THE WOMEN'S INTERNATIONAL ZIONIST ORGANIZATION AT THE CRITICAL JUNCTURE OF STATEHOOD: A POLITICAL ANALYSIS OF THE ISRAELI WOMEN'S MOVEMENT 1918-2001

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A thesis submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies in
partial fulfilment of the requirements
for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy

Graduate Programme in Political Science
York University
Toronto, Ontario

November 2002

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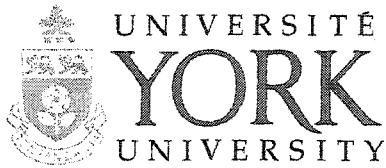
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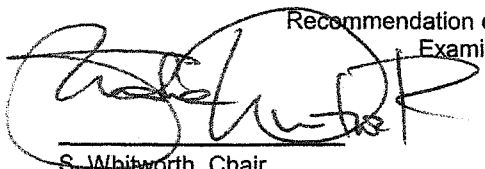under my supervision by

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AT THE CRITICAL JUNCTURE OF STATEHOOD: A POLITICAL
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be accepted in partial fulfillment of the
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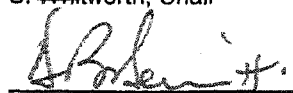
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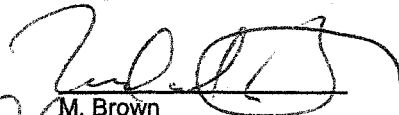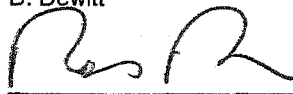Examining Committee
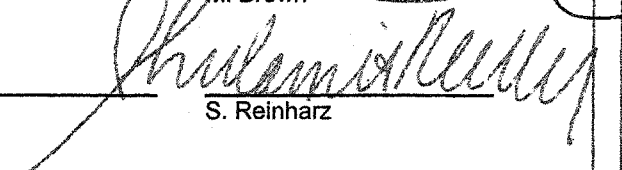
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Abstract

The withdrawal from Israeli electoral politics by the Women's International Zionist Organization (WIZO) in 1951 was counter-intuitive political behaviour. Most successful political parties do not withdraw from electoral politics following five successive election campaigns. Yet WIZO turned its back on thirty years of successful electoral campaigning by the women's movement in favour of non-partisan voluntarism. This thesis examines the WIZO decision through the theoretical perspective of historical institutionalism, relying on the model of critical juncture. The critical juncture model may be used to examine particular political decisions in the light of what impact they had on subsequent historical and political developments. The history of WIZO's 1951 decision is therefore reconstructed on the five stages of the critical juncture model. These are: antecedent conditions, crisis or cleavage, critical juncture, legacy and end of legacy. This thesis therefore contributes to three distinct fields. First, it assists our understanding of the development of the Israeli women's movement, and its shifts between electoral activism and non-partisan voluntarism. Second, it expands the theoretical body of historical institutionalism. While the historical institutionalist perspective is often used for studies of political institutions, it not often applied to studies of political movements, especially women's movements. Finally, this study develops the critical juncture model, not only by moving it into the new area of gender politics, but by testing its viability in the case of WIZO critical decision of 1951.

Acknowledgements

Many people gave me encouragement and support in my research. A number of scholars assisted me through providing research guidance. My advisor, David Dewitt was extremely supportive of my research from beginning to end. Despite his many commitments he was always available to guide me through the difficult process of writing this dissertation. Other members of my supervisory committee, Sandra Whitworth and Wenona Giles offered beneficial advice during subsequent drafts. Shabtai Teveth pointed out the importance of Hadassah in understanding WIZO's decisions. Hanna Herzog suggested that I incorporate important theoretical literature into my research. Shulamith Reinharz, through the Hadassah Research Institute for Jewish Women, provided me with generous financial support in the early stages of my research and served as the external examiner for my thesis exam. This final version greatly benefits from her comments and encouragement. Michael Brown served as the internal examiner and performed a through edit of my dissertation for which I am very grateful. Ross Rudolph, the Dean's Representative for the thesis exam provided helpful comments in the final stages of the completion of my thesis.

I also received a great deal of encouragement and support from friends and family. Devorah Kagan was kind enough to meet me in Haifa and pull out some of her personal archives about her mother-in-law. Frieda Forman encouraged me and offered some important insights into what kinds of questions my research should address. My in-laws, Miki, Isaac and sister-in-law, Lilac Levin encouraged me in many ways during my research, not least by sending me research material. My sister, Erica Simmons, patiently

took time away from her own research to proof-read this dissertation. My brother, Daniel Simmons, helped me by babysitting. My husband, Avner Levin, helped me as a unpaid research assistant, editor and psychotherapist. I could not have completed this work without his help. Finally, both my father and mother, Harvey and Eileen Simmons, babysat, translated German documents and edited drafts and offered helpful comments. I dedicate this thesis to my parents, Harvey and Eileen.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION:

THE CRITICAL JUNCTURE OF THE FIRST KNESSET: ORGANIZED WOMEN AND THE REJECTION OF ELECTORAL REPRESENTATION IN ISRAEL

The 1951 withdrawal of the WIZO Women's List from electoral politics presents a powerful theoretical challenge to theories of gender and politics. Whereas most political parties do not withdraw from electoral politics unless they lose one or more successive elections, the Women's List sponsored by the early women's movement disbanded following five successful elections. And while it is common for European, North American and Israeli interest groups to exchange political lobbying for partisan politics, the early Israeli women's movement did the opposite.

