labour itself which underlies this hardship and dependence experienced by all women.

2. WORKING WITHIN THE WELFARE STATE

In the context of the understanding of the welfare state advanced in this study, a fundamental question arises for the social welfare lobby and the child care movement as they attempt to achieve these short term and long term objectives. This is whether or not the welfare state constitutes a valid or fruitful arena for political attention and activity. For, if the welfare state does embody and reflect the existing ideological, political and economic structures of inequality in our society, how then can it be used as an agent of change which challenges the very powers that shape it?

In attempting to answer this question, many feminists have warned of the dangers of reformism or co-optation that are faced by activists working within the parameters of the state towards basic social change. A further reservation that might be added is that, even if activists did succeed at securing a better welfare deal for women, it is not necessarily the case that women's dependence upon the state as a provider of cash benefits and services would be any preferable to women's dependent status within the traditional family.
This central question of the potential effectivity of women's political work within the welfare state may be examined with reference to the history of the Australian feminists movement's involvement with the state over the past decade or so. The recent work of Dowse (1983) and Gowland (1983), in particular, provides a detailed picture of the extent and nature of this involvement and allows us to assess the various directions and successes of the feminist lobby under different social, economic and political conditions.

Specifically, we can observe that the women's movement has gained considerable political mileage within the welfare state sector over the past ten years of "counter-hegemonic activity" (Gowland, 1983:1). Its influence in policy decision-making in particular has grown, and there is no doubt that many of the gains of the burgeoning 'femocracy' during the early 1970's (eg equal pay (cf Ryan and Conlan, 1975:Chapter 4), anti-sex discrimination legislation (Gowland, 1983:8), and the Children's Services Programme (Dowse, 1983:206-10)) have considerably improved the position of many women both within and outside the paid workforce. It is important to note too that these gains were achieved under circumstances which were far from ideal. In addition to the resistance of a traditionally sexist society, the opposition from conservative women's groups was powerful and persistent (Dowse, 1983:215). Further, both the feminist bureaucracy and the broader women's movement were themselves divided on issues and priorities (Dowse, 1983:213), a situation which was compounded by the very nature of the bureaucracy which meant that women working within it suffered acute isolation and found communication with the rest of the movement difficult (Dowse, 1983:213). In this context, the progress made by activists fighting within the government sector for greater equality for women was significant.

A more critical examination of this period, however, reveals that, for all their gains, feminists were unable to secure any fundamental transformations of the sexual division of labour. In the words of Gowland (1983:1):
The feminist political movement was a dynamic force which was directly involved in the struggle to bring about changes in the situation of women in a number of spheres in the seventies and its activities cannot be dismissed as merely misguided reformism. A feminist materialist analysis of the "equal opportunities" decade however demonstrates that while there has been a significant rearticulation of the social relations of male dominance and female subordination new modalities of control have developed.

She goes on to argue, convincingly, that:

...inequality in the workforce has become less disclosed than it was before...state intervention has contributed to a process of containment of women's labour, and is likely to further mystify the position of women workers by rendering our oppression less visible... A consideration of the sexual division of labour in regard to motherhood, and marriage and the issue of sexual morality during this period shows a similar pattern.

(1983:9)

What this means for instance, is that while women have been granted equal pay, they are still unable to reap the benefits of this legislation because they are increasingly concentrated in part-time, unskilled and casual work. Further, while the single mothers benefit has been instituted on the recognition that women's economic position and opportunities render them more vulnerable to poverty if unmarried, this benefit has since been extended to men for whom the same objective life conditions do not apply. In contrast, the introduction of maternity leave which allows women to spend time in the care of their newborn children has not been permanently extended to men, thereby confirming women's primary responsibility for child care despite technological developments (eg the feeding bottle) which make possible parents equal participation in the care of young children. Maybe most significantly, the introduction of anti-sex discrimination legislation has proven to be little more than a token in the absence of parallel legislation which enforces positive discrimination in the hiring and promotion of women workers (cf Gowland, 1983:9).
To argue that this work of feminists within the state in past years was subsequently co-opted, or initially reformist, is a dubious stand. Nevertheless, it does seem that the potential impact of the women's movement on the state was, and remains, inherently limited by a system of social organisation which is not just affected by, but is fundamentally based on the subordination of women through a structurally entrenched sexual division of labour. On the basis of this reasoning, I will argue that, while the child care movement must continue to work within the welfare state in its fight for more and better funded public child care facilities, it must do so with the knowledge of the structural limitations to its success, and only in the company of other more basic attacks on the sexual division of labour which operates beyond the boundaries of the capitalist welfare state.

There are a number of reasons why women must continue to lobby governments and work in the area of social welfare provision. Barrett (1980:246) argues that because political and ideological processes carry a considerable weight in the construction of women's oppression, these processes should be attacked in their own right which inevitably requires a systematic attack on the state. As an extension to this claim, Barrett argues that welfare state support for the social relations which allow and perpetuate women's exploitation, via particular methods of welfare definition and delivery etc., should be contested on their own ground; that is, within policy formulation and implementation (1980:247). Finally, Barrett makes the especially pertinent point at the present time that the state is an important site of struggle for feminists during depression conditions since, not only is the protection of the wages and conditions of the majority female state employees crucial, but because many of the services provided by the welfare state, albeit inadequately, allow women some degree of economic independence via their participation in paid labour, these too must be protected (1980:246).

Further to Barrett's arguments, it should be noted from historical experience that those welfare measures which have resulted from feminist
struggle are, in the absence of further struggle, likely to be absorbed and adapted to the benefit of the status quo. The defence of these gains must, therefore, be maintained. It is reasonable also to argue that through seeking to achieve social rights via the welfare state, obstacles to their realisation may be exposed and rendered a matter for political concern and confrontation. Certainly, within the Australian child care movement, the lobbying of government has become, over the years, a means of initiating and developing organisational bases for political critique and action, as well as an avenue for consciousness raising amongst child care workers and users. The transformation of the resentment of welfare recipients at recent policy changes into an overt protest based on fundamental demands would pose a major challenge to the ruling order.

In sum, it is argued here that the welfare state is a valid and necessary site of struggle for feminists and that sections of the state that can be used to confront and contradict other, more repressive, parts of the state apparatus must be defended. This assertion is made, however, only in the recognition that social change via the welfare state is inherently limited by the very nature of that state, and that these actions will not, in isolation, achieve women's liberation from the responsibilities and labours of child care. The following section will therefore discuss some of the means by which the lobbying of government for social welfare provisions may be complemented with, and given meaning by, direct and basic challenges to the sexual division of labour.

3. CHILD CARE AS WORK

While achieving some improvements to the funding levels and conditions of children's services, the Australian child care movement has, to date, made few inroads into the foundations of women's exploitation as mothers and child carers. As expressed by Dowse (1983:210):
...the movement [has been] fobbed off with a poorly funded public relations exercise that deflected its energies and obscured what was happening in an area involving substantial structural change and redistribution of resources.

