

divisions in international and local women's movements today. We still have a lot to learn from these women.

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**Dominique Clément, *Equality Deferred: Sex Discrimination and British Columbia's Human Rights State, 1953–1984* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press 2014)**

*EQUALITY DEFERRED* provides an important and compelling account of the origins of human rights legislation in British Columbia, the first Canadian jurisdiction to prohibit discrimination on the basis of sex. Utilizing previously undisclosed records of British Columbia's human rights commission, Clément documents not only egregious acts of discrimination by individuals, but also the courage of women who pioneered claims for human rights and the challenges and limitations of the human rights regime. Ultimately, the book illustrates the entrenched nature of sex-based discrimination and the need to understand inequality beyond its definition in human rights legislation as acts of individual discrimination.

Clément places his study in the context of the limited scholarship on human rights in Canada and asserts that British Columbia provides an ideal test case for the study of human rights, not only because the province was the first to prohibit sex-based discrimination, but also because human rights were highly politicized in the province. British Columbia had the most highly developed women's movement in the country, but human rights developments were deeply contested. The New Democrat Party advocated, and for a time oversaw, the nation's most progressive human rights regime at the time, only to see their work decimated by the Social Credit Party (the Socreds) in

1984. The reforms of 1984 prompted debate throughout Canada, making British Columbia "the epicentre of a conflict on the nature and legitimacy of the human rights state." (21)

To set the stage for his examination of human rights legislation, Clément illustrates the entrenched nature of gender inequality in Canadian law. He documents the failure of labour organizations and Jewish activists – who campaigned relentlessly to ban discrimination on the bases of race, religion, and ethnicity – to understand the problem of sex discrimination. He then explores the 1953 *Equal Pay Act*, the first equality-based legislation in the province to deal with women, and acts banning discrimination in employment and accommodation. These reforms were largely ineffective, as was the symbolic inclusion of sex as a prohibited ground of discrimination in the Socred's *Human Rights Act* of 1969. Thus was the stage set for the NDP's 1973 *Human Rights Code*.

The bulk of *Equality Deferred* explores the origins and implementation of this ground-breaking and progressive *Human Rights Code*. Clément provides unprecedented detail about the development of the Human Rights Branch – a separate agency intended to deal with complaints – and the work performed under the leadership of Kathleen Ruff, who hired the province's first human rights investigators and developed procedures for investigating complaints. Ruff, with a long history of work in the feminist movement, brought an advocacy approach to the Branch and relied upon her connections with progressive social movements in the province to recruit committed investigators and to promote the human rights regime. The Branch received complaints from women who had been fired when pregnant, had been paid unequal wages for work the same as that performed by men, or had been subjected to sexual harassment. Precedents established under

the *Code* “profoundly challenged the entrenched male culture of many workplaces.” (117) As Clément notes, however, human rights laws had limited reach; the women who utilized the *Code* were overwhelmingly white and while a wide range of women “undoubtedly experienced discrimination,” they did not “engage with human rights law.” (7) Nonetheless, the courage and dedication of the women and men who worked in the Branch, and the tenacity of the women who made complaints, make for inspiring reading. The unrepentant vulgarity of discriminators is equally instructive. The Branch flourished, innovated, and expanded across the province under the NDP, but the election of the Socreds in 1975 brought increasing challenges for the human rights regime. Clément describes the government as “dominated by men whose policies demonstrated little understanding of sex discrimination” (185) and details the myriad ways in which government officials worked to undermine the Human Rights Branch through under-funding, failure to replace complaints investigators, and ignoring the reports of the Branch. Ultimately, the Socreds went beyond passive opposition to the Branch and replaced the *Human Rights Code* of 1973 with the *Human Rights Act* of 1984, a measure “almost universally vilified as a regressive step” (186); the *Act* restructured the human rights regime to place the burden of complaint almost entirely on the victims of discrimination and retrenched the progress of the previous decade. The passage of the *Act* coincided with a restraint regime which led to the dismissal of thousands of civil servants, wage cuts, and the elimination of multiple social services. Until 1996, British Columbia’s human rights regime “was the black sheep in Canada.” (196)

*Equality Deferred* is mandatory reading for all those interested in the human rights state in Canada, its development,

its innovations, and its flaws. The book illustrates not only the important connections between human rights legislation and politics and the vulnerability of progressive reform, but also the challenges of implementation and education and the intransigence of discriminatory beliefs and practices. Clément asserts that the focus of human rights legislation on individual complaints cannot fully address systemic inequality. Further, by defining discrimination through “a catalogue of independently enumerated grounds,” (213) human rights codes and boards of inquiry obliged defendants to define themselves narrowly and ignored socio-economic context and histories of oppression. Clément argues that an updated vision of human rights is required and that “a transformational human rights agenda would go beyond formal legal equality and change institutional structures and practices.” (216) In illustrating why such a renewed vision is necessary, *Equality Deferred* provides not only a useful history of one Canadian human rights regime, but also important lessons for our collective future.

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**Suzanne Morton, *Wisdom, Justice, and Charity: Canadian Social Welfare Through the Life of Jane B. Wisdom, 1884–1975* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press 2014)**

IN THIS EVOCATIVE, thoughtfully crafted, and engagingly written political biography of social worker Jane Wisdom, Suzanne Morton traces the large historical processes of liberal welfare state expansion and the professionalization of social work through the life and career of one individual woman. Born in 1884 in Saint John, New Brunswick, educated at McGill University, and trained in