In 1951, after the Jewish women's movement in pre-state Israel elected representatives on separate Women's Lists in five successive elections during the course of more than thirty years, a major women's organization of the period, the Women's International Zionist Organization (WIZO) announced that it would not sponsor a Women's List to run for the second general election of the independent state of Israel.[1] WIZO declared that it would henceforth abstain from electoral politics on the national level and devote itself to social welfare voluntarism. Organized women in Israel upheld this resolution for more than two decades until the campaign of a

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[1] A Women's List refers to a slate of women-only candidates presented for election by a Women's Party. By Jewish women's movement I am referring to the individual women and women's organizations drawn together in a "politically, ideologically and strategically diverse" collectivity. Nancy Adamson, Linda Briskin and Margaret McPhail, *Feminist Organizing for Change: The Contemporary Women's Movement in Canada* (Toronto, Oxford University Press, 1988), 7. I have used the most common English spelling for Hebrew transliterations.

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Women's Party which ran for election in 1977. This and three subsequent attempts to elect

representatives of separate Women's Lists to the Knesset were unsuccessful.[2]

The decision by the women's movement to pull out of electoral politics in 1951 might

have been an unremarkable example of an electoral list disbanding before an election, if it were

not for the exceptional history of the Women's Lists. Candidates from the Women's Lists won

seats in all four elections of the representative bodies of the Jewish community during the pre-

state period (1920, 1926, 1931, 1944) and one of its candidates won a seat in the first election

following Israeli independence (1949). For this reason alone the Women's Lists are an impressive

example of electoral activism by women.

Over the course of thirty years the Women's Lists included at one time or another all of

the major women's organizations active in the women's movement of the pre-state era. The

Women's Lists thus represented an important focal point of activity for the pre-state women's

movement. The Women's Lists fought for and won women's suffrage, campaigned for political

and equality rights for women, and introduced and supported the establishment of a social welfare

system which provided the infrastructure for the Ministry of Social Welfare in Israel.

Dissolving a political movement on the heels of five successful election campaigns is counter-

intuitive political behaviour. The decision by organized women to withdraw from electoral

politics in 1951 is a political paradox demanding explanation. Given the historic nature of this

decision the model of "critical junctures" devised by David Collier and Ruth Berens Collier offers

a paradigm which facilitates an investigation into the reasons and consequences of this pivotal

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[2]Leah Simmons Levin, "Setting the Agenda: The Impact of the 1977 Women's Party," *Israel Studies* 4 (1999), 40.

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decision.[3] The critical juncture model attempts to show how specific political events may alter the path of history, and is constructed in four stages (See Table 1). First, there are "antecedent conditions" which are the political context which triggers a second stage, "crisis" or "cleavage." In turn the "crisis" sets off the critical juncture, the third stage of the model. Fourth, the critical juncture results in a particular "legacy" which is historically limited.

The critical juncture model is based on an historical institutionalist perspective. Historical institutionalism is the view that historical and political events are contingent, not inevitable, that individual actors do not necessarily make decisions which maximize their self-interest but rather make decisions which are judged to be appropriate in particular political contexts, and that institutions guide and restrict the political options available to political decision-makers.

I have three main objectives in my study of the early women's movement's rejection of political power. On the most basic level I attempt to piece together an historical narrative which has been omitted from political analyses of Israel. In my view this narrative is intrinsically important because it adds to our overall understanding of how Israeli feminism developed. Whether the "second-wave" Israeli feminist movement of the 1970s would have emerged without there having existed an earlier women's movement in Israel is speculative; nevertheless, the political decisions of the earlier movement influenced the political choices of the Israeli feminist movement of the 1970s. I ask to what extent the earlier women's movement and its more than thirty years of political representation, had any effect upon the subsequent incarnation of Israeli feminism and status of Israeli women.

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[3]David Collier and Ruth Berens Collier, *Shaping the Political Arena: Critical Junctures: the Labour Movement, and Regime Dynamics in Latin America* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1991).

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On a second level, I wish to answer the baffling question of why organized women relinquished political representation. To date, scholarly mention of organized women's rejection of political representation has never referred to the peculiarity that organized women ceased to seek electoral representation after five successful electoral campaigns, particularly in a political context in which women's full equality was not assured. There seems to be an implicit scholarly assumption that it was somehow "natural" for organized women to embrace nonpartisan voluntarism; this means not viewing the early Israeli women's movement as a serious political force. I wish to challenge this perception.

Third, I contend that by providing empirical material which reaffirms historical institutionalist arguments this study will expand the analytical range of the historical institutionalism framework. Historical institutionalism has been applied mainly to comparative and case studies of Western European and American political institutions. I suggest that historical institutionalism and the critical juncture model offer a valuable method for studying the development of Israeli feminism.