The reason for this failure to achieve large scale and basic change in the area of child care provision would seem to lie in the absence within this movement of clearly defined and strong political bases and affiliations; conditions which are necessary for radical and effective action at the level of government. The welfare state, being created and located within the capitalist economic system, does not and cannot respond to moral or humanitarian pressure alone - if at all. The child care movement's fight for funding then, will not proceed successfully on these grounds, but must rather link its financial claims to the demand for wages and user control. It is by way of integrating the issues of social justice and equality in child care with clearly formulated economic/industrial demands that the prevailing notions and reality of child care as the private, unpaid labour of women will be most directly challenged. At the level of political strategy, the child care movement's fight to transform the concrete conditions of child care must proceed hand in hand with its fight to transform the ideology of child care as women's 'non-work'.

Central to this two-pronged proposal for action is the requirement to reconceptualise and redefine child care as socially necessary and productive work; that is, as real work. To do so is to question the very basis of domestic labour and child care premised on the sexual division of labour and supportive of all other aspects of cultural, economic and political life under patriarchal capitalism. The fact that our society cannot afford, literally, to acknowledge that child care is skilled and demanding work renders such a redefinition of child care a fundamental challenge to the prevailing social order.

Within the broader context of patriarchal capitalism, the initial and probably most obvious step towards the redefinition of child care as work -
the demand for appropriate financial compensation for this work - must take place within the public child care sector itself. As compared to the privatised care of children by their mothers, formal children's services are more visible to the public, are less socially and politically isolated, and have, to some extent at least, been institutionalised and granted partial industrial recognition. The demand upon the state for adequate wages and conditions for formal child care workers would, therefore, be expected to have a more challenging and long term impact on the system than, say, the payment of a 'mothers' allowance' to the still isolated and invisible domestic labourers of Australia.

In order that child care workers, as women and as workers, gain some power in the industrial sphere and are thus able to bring the sexual division of labour to the forefront of political attention, it is necessary that strong linkages be forged with other political lobby groups and with the trade union movement generally. In particular, women must organise themselves industrially by making unions their own unions or, when no formal organisational basis exists, creating one.

As part of this process, child care workers and users fighting for better funding and service conditions must also shed the 'lobby' label. As applied to the child care movement, this term has so far operated to subsume, and thereby conceal the fact that child care is a central demand of the broader women's movement and, as such, is ultimately aimed at altering, fundamentally, the structure of contemporary Australian society, not simply rendering the existing framework more palatable to women. The definition of child care as real work and thus the reality of all mothers as workers, does not fit well with a view of the child care movement as simply a voluntary pressure group.

For many at the present time, the notion of a child care industry which employs waged and self-conscious workers is antithetical to their conception of what good child care consists of and how it should be performed. Who could imagine, they argue, child care workers going on strike to protect
their wage levels? Given the existing ideology of 'natural' motherhood, not only would the highly emotive charge of child neglect likely be laid, but no-one would really notice or be affected by such a strike except the already overworked mothers using the service. Yet, even given such practical considerations, it is clear that if the child care movement is to become a more effective political force on behalf of all women, and if the exploitative ideologies of femininity and 'women's work' are to be contested at their base it is imperative that all child care workers perceive of themselves and participate as workers first, not simply loving and willing mums earning a bit of pin-money. It is also clear that the support of child care users in this process is crucial if it is to succeed. In a very real sense the long term interests of all women, be they mothers or not, or paid workers or not, are objectively united under patriarchal rule. That this is recognised, even when the effects of some women's struggle for recognition as equals to men poses short term difficulties for other women, is essential to the success of the child care movement in this regard.

The practical difficulties of organising child care workers and users in this way are many, almost all deriving from the present conditions of inadequate funding. As noted earlier, child care workers are themselves divided on a range of issues, not the least of which concerns funding priorities in an industry which provides many different types of services on tight budgets. The large differentials in wages and conditions between trained and untrained child carers, many of whom work side-by-side and have very similar responsibilities, is a basic source of discontent, competition and division amongst workers (cf Forbath, 1983b:6), and one which can only be overcome by these workers supporting each other in their demands for adequate wages tied to funding levels.

These divisions between workers also carry over into the worker-user relationships in almost all child care services. During a period of welfare state expenditure reduction in children's services, inadequate funding
levels mean, very often, that parents' need for child care can only be met by sacrificing the wages and working conditions of the service employees. In the event that these workers recognise and commence to demand their right to a decent level of payment for their labour, a payment which must come out of the limited funding allocation to centres, the cost of child care places will inevitably increase, or the number of these places decline. Either way, the users of the service bear the brunt (cf Ryan, 1982:1-3). Once again, and under these circumstances, it is clear that the fight for increased funding by the child care movement must be tied, not only to the needs of the users, but also to the needs of the workers.

At the present time, there are at least twenty-two trade unions with members working in child care and preschool centres throughout Australia. These unions hold at least thirty-eight awards and determinations which provide industrial coverage for children's services workers (Forbath, 1983a: 18). Such a wide range of coverage has created many problems in establishing a strong and united body of children's services workers. These problems have been compounded by the fact that child care workers are spread extremely thin geographically, sometimes with only two or three workers per centre or district. The social and political isolation of child care workers from each other, their current conditions of overwork and underpay, and the consequent high levels of staff absenteeism and turnover, all make it very difficult for these workers to attend meetings, discuss issues and organise collectively, or to obtain widespread support for any political activity they may undertake. The difficulties experienced by trade union representatives attempting to contact and talk to prospective members from the children's services ranks are equally large for the same reasons. The additional and significant problem of employer bodies in both community and commercial child care centres attempting to prevent workers from joining their union by threatening the sack has severely exacerbated these problems (Edney, 1983:2).
The final barrier to the industrial organisation of child care workers to be discussed is also the most controversial and probably the most fundamental one with respect to the long term developmental direction of state funded child care services in Australia. The concept of community, as it was adopted by the child care movement in the early 1970's, is discussed in the appendix to this study. The accompanying idea, that the children of any community are the responsibility of the whole community and should be cared for accordingly, has been accompanied within large sections of the women's movement by an ardent opposition to the 'professionalisation' of child care. As expressed by Deagan (1978:5):

...the opposition to trained staff in child care is based on an assumption that women have been raising children for centuries without the intervention or approval of trained staff... professionalism [it is argued] mystifies skills and techniques that are, or should be, everyone's property, and it is this which makes child care expensive, and so beyond the reach of most families to afford... The preference is for co-operative child care, with all parents participating on a roster system. It is expected that all parents involved can take responsibility for large groups of other people's children.

On this basis, the industrialisation of child care and the material and ideological reconstruction of child care workers as skilled and organised paid labourers is opposed.

While the recent professionalisation of 'child development' skills certainly attests to the danger of mystification in women's traditional work (some of the implications of which will be discussed in their broader context in the following section), there are a number of considerable problems with this perspective on co-operative community care which become particularly clear at ground level and which render this ideal of community parenting less than desirable for women.