My interest in the 1949 WIZO Women's List grew out of the intersection of my academic research on the Israeli women's movement and first-hand experience working for WIZO. I became aware of the 1949 WIZO Women's List during the course of undertaking research on the Israel Women's Party, a political party made up of only women candidates, which ran, unsuccessfully, for Knesset in the 1977 election.[4] In explaining her decision to establish the 1977 Women's Party, its major organizer, feminist activist Marcia Freedman referred to the 1949 WIZO List as evidence that feminists could achieve political power through collective action and

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[4]See Chapter 6.

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participation in electoral politics. But the short term tenure of the WIZO Women's List, and the inability of the 1977 Women's Party to win a seat in the Knesset tarnished the reputation of separate lists and parties as a political strategy for women. As I discuss in detail in Chapter 2, during the campaign of the 1977 Women's Party and afterward, many feminist activists, academics, and women politicians were adamant that separate political activism by women resulted in women's segregation and marginalization from political representation and power. For me, however, the failure of the 1977 Women's Party made the 1949 Women's List, regardless of its short life-span, all the more intriguing. What organizational and rhetorical powers did WIZO have at its disposal in 1949 when women's issues, let alone feminist issues, were not widely understood by the public, which the 1977 Women's Party emerging at the height of the second-wave women's movement could not rally?

The answer to this question, as I found out from personal experience, could be found in understanding the strength of WIZO as an organization. In the early 1990s I began working in the Organization and Education Department of the Tel Aviv branch of WIZO. Most people reacted to the identity of my employer in the same way, with mild amusement, and sometimes ridicule. WIZO enjoys a reputation of being a women's organization for do-gooders, for married, middle and upper-class women, "housewives" with grown children and time on their hands. Those who have not dealt with WIZO directly rarely take WIZO seriously as an organization. But as I began working at WIZO I realized that, regardless of the stereotypes of the "WIZO woman," that WIZO is responsible for a substantial section of Israel's social infrastructure. It has a massive international membership, and perhaps more importantly a substantive budget at its disposal. Clearly there was a serious gap between WIZO's image and its actual concrete work. Was it

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possible that WIZO was not taken seriously because women's voluntary work could not, by definition, be considered important?[5] And if WIZO was not to be taken seriously, how had they deployed the necessary skills to elect a representative to the Knesset?

I was also surprised by feminist indifference, and at times hostility to WIZO. Most feminists I spoke with, or whose work I read, slotted WIZO into the category of an "establishment," non-feminist, or even anti-feminist organization.[6] In my view WIZO's refusal to associate itself with feminism does not in any way detract from its work, and its call for the social, political and economic advancement of women. Indeed, I would argue that the issue of whether or not WIZO views itself a feminist organization is a red herring. The political context of the Yishuv during 1920s, 1930s and 1940s emphasized the national collective above all. When women's organizations called for equal rights they did so, they claimed, because the Zionist ideal was based on equality, not on the rigid sexual division upheld by their religious opponents. Women's organizations argued that if the Zionist movement was to succeed, it required women's full participation and support. From the 1920s until the 1940s women's organizations and their allies argued that a choice had to be made between two paths: democracy or theocracy. The approval or granting of full political rights for women meant that tentative steps were taken along the first path. The call for women's rights was not articulated, therefore out of an ideological commitment to feminism, but first, to Zionism, second to democracy both of which were underpinned by secularism.

I was also amazed by the contrast between what I believe to be deplorable religious

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[5]This is one of the main arguments that Hanna Herzog makes in her book, *Gendering Politics: Women in Israel* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1999).
[6]See Chapter 2. Again, Hanna Herzog is the exception to this general rule.

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control over women's lives today in Israel on one hand, and on the other, the fact that a Women's Party representing women's interests sat in Knesset as early as 1949, a significant accomplishment for organized women anywhere in the world even by contemporary standards. I wanted to understand how a political effective women's movement could exist with a political system in which glaring legal inequality was state approved. Was there a connection between the seeming evaporation of the 1949 Women's Party and continuing religious control over women's lives? What could the experience of the 1949 Women's Party teach contemporary feminist activists about gaining and keeping political power?

In the course of undertaking this research I was not able to decide on my own stance regarding whether I thought that women's parties were advantageous for feminists. It is clear to me however, that the political stakes for running women's parties and lists are higher than for other political parties. If a women's party loses a campaign it is usually seen as a sign of strategic error; that is, women should work within mainstream parties and not cordon themselves off from men. The failure of a women's list or party also reflects badly on the women's movement since it is taken as a sign that women don't support feminist goals. When a women's party wins, as in the case of 1949, the expectations of what it should be able to achieve are extremely high, and almost certainly bound to be frustrated.

However, I can say with certainty that my commitment to this research was driven by my firm belief that the withdrawal by WIZO from electoral politics in 1949 was a grave tactical error for the Israeli women's movement. It is pointless to speculate on what might have been if WIZO had approved running a list of candidates for the 1951 election. It is quite possible that WIZO would not have won any seats in the Knesset at all.

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But it is also possible that WIZO might have held on to its representation in the 1951 election and even subsequently. Even if there had been only one representative devoted to protecting women's status, and as part of that effort, social equality, as Rachel Kagan was from 1949-1951, the Israeli women's movement, and a later generation of feminists would have been able to benefit from the advantages of having some degree, however minimal, of political representation. Perhaps even more importantly, if WIZO had continued to run candidates for election, it would have advanced the argument that women as a group need political representation, that there are women's issues which require political attention.