The first of these problems concerns the practical applicability of a proposed system of care which apparently ignores the sheer variety of child
care requirements in most communities. The particular child care requirements of shift workers and long day factory workers, for example, are not readily reconciled with a system in which these workers must also find the time and energy to share the labour of centre based child care on a voluntary basis. Migrant parents, too, may require the use of formal child care facilities but, because of language and/or cultural differences, may not desire to, or be desired to care for children of other races and nationalities. A further important consideration is that, according to all sorts of factors, parents undeniably vary both in their expectations of child care, and their methods of child care, as well as the amount of enjoyment and fulfillment they receive from this work. If it is assumed that the experience of looking after other people's children is in some ways different from that of caring for one's own, these differences in parenting become very important in terms of the quality and variety of care that will be provided. Finally, as noted by Deagan, "the incidence of non-accidental injury to children is evidence enough, extreme though it is, of the fallacy that all adults are 'good' parents" (1978:6).

The second issue of concern is that this proposal of community parenting, unless located within a social system entirely devoid of the prevailing sexual division of labour, will ultimately operate to ensure the continued exploitation of female labour. Such child care arrangements which continue to be based on the principles of voluntarism and dedication can only perpetuate the devaluation of women's labour in a capitalist society. Those structures of gender inequality which underlie and follow from this definition of women's work are not, therefore, contested. Within this context, no amount of community involvement or co-operation (male and female) in unpaid child care provision can possibly reverse the basic economic, cultural and political powerlessness of women as a social category.

To summarise so far then, until child care is perceived and acknowledged as real and essential work in our society, work which should be rewarded
and supported in a manner in which other valuable work is, the labour of all women caring for children will continue to be ignored and/or devalued, and the constitution of women as subordinate to men in all spheres of social life will continue. In a capitalist society, the only thing most people have to sell is their labour power. That women's traditional labour is not even deemed worthy of purchase lies at the heart of their exploitation in all other areas of capitalist life. In attempting to remedy this situation, formal child care workers are in the best position to lead the way for all child carers and potential child carers by confronting and contesting this definition of women's work. To do so effectively requires that they must, among other things, develop a strong and extensive power base within the industrial sector, and also that they garner the support of all women in their demands for:

* a review of the Child Care Act (1972) to allow for and ensure the funding of all child care services to cover the full cost of running and staffing each service

* the full funding of children's services which provides for capital expenditure as well as the cost of employing adequate numbers of staff at award wages and conditions

* the repeal of a means-testing system which not only disadvantages most (financially needy) families, but which disregards the diversity of types of need other than economic

* the development of multi-purpose child care services, not as an additional type of care, but as a model for the future development of all child care services which should be comprehensive and integrated, and flexible and responsive to the particular needs of the community that they serve
as a prerequisite to the above, the decentralisation of policy
decision-making and implementation to allow children's services
greater autonomy and control over the assessment of need and the
development of services.

These specific demands are, of course, transitional and must be located
within the ultimate demand for free, universal, twenty-four hour community
child care. Over the past seven years, the Government attacks on child care
funding have seen this fundamental demand lost amongst the difficult battles
to defend minimal funding levels, quality controls and community autonomy in
child care provision. The necessary fight to defend the access to child care
of especially needy families has largely meant the loss from view of the fact
that all mothers have the right to these services, and that most need and
want them. In this context, the demand for free, good quality child care
for all children has appeared to many as inflammatory under conditions of
economic depression. Consequently, child care continues to be seen as a
privilege, not a right, and the demand for full child care coverage has been
increasingly viewed in the long term - as a sort of futuristic fantasy.

It was argued earlier in this discussion that the present period is one
of great importance for the child care movement. The prevailing crisis
conditions render the inherent contradictions in the welfare state increasingly
visible and therefore vulnerable to attack, while the increasing exploitation
and discontent of workers and non-workers alike make for greater social unrest
and overt confrontation. As detailed above, it appears from an examination
of the previous decade of feminist activity within the welfare state that
the success of major attacks on the sexual division of labour is no more
guaranteed when economic and political conditions are apparently more amenable
than at the present time. Indeed, I have argued that these attacks, if made
under the present conditions of enhanced contradiction and conflict, are
more likely to bring us closer to truly basic change in the structural
organisation of Australian society. Since the demand for free, universal,
twenty-four hour child care provision poses a fundamental challenge to the
sexual division of labour, it must be pursued now rather than later. For,
unless the child care movement makes its expectations of government very
clear, the recent decreases in funding and support will likely continue
and the 'long term' may never eventuate.

Bearing this in mind then, the transitional demands outlined above must
be seen to be ultimately aimed at, not just improving the material conditions
of child care provision via the public purse, but at counteracting the
prevailing ideologies which surround the labour of child care and which are
perpetuated by the operations of the Australian welfare state. As such,
these demands are premised upon an understanding of the inadequacy and
invalidity of the concept of social welfare as it presently subsumes the
funding of children's services in this country. At the very core of the
ideology of the patriarchal capitalist welfare state lies the assumption
that social and economic policy constitute two separate and distinct spheres
of welfare activity. This distinction may be seen to closely parallel that of
the ideological split between the public and private spheres which has
developed under capitalism and, in the same manner as the latter, to
consolidate the socially constructed definition of feminine and masculine
spheres of activity and concern whereby the contribution and role of women
is subordinated to that of men. Central to the child care movement's attack
on this welfare ideology as it relates to children's services then, is the
mounting of an attack on the notion of social welfare which divorces it from
the economic base and the public (male) sphere of production. This must be
done at the levels of both theoretical analysis and political practice. Not
only is an analysis of women's position in a social structure in which
political, economic and social factors are inextricable intertwined essential,
but feminist activity within the welfare sector must consciously resist
its confinement to the officially defined sphere of voluntary, unpaid and
undervalued social welfare. As noted in a previous chapter, the direct
The social construction of the distinction between men's and women's work in capitalist societies was detailed in an earlier chapter. It was asserted in that discussion that there is nothing inherent in women's and men's work which distinguishes it from the other, but rather, that the division between the public sphere of production and the private sphere of consumption which developed alongside capitalism has determined that the domestic labour performed by women within the home is unskilled and valueless.

In their recent study of women at work in various sectors of the labour force, Game and Pringle (1983) document the gender specificity of paid and unpaid work, illustrating that skilled work in patriarchal capitalism is, by definition, men's work. Thus, they argue, the deskilling of certain types of work which inevitably follows changes in the labour process (e.g. industrialisation, technological development) is accompanied by changes in the sexual division of labour such that women's identification with and location within the unskilled workforce sector is generally maintained (1983: 17-18). The trivialisation of child care as non-productive, non-waged work carried out within the home, and its subsequent allocation to women, exemplifies this historical process.

The constitution of work as skilled/unskilled, valuable/unvaluable is a defining feature of the social construction and reconstruction of gender relations. In light of this, any effort by the child care movement to ideologically and materially redefine child care as valuable, waged work raises a number of points for consideration. Initially it is clear that this objective of the movement will pose a basic challenge to the power relations under capitalism. As such, considerable resistance and counter-
attacks may reasonably be expected. An examination of the same process of redefinition in occupational areas traditionally and similarly deemed 'women's work', for example teaching (cf Craney and O'Donnell, 1981) and nursing (cf Game and Pringle, 1983), warns against the inevitable backlash in a society which cannot afford, at any level, to acknowledge that women's domestic work is real work.

The deskilling of motherhood and child rearing which commenced with industrialisation and the separation of the home from the workplace has since been institutionalised in the development of the child development expert who has flourished with the increasing child centredness of the suburban nuclear family over the past few decades (cf Bowlby, 1953). The power base of motherhood thus no longer exists independently of these experts who dictate, not only what constitutes a 'good' mother and a healthy child-carer relationship, but also ultimately define domestic child care as non-work which relies for its adequate performance, not on skills and knowledge, but on women's expression of love for their children; that is, on their maternal instincts.

Given this situation, the possibility that efforts by the child care movement to reskill child care and redefine it as waged work may only result in a further differentiation of the child care hierarchy extending from the (male) professional child development adviser, to the (male or female) paid child care worker, to the unpaid 'nappy-changer' in the private home, must be seriously considered. Within this schema, and as has occurred in the cases of nursing and teaching, the false and, for women, exploitative division between the public and private spheres of paid and unpaid child care would not be contested and the sexual division of labour would be left intact.

Further to this concern, the likelihood that the changed status and wage conditions that would accompany the redefinition of child care as skilled work would result in a male take-over of the occupation of child care
(though not necessarily the unpaid role of motherhood), must be examined. Given a social system in which women are educationally and otherwise disadvantaged in relation to men, the professionalisation of public sector child care and the growth of credentialism that such a process implies may eventually operate to exclude women from this area of paid work, thereby reinforcing their ideological and concrete location in the sphere of unpaid child care and domestic labour.

The unintended consequences of women's efforts to redefine their traditional labours and skills as valuable which have been experienced in other more 'developed' female occupations, warns the child care movement of the considerable dangers in pursuing this objective in isolation from a more comprehensive and systematic attack on the sexual division of labour. As I will now discuss, this means that the child care movement must locate itself, at all levels of analysis and activity, within the broader feminist movement in Australia.

5. CHILD CARE AND FEMINISM

As has been indicated throughout this study, the sexual division of labour in capitalist society is not without contradiction. Since gender relations are socially constructed and are, therefore, historically specific, neither are they fixed or unshakeable. An examination of both the development of ideologies of femininity and the family in industrial society, and the historically variable location and responsibilities of women in paid and unpaid labour in this system, clearly reveal that the categories of gender, as opposed to the direction of the power relation between them, are constantly deconstructed and reconstructed according to changes in the labour process as a whole. As detailed in Chapters Four, Five and Six, the role of the welfare state in this process is significant, both at the level of
ideological prescription, and in its economic and legal enforcement of these changes.

By way of developing this basic analysis, it has been argued that the centrality of the sexual division of labour to the capitalist system is most vividly revealed during periods of rapid change in labour conditions. During these periods of marked growth or decline in capitalist production, changes to the sexual division of labour are most significant, affecting - quantitatively and qualitatively - both the public and the private spheres of labour within which women are variously and systematically located on a historically specific basis. It is during these periods then, that women's contradictory relationship to paid and unpaid labour becomes most evident, in a large part because it is at these times that the gender specific public/private dichotomy is most explicitly addressed - either to be reasserted (eg at the present time in family welfare policy formulation), or to be temporarily amalgamated (eg during World War Two as noted earlier in the study).

It must be stressed here that the reconstruction of the sexual division of labour via the restructuring of the private/public labour distinction is not simply the result of a conscious decision on the part of the ruling order to relocate or redefine women's paid and unpaid labour to meet their own ever-changing requirements. Rather, this process is built into the very foundations of the social structure such that changes in the material conditions of women's work follow immediately from, and partly determine, changes in the labour process as a whole. Thus, for example, the present growth in unemployment, combined with reductions in state expenditure on welfare support, mean that the family household, whatever its form, is forced to absorb the effects of the depression on many individuals. In this context, the prior and primary location of women within the home, irrespective of their waged labour participation, is inevitably reasserted and the extent and nature of their domestic labour (and, therefore, their paid labour) is altered. Certainly, the activities of a government and its bureaucracies are
to an extent consciously geared to both consolidating these changes in the labour process, and to promoting people's passive acceptance of these changes. A large part of this study has attempted to demonstrate how this is done. Nevertheless, insofar as patriarchal capitalism has a logic of its own in terms of structure and process, these specific and self-conscious activities of the welfare state must be seen to be supportive of those structures which determine the exploitation of women as a social category, not the source of the exploitation itself. It is in this light that the reassertion of feminised and privatised child care provision in recent Australian social welfare policy and rhetoric may be understood.

Because it affects, to a large degree, women's relationship to paid labour, the historically specific character of child care (who does it, where and when), is clearly of crucial importance with regard to how the sexual division of labour is maintained, reproduced and challenged in patriarchal capitalist societies. If child care, as a major requirement of women, is understood in terms of a total social structure founded upon hierarchial gender differentiation, however, it becomes clear also that the child care movement's fight for better children's services funding is not sufficient to the long term needs of women. For, while more and better child care facilities would undoubtedly enable more women to cope much better with their contradictory positions in paid and unpaid work, the achievement of this goal alone cannot seriously contest or undermine the basic structures which shape the double roles and exploitation of women. To do this, the exploitation of women must be attacked at its foundations - in the public/private dichotomy which constitutes women as unproductive, unskilled and therefore unvaluable labourers in the home. The redefinition of formal child care workers as 'real' workers, deserving proper wages and social recognition, while being an important step in this direction, is only one step and cannot be effective if not accompanied by complementary attacks on that ideology which allows all women to be exploited within the home. This step on the
part of the child care movement then, must be located within the broader women's movement which explicitly and systematically challenges the social constructions of femininity and masculinity, and the power relations between them in all spheres of economic, political and cultural life. Attacks on the exploitation of women in the market sector of capitalism (via the unions, legislative change etc) must be accompanied by attacks on the sexual and legal exploitation of women within the home. Unless the various sections of the women's movement are united in this two-pronged offensive, the public/private distinction and the accompanying ideologies can be neither revealed as a convenient fiction for patriarchal capitalism, nor demonstrated as the basis of the super exploitation of women in our society. The sexual division of labour must be confronted both within and outside of the home and in terms of the real relationship of these spheres to each other. If this is not done, the problems of backlash described above are inevitable.

By way of conclusion then, it is crucial that the strategies proposed above regarding the future direction of the Australian child care movement must be seen to be only one branch of a total programme of feminist action operating both within and beyond the boundaries of the welfare state. As such, these strategies must not proceed and cannot succeed in isolation from other, inherently interrelated, attacks on the sexual division of labour.