Instead, by the 1960s WIZO assumed the position (ironically, given its own role in leaving electoral politics) that the reason why women were underrepresented was their *own fault* because they were not politically aware. So, instead of devoting its resources to assisting women candidates, WIZO sponsored a series on political education for women. In my view this shift simply wasted the political expertise and skill which WIZO as an organization had accrued during the years not only when it sponsored Rachel Kagan in the Knesset, but during its sponsorship of the Women's Lists in the Representative Assembly. It also wasted women's time, by advocating the idea that political representation followed what it defined as "political education," regardless of the fact that most other political parties did not abstain from electoral activism until its leadership deemed that the membership were politically mature.

Scholarship is never objective, but it is my belief that researchers should strive for objectivity as much as they are capable. I believe my biases are transparent, but I hope my research is solid enough so that if my conclusions are disputed, the facts on which they are based will be acknowledged.

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Chapter 1 discusses why conventional studies of Israeli politics failed to perceive the historical and political significance of the 1951 decision. While feminist analyses have made certain erroneous premises about the Women's International Zionist Organization (WIZO), which is conflated with the Women's Lists, dominant Israeli political analyses fail to accurately account for the political decisions of organized women accurately. A review of the historical institutionalist perspective offers a new way to look at the rejection of political power by the Israeli women's movement. Chapter 1 proposes the model of critical juncture as a method for mapping out the process by which organized women in Israel withdrew from partisan politics.

Chapter 2 examines the "antecedent conditions" behind the critical juncture of 1951. The struggle for women's suffrage during the first two decades of the 1900s, combined with the growth of highly interdependent Jewish women's organizations dedicated to the creation of a social welfare network, were the two major political events which created the pre-state Jewish women's movement. The intransigent opposition of the religious sector to the very concept of women's equality, its refusal to accept democratic procedures, combined with the secular sector's tenuous commitment to women's rights when faced with the threat of religious secession, persuaded organized women that their political rights in the new polity were not secure. In addition, ongoing pervasive legal and political discrimination against women provided organized women with the incentive to continue political activism even after winning suffrage in 1926. The Women's Lists also provided the vehicle for the second major goal of the women's organizations; creating a network of social services based on public support, rather than traditional religious charitable relief for the destitute. The first Women's Lists were thus founded in order to win women's suffrage but provided an ongoing institutional basis for the expansion and continuation

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of political activity by organized women. This examination of the antecedent conditions of the critical juncture thus sets the context in which a cleavage between partisan politics and civil society emerged among the organizations of the women's movement.

Chapter 3 further examines this cleavage. The theory of institutional dynamism developed by Kathleen Thelen and Sven Steinmo discusses sources prompting institutional change. The social welfare agenda promoted by the political actors in the Women's Lists, Zionist leader Henrietta Szold and WIZO, resulted in the Women's Lists reorienting their goals from women's legal and political rights to support for the creation of a social welfare network in Israel. The appointment of the head of the Women's List, Henrietta Szold to the executive steering committee of the autonomous Jewish community, the National Council, in order to set up a system of social services illustrates how a change in political context allows "previously latent institutions" to "become salient."[7] Szold's reliance on volunteer labour from organized women in order to establish of the Department of Social Service in Palestine entrenched the view that organized women's volunteer work would be recognized by formal political recognition. The stage of cleavage thus indicates a disjuncture between support for partisan politics, and volunteer work as part of civil society as a means for gaining political influence.

The failure of partisan politics to give organized women political power was apparent immediately following Israeli Independence. The first government of the nascent State of Israel allocated the newly-established Ministry of Social Welfare, to a representative of the

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[7]Kathleen Thelen and Sven Steinmo, "Historical Institutionalism in Comparative Politics,"in *Structuring Politics: Historical Institutionalism in Comparative Perspective*, ed. Sven Steinmo, Kathleen Thelen and Frank Longstreth (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 16.

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TABLE 1

The Critical Juncture Model
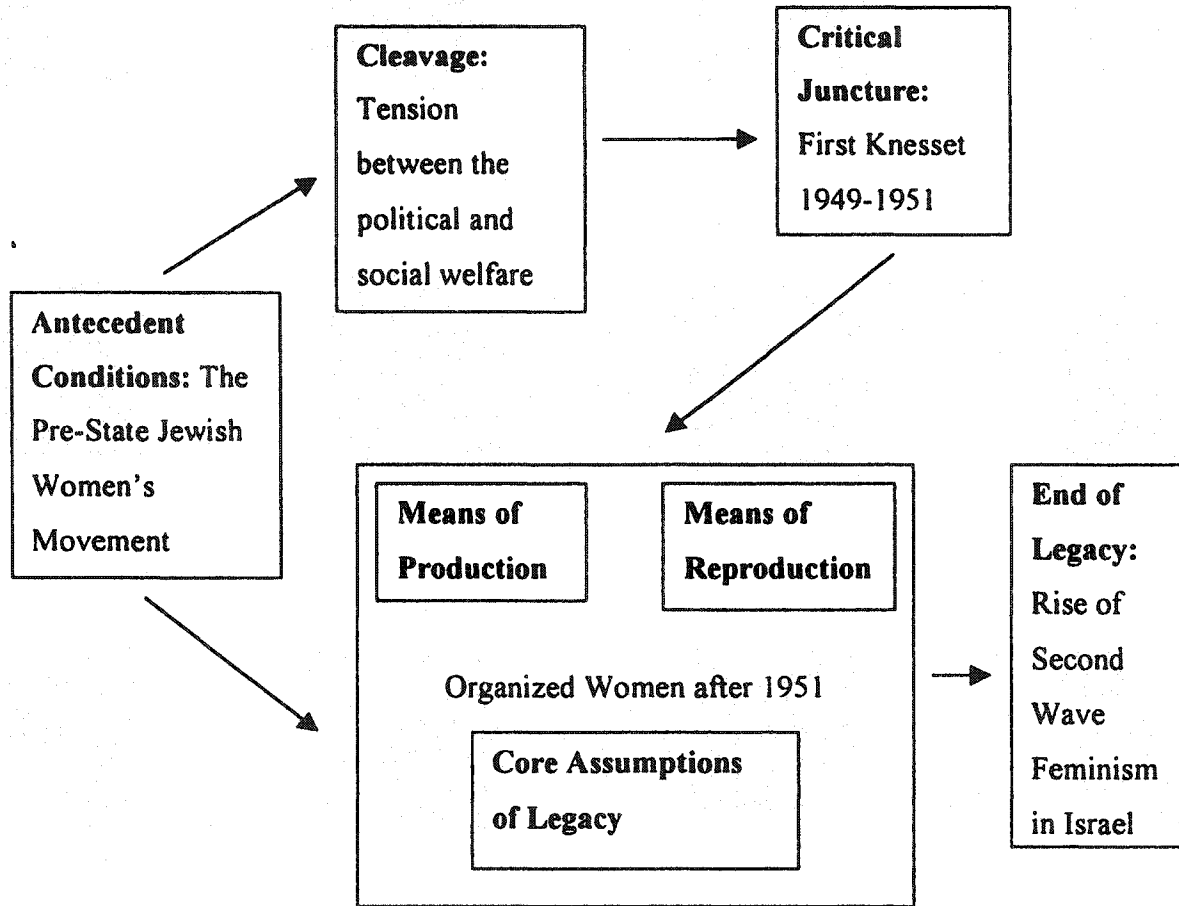
Cleavage: Tension between the political and social welfare

Critical Juncture: First Knesset 1949-1951

Antecedent Conditions: The Pre-State Jewish Women's Movement

Means of Production

Means of Reproduction

Organized Women after 1951

Core Assumptions of Legacy

End of Legacy: Rise of Second Wave Feminism in Israel

This table is an adaptation of the critical juncture model devised by David Collier & Ruth Berens Collier, *Shaping the Political Arena: Critical Junctures, The Labour Movement and Regime Dynamics in Latin America* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1991), 31.

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government's coalition partner, the United Religious Front (URF), an Orthodox religious party. Prime minister David Ben-Gurion's failure to allocate the Ministry of Social Welfare to the Women's List's representative in the first Knesset was all the more glaring given Rachel Kagan's extensive experience in social work, and her assumption of Henrietta Szold's position as the head of the Department of Social Service after the latter's resignation. Chapter 4 thus examines the critical juncture which took place during the first Knesset, in which WIZO's failure to receive the portfolio for the Ministry Social Welfare was aggravated by a number of other factors which indicated to organized women that partisan politics would not give organized women significant political power. These factors included the new allegiance of the women representatives of Mapai, whose organizational representative, the Working Women's Council (WWC) had formed part of the women's movement, to the government, above the claims of the women's movement. Another factor was the Mapai government's passage of the Women's Equal Rights Law (1951) which, despite its title, confirmed religious control over family law despite the new state's supposed commitment to women's full equality. While government advocates claimed that compromise with the religious sector was necessary to avoid civil strife, the new government had been willing to antagonize religious sensibilities during the debate over a bill stipulating military service for women. Together, these factors split organized women into two camps: one, including Kagan, held that Women's Lists were still necessary to fight for women's rights, and another argued that the new political context rendered political separatism obsolete.

Chapter 5 examines the "legacy" of the critical juncture and the "mechanics of production and reproduction" by which it was maintained. The legacy was the refusal by organized women

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to seek political representation collectively for a little more than two decades. From 1951 until 1977 organized women were joined in a consensus that support for civil society meant refraining from partisan politics. Chapter 5 examines how the women's movement revised its political activities in response to the rejection of electoral activism. Chapter 5 also looks at the "end of the legacy": the re-entry of organized women into partisan politics. The international appearance of second-wave feminism during the early 1970s sparked the growth of Israeli feminism. This new movement rejected the post-1951 nonpartisan activism of its predecessor, and in 1977 formed a Women's Party which unsuccessfully ran for Knesset election. The influence of the early women's movement upon the second wave Israeli feminist movement was marginal. The rejection of political representation by the early women's movement meant that the Israeli feminist movement gained little, if any, benefit from thirty years of electoral representation of the Women's Lists. Finally, in the conclusion, I argue that in conjunction, the historical institutionalist perspective and the critical juncture model provide an invaluable method of studying change within the Israeli women's movement, and of women's movements internationally.