Given this qualification, it is nevertheless argued here that the provision of free, good quality child care on a universal basis is a necessary precondition to women's liberation, and that the immediate pursuit of this apparently limited goal will expose the contradictions of patriarchal capitalism as no other feminist campaign can. In this light, the direction taken by the child care movement over the next few years will be of crucial importance to all women.
APPENDIX

Public Welfare and the Notion of Community
Two key ideological and operational concepts have predominated in Australia's public welfare sector in recent years. Both are founded upon and rely for their successful implementation on the sexual division of paid and unpaid labour, and both operate to perpetuate this division. The first, the concept of 'need' was discussed in detail in Chapters Six and Seven. The second and complementary concept of 'community' is also worth considering in some depth.

The concept of community was adopted and promoted early in the life of the Australian child care movement (Simpson, 1983). During the early 1970's, and particularly under the influence of the Women's Electoral Lobby, the child care movement's demands on government consisted of the funding of community based children's services which, it was argued, would facilitate localised planning and development initiatives, the establishment of relevant and flexible services geared to the various needs of resident families, and self-sufficiency and responsibility in the development of these services. In short, the key focus was on local user control.

This concept of community management was legislatively promoted under the Federal Labor Government of the early 1970's whose stated aim it was to decentralise child care planning while simultaneously developing the centralised funding of these services (Project Care, 1974:6.37). While the real effectiveness of the ALP's commitment to community service provision is debated (cf Mowbray, 1982), there is no doubt that the advent in the mid 1970's of deteriorating economic conditions and a more conservative Federal Government concerned to dismantle an "inefficient" and "wasteful" welfare state, has seen this initial notion of community participation and action co-opted and radically redefined. In brief, it seems that the ideological and material character of community action has been transformed, divorcing it from any notion of user control, and rendering it a tool of the welfare state in its efforts to minimise its responsibilities and expenditures in welfare provision. As evidenced in recent
government welfare rhetoric, the notions of self-sufficiency, self-help and self-reliance which were embodied in the earlier conceptions of community control, have been substantially redefined to emphasise economic, as opposed to administrative and decision-making self-sufficiency. Simultaneously, the images of "sensitive personal care... and individual voluntarism" have replaced those of "clumsy bureaucratic intrusion and coercive state power" (Shaver, 1982:20), thereby creating an ideal of community involvement in welfare provision which differs markedly from that proposed in the early 1970's.

Clearly, the emotive connotations of the term community are central to the purposes of the present day welfare state in Australia. Not only is this term laden with notions of personal contact, caring and support, but it also promises independence from the impersonal and alienating bureaucracy, as well as the reliability and security which is associated only with small, personal organisations. In the same way that the family is deemed desirable because of the 'haven in a heartless world' ideology which surrounds it, so too community is assumed to be inherently 'good'.

The continuity between the concepts of the family and the community do not end here. For, like the term the family, the concept of community not only promotes idealised perceptions of social relations, but it also conceals the heterogeneity - the different characteristics, situations and needs - of the 'community at large'. Like 'the family', the blanket term community ultimately operates to hide systematic inequalities in society, rolling them all up into one big, energetic, co-operative happy family. The concept of power has no place, except at the most fragmented and individualistic level, in such a schema of togetherness and common purpose.

Again, as in the family, the labour performed by and for the community is not generally viewed as real, productive work. Rather, it is seen to be done for the benefit of all out of individuals' and groups' emotional ties to and caring feelings about members of their community and the community as a whole. Extending this observation, we can also note that the notion of community
effort, where everyone is working together for the benefit of all, conceals the fact that this effort is largely women's effort. As in the family household, the efficiency and success of community action has always depended, almost exclusively, upon women's willingness and ability to perform their unpaid labour of love.

The extent of empirical and theoretical investigation into community welfare action and ideology in Australia is very limited. The recent national survey of non-government welfare organisations (NGWOs) conducted by the Social Welfare Research Centre and the Australian Council of Social Services does, however, begin to fill this considerable gap by providing a range of basic data with which those assertions made above may be concretely investigated and developed. The preliminary results of this survey, presented by Yates and Graycar (1983) are revealing and deserve some consideration.

According to these authors, there were at least 37,000 NGWOs operating in Australia at the end of 1983 (1983:156). Of this number, almost one third (30.4%) were established during the short period between 1975 and 1979; that is, following the election to Federal power of the Fraser Liberal Government (1983:157). In contrast, only one half (48.6%) were set up in the nine years to 1980. The enhanced support, and possibly need for NGWOs since the setting in of the economic decline and a conservative Federal government is clear.

This recent growth of government support for non-government welfare provision does not appear to have been accompanied by high levels of funding. Of the 37,000 NGWOs in Australia, 40% receive no government funding at all, while 43% generate more than half of their own operating funds. Only 17% of these organisations were totally uninvolved in fund-raising activities, presumably because they received full government funding (1983:158). The low level of government financial support for these services would seem to indicate that most NGWOs run on relatively small and tight budgets. Assuming that most workers in these organisation would accept some payment for their labour if
finance were available, the extensive use of volunteer labour within these organisations confirms this point. Not only do volunteer workers comprise 75% or more of all staff in 64.3% of NGWOs (compared to 25% or less of all staff in only 11.5% of NGWOs), but almost all NGWOs (92.4%) who employ paid staff also use volunteer labour (1983:159). In addition, 20% of NGWOs which employ full-time paid staff have staff on reduced salaries, while 18.6% which employ part-time paid staff also have staff on reduced salaries. In total, approximately 1.5 million volunteer labourers are used in 86.3% of NGWOs in 160,000 full-time jobs. The remuneration bill for this unpaid work alone has been estimated at $2,000 million (1983:159).

Finally, and most significantly in this context, the assertion made above that most volunteer labour - including both unpaid and underpaid work - that is undertaken in community welfare organisations is performed by women is confirmed by Yates and Graycar. These authors note that almost 60% of all NGWOs use entirely, or mostly, female volunteers (1983:160). This figure contrasts with the 11.7% of organisations who use all, or mostly, male volunteers, and affirms earlier findings within the child care sector specifically (Alexander et al, 1981:Chapter 4). While it is noted by Yates and Graycar that the ratio of female to male volunteers of three to one is similar for paid and unpaid non-government welfare workers (1983:160), their accompanying observation that more males than females are represented on NGWO management committees attests to the resilience and persistence of the sexual division of labour, even in what is primarily a 'woman's' sector of the workforce.

The economic imperative informing Federal Government support for non-government welfare provision seems clear. Not only are the cost savings allowed by minimal funding and voluntary labour considerable, but because the voluntary work performed in these organisations is, by its very nature, invisible in a market economy, the Government is able to provide or withdraw funds for wages to and from this sector with a minimal regard to electoral accountability.
The political basis for the Government's support for and promotion of these services is also clear. Since these community services presumably fill many gaps in the inadequate provision of government services, they must therefore serve to avert, at least temporarily, the crisis of political legitimacy that inevitably faces a government which is reducing social welfare expenditure during a period of rapidly growing welfare needs.