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CHAPTER 2

HISTORICAL INSTITUTIONALISM:
A METHOD FOR UNDERSTANDING ORGANIZED WOMEN'S
REJECTION OF ELECTORAL REPRESENTATION IN ISRAEL

The political system established with the declaration of Israeli statehood preserved many features of the pre-state system such as the proportional representation electoral system, and a democratic legislature, based on the British model. To this day there are no separate ridings or constituencies during national elections; the entire country is one electoral district. The electorate does not vote for an individual representative, but for a slate of ranked candidates. Electoral slates receive mandates (seats in the legislature) depending on the percentage of votes they receive. Electoral slates may be submitted by a political party, a political organization which operates during more than two elections, or a list, which is an association of people who draw up a list of candidates for a particular election, but do not have a coordinated political presence between elections. Electoral slates cannot present more than 120 candidates since that is the number of legislative seats; some slates present a minimum of candidates, based on their projected percentage of the vote. While the electoral threshold parties need to win a Knesset seat, or mandate has since risen, in 1949 parties and lists required at least one percent of the electoral vote. Candidates whose rank is at the top of a slate (within the first ten positions) therefore have greater chance of being elected than those listed at the bottom of the slate, and parties and lists carefully estimate their projected percentage of the vote so as to rank their strongest, or most favored, candidates closest to the top of the slate.

The low electoral threshold required for a party to win a mandate for the Knesset has been

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identified as one of the contributing causes of the factionalism of Israeli party politics. The Israeli party system is characterized by the proliferation of small or minor parties representing one sector of the population (such as taxi drivers, Russian immigrants, senior citizens) which may dissolve immediately following electoral defeat. Israeli parties have a high rate of splits and mergers which result as much from power sharing arrangements in the Knesset as from ideological disputes. In order to form the government, a party or a coalition of parties must hold at least 61 seats. Since 1949 no single party has formed a government without entering into a coalition agreement. Coalition governments are formed out of strategic compromise, not ideological agreement. This means that ministries are distributed as enticements to entering a coalition government.

The major party which has dominated Israeli politics since the pre-state era is the forerunner of the current Labour Party, the Mapai Party (Hebrew acronym for Land of Israel Workers' Party) which itself was formed from the merger of its predecessor, Ahdut HaAvodah (United Labour), and smaller left-wing parties associated with the Labour Zionist movement. The Labour Zionist movement refers to a number of political parties founded in the late 1800s in Eastern Europe which were committed to various constellations of socialist and Zionist ideological doctrines. These took different positions on the ideal class and political structure of the planned Jewish state, but all upheld the necessity of settling in Palestine and engaging in manual labour not only to build the economic infrastructure of the new polity, but also to transform what they argued was the unhealthy character of the Diaspora Jew.[1]

The party which exerted the most political influence during the 1920s was Ahdut Ha'Avodah (United Labour) which solidified its position through the establishment of the

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[1]Walter Laqueur, *A History of Zionism* (New York: Rinehart and Winston, 1972).

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Histadrut, (General Federation of Labour Unions) a "structure to further the social, economic, and cultural interests of the workers."[2] In 1930 Mapai was formed becoming the political base for David Ben-Gurion, an Eastern European Jew who had been heavily involved in socialist Zionist groups throughout his youth. In the early 1900s he settled in Palestine and began to manoeuver his way into becoming the pre-eminent Zionist leader in Palestine. In 1935, Ben-Gurion not only led Mapai, but he was the secretary-general of the Histadrut. In addition, as the chairman of the World Zionist Organization Executive Ben-Gurion acquired a domestic and international reputation as being the pre-eminent leader of Palestinian Jews.[3]

The development of the Jewish polity in Palestine was undertaken in a context of profound political uncertainty. The British Mandate, the unyielding opposition of Arabs to Jewish political autonomy which was expressed through political and military campaigns, waves of immigration after the Second World War of displaced European Jews and, during the 1950s, of Jews from newly-independent North African and Middle Eastern states, and a war of invasion immediately following the Declaration of Independence in 1948, presented formidable challenges and constraints on Zionist leadership.

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[2]Asher Arian, *Politics in Israel: The Second Generation* (Chatham: Chatham House Publishers, 1985), 72.

[3]Ibid., 73.

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2.1 Perspectives of WIZO and the Women's List of the first Knesset (1949-1951)

There are to date only partial political analyses of the WIZO Women's List's term in the first Knesset (1949-1951) or of its withdrawal in 1951 from electoral politics.[5] In part, this may be attributed to a persistent scholarly neglect of WIZO as an organization as manifested by the lack of serious analyses of this massive women's voluntary organization.[6] Lack of scholarly interest in WIZO is also symptomatic of the tentative position gender occupies in studies of Israeli politics.[7]

Although feminist analyses of gender in Israel might be supposed to be more receptive to the WIZO 1949 Women's List they too have compounded the exclusion of WIZO from political studies. First, feminist political and historical analyses have assumed that the organized women of the Labour Zionist movement were the sole women's movement in pre-state Palestine. For example, Dafna Izraeli distinguishes between "the Palestinian women's movement [which]

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[5]There are two extensive discussions of legislation passed during the first Knesset (1949-1951) initiated by the representative of the Women's List, Rachel Kagan. See Pnina Lahav, "When the Palliative Only Makes Matters Worse," *Zmanim*, 46-47 (1993):193-209 (in Hebrew); Nitza Berkovitch, "Motherhood as a National Mission: the Construction of Womanhood in the Legal Discourse of Israel," *Women's Studies International Forum* 20 (1997): 605-619.