Finally, there is an ideological imperative at work here also, one which is premised upon, allowed by and perpetuates the sexual division of labour. Just as women's location in less secure, less well paid and simply less paid labour positions than men renders them more likely to be available and willing to undertake voluntary community work, so too the sexual division of labour ideologically defines community work as women's work being an extension of their unpaid labour in the home. In this context, the observation of Baldock (1983:290) that, whereas men tend to engage in voluntary community labour in conjunction with full-time paid work, women typically engaged in voluntary work tend not to be employed in paid labour, is significant. Baldock's further and related point that the use of the term 'voluntary' with respect to either the private or public work of women is especially controversial, is also pertinent. As she has pointed out, women seldom have a choice regarding their participation in voluntary work, being reduced to this form of work to keep from being labelled as totally useless in a society which does not acknowledge or value women's traditional contribution to modern social life.

This distinction between the nature of men's and women's relationship to voluntary labour effectively reasserts the ideology of women's unpaid labour as not being 'real' work, as well as stigmatising their paid labour as being temporary and expendible. Thus, the sexual division of labour is maintained within and via the voluntary workforce and the constitution of female volunteer and waged workers as flexible pools of super-exploited labour is perpetuated.

The promotion of the notion of community welfare in the child care sector
has been a relatively smooth and successful process (cf McCaughey et al, 1977). Insofar as the labour of child care, like voluntary welfare work, has almost always been constituted as the unpaid labour of women, this is not surprising. The performance of child care 'voluntarily' by women has historically underpinned the structure and development of the nuclear family. For this reason, the tensions and contradictions otherwise revealed when social welfare responsibilities which have been assumed by the state are, in times of crisis, reverted back to the family or the voluntary public sector, although no less real, are less visible in the area of child care provision. Indeed, extending this reasoning, it would seem likely that other forms of domestic labour which have at some time been 'taken over' by the welfare state (eg care of the aged) would also be being redefined as a voluntary community responsibility in the present crisis. The recent work of Kinnear and Graycar (1983), among others, indicates that this is occurring in areas of women's work other than child care.

The centrality of the labour of child care to the sexual division of labour renders the issue of control a particularly important one for the welfare state in its promotion of the ideal of community welfare provision in this area. The broader definition of child care by many women's groups as irreducibly a community responsibility which must be shared equally by everyone in our society - both financially and emotionally - poses a very real challenge to the labour relations embodied within and promoted by the welfare state. In this light, it is essential to its purposes that the welfare state contain and monitor the direction of community action and management in the feminist oriented child care sector. One means of doing this has been to stress the need for 'accountability' in these services, a practice which has been stringently enforced by the Office of Child Care over recent years. This call for accountability has been rationalised by both government officials and certain sectors of children's services (most notably the commercial sector) in terms of 'moral deserving' and 'business efficiency'. In the context of the extreme competition for government funds, this emphasis on the efficiency and cost-benefit
balance of individual child care services has been used to control both radical initiatives and opposition to the Government's most recent funding guidelines by the child care movement. For example, following the 'handing down' of the 1982/83 child care funding guidelines as discussed in Chapter Six, the Office of Child Care announced that it required all child care centres to sign a contract with the Government pledging to implement, in their own service, the 'user pays' system of funding set out in these guidelines. A centre's failure to sign, it was warned, would result in the withdrawal of all funding from that service (Community Child Care Association of New South Wales, 1983: Newsletter No. 15:5). To summarise this point in the words of Mowbray (1982:20):

What is represented as devolution of responsibility and power, through joint, government-community involvement schemes, and community management and participation programmes, may actually operate in a reverse manner. This is obviously so when ascription of resources, or other rights, is made conditional, as it usually is, on compliance with more or less circumscribed conditions.

The Federal Government's rhetorical promotion and operationalisation of this concept of community in social welfare provision has not, however, been entirely successful in the sphere of children's services. Certainly, the proliferation of various types of largely volunteer child care services, as in the case of family day care and occasional care schemes (cf Deagan, 1979:8), attests to a significant degree of success for the government in this regard. There has, nevertheless, been considerable opposition and resistance mounted to these developments by a national child care movement which has become increasingly organised, vocal and demanding in its relations with the state over the past decade. As a result, the Government has been forced to acknowledge and respond to these demands for continued funding, albeit in conjunction with concerted attempts to reassert the 'proper' family and community responsibility for all aspects of child care provision.

Finally, in this discussion, it is worthwhile considering this concept of
community as it appears in present day welfare services in conjunction with the concept of need as discussed in Chapters Six and Seven. For, I will argue, by examining each in its relation to the other, a more clear and coherent picture of Australian welfare state tendencies in the definition and provision of public welfare support can be obtained.

The provision of welfare services by voluntary community effort clearly has objective limits, both in terms of the resources and tolerance of voluntary workers. With reference to the children's services sector specifically, we can observe that, in order to retain its political credibility in the face of increasing demands for child care services which have remained unfulfilled by the expanded voluntary sector, the Federal Government has, in recent years, complemented the notion of community effort and responsibility with a narrow and restrictive concept of economic need. Thus, by simultaneously promoting the voluntary provision of child care services, and redefining (and thereby reducing) the official assessment of community need for those services, the Commonwealth is able to appear to be assisting Australian families while steadily reducing its real level of expenditure on children's services. This process can be diagramatically illustrated as follows:

\[
\begin{array}{c}
\text{Real level of need} \\
\text{Concept of 'economic need'} \\
\text{Government definition of limited need} \\
\text{Need fulfilled by volunteer labour} \\
\text{Need fulfilled by government funding} \\
\text{Concept of 'community'}
\end{array}
\]

It is not within the scope of this appendix to elaborate further on all of the various concepts, variables and relationships encompassed in the above diagram which is presented simply as a possible hypothesis for examination. Nevertheless, I would argue that each warrants careful and detailed investigation.
at both the theoretical and empirical levels, a task which would make a significant contribution to present efforts to understand the specific and changing nature and dimensions of the welfare state's intervention in the lives of Australian women in the 1980's.
1. One of the problems encountered by individual researchers employed on extended projects such as post-graduate theses is that their work can become, quite rapidly and suddenly, outdated in terms of providing a fresh perspective on old data, or simply new data. In the case of child care, this issue has been of concern to women for some time. Indeed, the demand for free twenty-four hour child care facilities was an original demand of the International Women's Movement and was formalised over a decade ago. For so long as women are responsible for child care, this issue will not become outdated for feminist researchers. Under the prevailing conditions of economic crisis and social welfare cuts, the question of child care has, for many women, become a more immediate and urgent one. In the sphere of sociological research, this urgency has manifested itself in a sudden proliferation of research publications on child care practices and policy in Australia (Sweeney, 1982b, 1983; Cass, Keens and Wyndham, 1983; Davis, 1983; Cox, 1983a; Dowse, 1983). While posing a number of logistical problems for this researcher at such a late stage in the thesis production, the heightened interest and investigation of the issue of child care policy in the past twelve months is heartening from both a political and an analytical perspective. Nevertheless, there is still much work to be done at both the theoretical and empirical levels. In the attempt to answer some of the outstanding questions in the area of child care, this study raises many more and, hopefully, provides another point of departure for much more research in this crucial area.

2. In arguing this point, the greater access of women than men to certain kinds of personal resources as a result of their socialisation (e.g., interpersonal relations skills, the rewards of motherhood in old age etc) are not being denied. Rather, it is argued that these resources are not those which are publicly valued in our materialistic society. Therefore, while they may be inherently useful and rewarding, they are not as valuable to women's overall wellbeing in our society as others. Neither are they recognised or rewarded to the same degree as those skills which are more often possessed by men.

3. Quantitative data detailing, for example, the need for, costs of and attitudes towards public child care provision, as well as the patterns of use and the effects of specific types of child care, have only been available on a regular and national basis for just over a decade. Further, even the limited information that is available is inadequate for analytical purposes being incomplete, and having been collected, collated and presented in official documents according to different methods and variables over time.
4. Tait (1983) provides some interesting and important data to show that both the concepts and the categories employed in official statistical collections on the Australian family have varied enormously over time and in relation to the use to which the information was being put. The failure to collect certain information, he concludes, was not generally due to oversight, but to a lack of official interest in the matter.

5. For an excellent overview and discussion of this tendency towards functionalist analysis in family research see Rapp et al (1979).

6. Summers (1975:317-45) provides a good account of the 'education' of colonial Australian women to fulfill these roles properly according to the feminine ideal.

7. Trudgill (1976) provides an account of how the feminine ideal which developed during the nineteenth century was also used to control the sexuality of Victorian women.

8. In contrast to "primary" workers, "secondary" workers are defined in these studies as those who are readily dispensable, either voluntarily or involuntarily; have a relatively low inclination to obtain training and experience; do not rate economic rewards highly; are relatively unlikely to develop solidaristic relations with other workers; and can be sharply differentiated from primary workers by conventional social differences (Barron and Norris, 1976:54-64).

9. On this question Beynon and Blackburn (1972) provide a detailed and valuable set of data indicating the ways in which family life cycle stage affected the labour force participation of British women in the late 1960's and early 1970's.

10. The one exception to this trend during the 1930's was the introduction of the Married Women (Lecturers and Teachers) Act by the New South Wales Government in 1932. This Act was repealed in 1947 and is discussed in more detail in Chapter Four.

11. To assert that the welfare state is irreducibly a capitalist welfare state which operates in the interests of the ruling class is not to present an entirely conspiratorial analysis. For, as has been elaborated by a number of theorists (cf O'Connor, 1973; Gough, 1979), the welfare state is contradictory in nature and:

   simultaneously embodies tendencies to enhance social welfare, to develop the powers of individuals, to exert social control over the blind play of market forces; and tendencies to repress and control people, to adapt them to the requirements of the capitalist economy. Each tendency will generate counter-tendencies in the opposite direction; indeed, this is precisely why we refer to it as a contradictory process through time.

   (Gough, 1979:12)
Although it is sufficiently permeable to respond to some of the demands of the socially disadvantaged, however, being a creation of the capitalist system, the welfare state cannot be divorced from the structures and processes of capital accumulation. For so long as it is located and operates within this hierarchically differentiated social structure, the welfare state can be nothing more or less than an agent of capitalist control.

12. It is worth noting here that, while the family may not 'function by violence' in the same way in which other institutions do (indeed, the ideology of the family emphasises the reverse), the threat of violence faced by all women in families is a considerable one. Although less visible, the violence encountered by women in the home is amply evidenced in the high (although underreported) incidence of marital rape and wife bashing in Western societies (cf Binney, 1981; Canberra Rape Crisis Centre, 1982).

13. By restricting the focus of this discussion to key Federal Government policies, this chapter belies the many complexities involved in a history of family policy which has spanned three variously independent levels of government decision-making and administrative procedures in this country. While the focus chosen has served the purpose of indicating general and changing policy directions in relation to the Australian household form, a thorough understanding of the processes and forces involved - particularly at the level of the political - in the writing and implementation of policy would ideally involve an examination of all arenas of policy negotiation. Specifically, questions concerning the development of Federal/State relations have been, and remain, of considerable importance in the Australian social policy sphere (see Phillips, 1976).

14. The one exception specifically allowed under this Act clarifies beyond doubt the ideological foundation of this state measure. This exception enabled female needlework and domestic arts teachers in high schools to continue work on the condition that their wages be paid directly to their husbands.

15. Despite adamant claims to the contrary by Federal Government ministers, the practice of 'bed-sniffing', as it is popularly known, is still endorsed and encouraged by the Department of Social Security in Australia. This practice of 'checking up' on the sexual activities of single female welfare beneficiaries is conducted on a regular and constant basis by 'field officers' of this department (Personal communication, Department of Social Security employee, Canberra, 1983).
It has not been possible in this brief discussion to deal with all those Federal policies which have had a particular impact on women's paid and unpaid labour. The period during World War Two which featured the establishment of the National Security Act (1942) and the Women's Employment Board, and resulted in a massive influx of women into all sectors of the labour force at unprecedented high rates of pay, has been well documented elsewhere (cf Summers, 1975; Hargreaves, 1982). For the purposes of this discussion, we need only note that this period was characterised by a considerable material assault on the traditional sexual division of labour and the nuclear family ideal. Immediately after the war, however, the Government, supported by the media and most trade unions, embarked on one of the most concerted attempts yet seen in Australia to reassert the ideology and reality of the nuclear household form. Most of the material gains made by women in the workforce were quickly eroded and the official dialogue of the time clearly reflected the belief that women should and would willingly return to their 'proper' place in the home once their wartime wage labour was no longer necessary (Summers, 1975:417-420).

The Federal Government's proposal in the early 1970's of a 'mother's allowance' to be paid to those women who chose to remain at home full-time in the care of children epitomizes the orientation of the welfare state's involvement in the domestic sphere at this time. The very naming of this benefit the 'mother's' allowance, and the absolute exclusion of men from benefit, clearly relegates the identity of women to simply child carers. The amount proposed for this allowance of $20 per week could be no more than a token and further illustrates the low value placed by the state on the domestic labour and responsibilities of women. For a detailed discussion of this proposal, see Windschuttle (1974).

This statement should be considered in light of the fact that, since World War Two, the real value of families' incomes in Australia has been augmented more by married women's entrance into the paid workforce than by welfare state expenditure on family support.

This reassertion of the nuclear family ideal was not exactly new as the preceding discussion indicates. There was, however, a very substantial shift in the late 1970's insofar as the conservative assumptions which had historically informed welfare activities were made much more explicitly, consistently and vehemently during this period.
20. Cass (1981a) provides a good discussion of the various facets of the unemployment of Australian women in the present period of economic depression.