[6]Hanna Herzog and Ofra Greenberg's review of the development of WIZO in the pre-state era might be considered an exception, although their work is a survey and not a critical analysis. Hanna Herzog and Ofra Greenberg, *A Voluntary Women's Organization in a Society in the Making: WIZO's Contribution to Israeli Society* (Tel Aviv: Tel Aviv University, 1981). Another partial exception is the discussion of WIZO as a women's voluntary organization in Hanna Herzog in *Gendering Politics.*

[7]Neither of the following discuss women as a political category: Reuven Y. Hazan and Moshe Maor, *Parties, Elections and Cleavages: Israel in Comparative and Theoretical Perspective* (London: Frank Cass, 2000) , Judith T. Shuval, "The Structure and Dilemmas of Israeli Pluralism," in the *Israeli State and Society: Boundaries and Frontiers*, ed. Baruch Kimmerling (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1989).

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developed within Labour Zionism" on one hand, and "women in the non-socialist sector of the

Zionist movement both in Europe and North America [which] formed separate chapters that

engaged in fund raising, education and philanthropy" on the other.[8] Dafna Sharfman reiterates

this inaccurate view of the pre-state women's movement. She claims that once the institutional

representative of women of the labour movement, the Working Women's Council, (WWC) lost

its organizational independence "women lost the struggle for an equal position in public life, and

for the next fifty years the women's movement did not make any significant effort to change this

basic division of roles in society and politics."[9]

Second, a variation of this view claims that during the pre-state period WIZO was (and

remains in the present) an ideologically conservative women's organization, closely linked to the

governing establishment, that it did not promote what may be defined as feminist issues in the pre-

state period, and that it was an apolitical organization.[10] Benjamin Akzin argues that after the first

Knesset WIZO "returned to its original terrain of non-political activities."[11] In her short

introduction to archival memoirs of the women's suffrage movement, Yaffa Berlovitz offers this

explanation for the supposed decline of the women's movement in Israel:

> After the State of Israel was established, there was a decrease in ideological

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[8]Dafna N. Izraeli, "The Zionist Women's Movement in Palestine, 1911-1927: A Sociological Analysis," *Signs* 11 (1981): 88.

[9]Dafna Sharfman, "Women and Politics in Israel," in *Women and Politics Worldwide*, ed. Barbara Nelson and Najma Cowdhury (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1994), 385.

[10]Sylvia Fogiel-Bijaoui, "Women's Organizations in Israel- The Current Situation," *International Problems - Society and Problems* 31 (1992): 65-76. (In Hebrew).

[11]Benjamin Akzin, "The Role of Parties in Israeli Democracy," in *Integration and Development*, ed. S.N. Eisenstadt, (New York: Praeger, 1970), 30.

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fervour and, suprisingly, a decline, even a regression, in a woman's awareness of herself and her need for liberation. She began to concentrate increasingly on housework, work she had previously seen as demeaning. When working outside of the home, she sought jobs more suitable to her as a housewife and a mother, whereas before she had wanted only to be included in so-called man's work. She also began now to emphasize her "feminine" appearance and charms -values she had provocatively rejected earlier, and willingly or otherwise, she began to accept her secondary place in society. In military service, with all its apparent equality, she performed duties, for the most part, that were designated as 'women's work,' such as secretarial, nursing, social work, and teaching functions.

This regression lasted some 30 years, and it was only with the awakening of the feminist movement in the U.S.A. and elsewhere that Israeli women began to become aware of feminist issues.[12]

In one fell swoop Berlovitz simply ignores the election of WIZO to the first Knesset, and attributes the apparent disappearance of the early women's movement to organized women's declining interest in political rights.[13]

Barbara Swirski does not distinguish between the socialist and non-socialist branches of the pre-state women's movement, but she argues that the women's movement "petered out" by the 1930s and that with the establishment of statehood, the former women's movement became allied with the political establishment and thus was "not predisposed to reach out and recruit new allies among the new groups" of immigrants.[14] Likewise, Gerald M. Berg asserts that the leaders of WIZO were financially dependent on their husbands, and that, therefore, they did not conceive

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[12]Yaffa Berlovitz, "Foreword" to Hannah Trager, "Votes for Women," *Journal of Women's History*, 2 (Spring, 1990), 196-197.

[13]Ibid.

[14]Barbara Swirski, "Israeli Feminism Old and New," in *Calling the Equality Bluff: Women in Israel*, ed. Marilyn Safir and Barbara Swirski (New York: Pergamon Press, 1991), 293.