21. On this point, it might also be worth considering that, while the notional status of women as wives and/or paid workers has been consciously relegated to the political sidelines in the family allowance scheme, the same cannot be said for the paramount role of women as mothers. Without denying many women's very real need for financial assistance in their reproductive role in our society, this observation simply acknowledges the need to temper the widespread support for this scheme (as the 'best yet' for women) with a critical awareness of the profoundly ideological content of welfare state provisions. For, so long as women remain dependent upon the historically fickle benevolence of the state, we must, I think, be wary of embracing unquestioningly short term support in the absence of conditions which also allow women greater access to and self-sufficiency within all spheres of contemporary social life. This point is taken up in more detail in Chapter Eight.

22. In the context of this discussion, the need for a detailed examination of the historical development of Australia's wage and taxation structures in relation to the changing structure of social security provisions in this country appears clear. Although these various mediums of (re)distribution have now been extensively discussed from various analytical perspectives, they have, to date, been considered mainly in isolation from each other (recent exceptions include the work of Scotton and Ferber, 1980; Watts, 1980; Cass, 1981a). To obtain a dynamic understanding of the development of the Australian welfare state, all three must be examined in their broader context and in relation to each other. To do otherwise is to perpetuate the false distinction which has dominated social policy analysis between social and economic welfare systems and activities.

23. Only rarely has the welfare state actually assumed total and permanent responsibility for family functions, one such example being the education of five to fifteen year olds. Rather, by performing these tasks on behalf of the family, the latter does not relinquish the ultimate responsibility for these functions. The ideological conditions are thereby maintained for a substantial, rapid and 'legitimate' withdrawal of public welfare support for these 'proper' family duties when this support is no longer deemed viable.

24. The involvement of the individual State Governments in the provision of child care services has a much longer and more extensive history. For more details on the state of child care provisions in Australia prior to the 1970's, see Spearritt (1979) and Cox (1983a).
The key slogan recently adopted by the National Association of Community Based Child Care - "Child care: good for kids... and good for parents too" - would appear to reflect an attempt by the Australian child care movement to 'moderate' its developing image as a hard-line feminist lobby. The implicit emphasis on the needs of children as a priority to those of their parents (usually mothers) in this slogan may successfully deflect the popular conservative charges of 'selfish mothers', or 'child neglect' from the child care movement. Considered within the political and analytical framework offered in this study, however, this slogan also runs the risk of seriously misrepresenting the basic issues involved.

In fact, many more children over the age of three years than younger use family day care in Australia (Simpson, 1980:45).

In attempting to assess the need for child care services on the basis of the workforce participation of women, the distinctions between working women and working mothers, and between married working women and working mothers are crucial. Unfortunately, most official data detailing women's workforce participation are collected and/or presented on the basis of marital rather than maternal status. Given the prevailing ideology concerning the family breadwinner role of men, this is not really surprising.

Since it is likely that the rate of children being left at home alone is underreported, the reliability of this assertion is difficult to assess. The social condemnation of 'bad mothers', and the possibility of charges of 'child neglect' (officially or otherwise), must have a significant bearing on the amount and type of information respondents will provide on this question. This effect may be even stronger in the case of under five year olds.

For more detailed information about the situation, as well as the demands of migrant women for adequate and culturally appropriate child care services, see Cox et al (1976) and Elefsiniotis (1983).

From the data available, the average number of hours spent by children from middle income households in a particular type of care may be calculated. Thus, over 90% of all of these children who attended preschool during the week surveyed did so for less than twenty hours per week; approximately 80% of those children who were left alone were left for less than five hours per week; and so on. In order to estimate the extent to which these hours and types of care fulfill the child care needs of these households, however, information regarding the number and combinations of care used by them is required. This information is not yet available by family income.
31. Simpson (1983: Chapter 6) makes the important point that (in Canberra), very few 'needy' families actually use those child care facilities available to them especially. By making a distinction between public access and personal access, Simpson explains his observation in terms of the particular geographical, emotional and other disadvantages of economically needy families which restricts their access to services. He argues that, if all these personal access problems were removed and all eligible needy families sought and obtained subsidised access, the shortage of child care facilities in this city would mean that chaos would result in this welfare sector.

32. This is equivalent to the cost of sending a child to a top private school in Sydney (Cox, 1983b:5).

33. The commercial child care lobby has had a direct and apparently major impact on Federal child care policy development. Led by the Australian Federation of Child Care Associations, this lobby has claimed that the community sector mismanages funds and has, on this basis, "pointed out ways [to Federal Ministers] in which the Government's child care costs could be cut" (Brennan, 1982:32).

34. It is noted in an earlier discussion that, while the Child Care Act has many shortcomings in terms of scope and intent for the Children's Services Programme, it is nevertheless the only secure legislative basis for the Federal funding of child care in Australia. To repeal, rather than amend, this Act could readily allow for a massive withdrawal of Commonwealth support for children's services and the handing over of all responsibility for these services to the State Governments. Although, as noted in the Spender Report itself:

   Because most programmes funded under the Children's Services Programme are highly visible and strongly endorsed at the local level, a strong and adverse political reaction is likely if they cease functioning as a result of Government defunding.

   (1981:18)

35. The work of Rapoport, Rapoport and Strelitz (1977), and Richards (1978) does indicate that some changes in popular notions about parenthood (and motherhood and fatherhood) have taken place in recent years. These changes are, however, minor.

36. The state, at least, does not make emotional/sexual demands upon its 'brides' in the same way as some men do. The fact, however, that the welfare state operates to support social structures which enable men to continue to exploit women in the home would seem to render this dependency distinction less than significant as far as women are concerned.
A study of child care workers undertaken in Melbourne in late 1981 confirmed that high levels of job stress are experienced by most child care staff, the major determinants of this stress being:

(a) organisation - stress such as staff changes and major changes in policy and instructions

(b) work load stress - such as having too much work, too little time to complete work and having to cover for absent workers

(c) professional stress - for example limited career opportunities, low job status and low pay

and (d) environmental stress - for example coping with high noise levels, inadequate space and lack of privacy. (Forbath, 1983b:7)

Baldock (1983:292-96) notes the growth in credentialism in voluntary welfare work and comments:

...it is interesting but perhaps not surprising that the incentives offered in recent years to potential recruits for voluntary work have come to focus ...on the similarities between voluntary work and paid work, and the professional qualities of work done in the voluntary sector.

(1983:293)

Citing the work of Ericksson-Joslyn, she adds:

In these circumstances it is understandable that volunteer workers become aware of the fact that they are 'in reality underpaid employed workers' ...[and consequently] more aware of the distinction between volunteering as service and as a means of effective political participation.

(1983:295)

That this contradiction between the ideology of professionalism and that of volunteerism might lead to genuine social change is an interesting consideration.


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