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of women as independent beings. [15] Berg refers to a dispute between the WIZO leadership and the administration of an agricultural training school it supported as evidence of WIZO's lack of support for teaching women agricultural skills. [16]

A third reason for the lack of scholarly interest in WIZO's election to the Knesset in 1949 stems from the uncritical acceptance of WIZO's version of why it withdrew from electoral politics. WIZO claimed that the projected number of representatives it could elect to the Knesset did not justify the expense it would take to finance an electoral campaign, that its involvement in electoral politics alienated its members who were allied to their own political parties and wanted WIZO to remain a nonpartisan body supposedly above politics, and that the passage of the Women's Equal Rights Law in 1951 rendered the presence of a separate Women's List in the Knesset unnecessary. [17]

The facts upon which these views are based are not historically grounded. As shown in Chapter 3, the women's movement in pre-state Palestine was made up of five women's organizations, of which the institutional representative of the women of the Labour Zionist movement, the Working Women's Council (WWC) constituted only one. The five organizations of the pre-state women's movement were closely linked financially, organizationally and politically. To argue that the pre-state women's movement declined with the loss of independence of the WWC ignores the existence of the non-labour women's organization which

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[15]Gerald M. Berg, "Zionism's Gender: Hannah Meisel and the Founding of the Agricultural Schools for Young Women," *Israel Studies*, 6 (Fall 2001): 152.

[16]Ibid., 154-156.

[17]An example of this view of WIZO is expressed in Yael Yishai, *Between the Flag and the Banner: Women in Israeli Politics* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1997), 42.

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composed the women's movement, and ignores their extensive involvement in building a social welfare infrastructure in the new polity.

Second, arguments which claim that WIZO's ideological orientation tended toward conservatism because of the sociological composition of its leadership or that its embrace of philanthropy precluded it from supporting the emancipation of women through agricultural training, are misleading. Historical evidence (in Chapter 3) demonstrates that WIZO initiated and explicitly supported a wide range of agricultural and vocational training projects for women in conjunction with women from the Labour Zionism movement.[18] Indeed, the view that WIZO was an establishment women's organization which was not predisposed to social change reflects contemporary misconceptions which are projected to the pre-state era.

Third, as argued throughout Chapters 4, 5, and 6, WIZO's official version of why it withdrew from electoral politics is not entirely borne out by fact. WIZO could not predict the number of candidates elected to the Knesset in subsequent elections. There was also support among the membership for running a Women's List for the second Knesset and the organization had no verifiable data on the percentage of its members that opposed a Women's List.[19] Moreover, as shown in Chapter 4 the passage of the Women's Equal Rights Law in 1951 was not a victory, but a defeat for the women's movement. Rachel Kagan, the WIZO Women's List representative in the first Knesset was a vocal opponent of the bill and voted against it. The need for a concerted effort to secure legislation for women's equality was greater after the passage of

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[18]Including the agricultural school to which Berg refers, despite the leadership's criticism of how it was managed. The biographies of WIZO leaders also demonstrate that they were not as dependent on their spouses as Berg suggests. See Chapter 3, p.87.

[19]"Xth Conference Minutes," 1951, file F49 110, Central Zionist Archives (CZA).

21

the Women's Equal Rights Law, which recognized religious control over laws relating to the family. Clearly, WIZO's justifications for its decision to withdraw from politics cannot be accepted uncritically.

Fourth, although WIZO decided not to sponsor a subsequent Women's List, it is important to distinguish between the 1949 Women's List and WIZO. In fact, as discussed in Chapters 2 and 3, the WIZO Women's List was built on the basis of four previous Women's Lists which were elected to the pre-state legislature in 1920, 1926, 1931 and 1944. Understanding the disappearance of the Women's Lists from Israeli electoral politics after thirty years of electoral participation thus requires an investigation of WIZO's organizational mandate as well as a broader consideration of the pre-state and post-independence women's movement's sponsorship of the Women's Lists.

Political analyses of Israeli political parties also shed little light on the pre-state Women's Lists. Analyses share at least two points of consensus regarding the political parties of the pre- and post-independent polity which have the effect of devaluing the pre-state Women's Lists and detaching the 1949 Women's List from its institutional history. The first point of consensus is a tendency to emphasize the strong role of ideology in the creation of the Israeli party system.[20] For example Akzin suggests that Israel's proportional representation system

> is certainly not designed to check the number of political parties. But basically, the profusion of parties results from the strongly ideological character which most of these parties possess and reflects the multiplicity and intensity of views which various sectors of the population hold on economic, religious, and other matters. For all its practical importance, the number of parties in Israel is a phenomenon

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[20]Leonard J. Fein, *Politics in Israel* (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1967), 67-105.

22

secondary to, and flowing from, their pronounced ideological basis.[21]

A corollary of this argument is that labour Zionist parties exerted overwhelming influence on the development of party politics in the Mandate and post-Mandate periods. Because many Labour Zionist parties developed prior to the political party system, they are understood to have been ideological vehicles instead of the product or conduit of material interests. Some claim that ideological debate, and not material demands, determined the political life of the pre-state period. This view argues that:

> Political forces were stronger than social forces; politics controlled and directed society, and as a result, social structures had little or no autonomy...Party preceded society...The major institutions of political power in the Yishuv [the pre-state Jewish community] were created in a social vacuum, as it were *ex nihilo* by political parties, which were voluntaristic and ideologically motivated movements and organizations.[22]

By setting up a hierarchy of importance in which ideology takes precedence over the material demand for political rights, women's political organization is equated with sectarian demands and then relegated to the sidelines of political activity.[23]

A second point of consensus among political analysts is that the political system which developed during the pre-state period, and which was retained after statehood, was one of bargaining and tradeoffs between parties, so that party support for the state translated into

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[21]Akzin, 9.

[22]Peter Medding, *Founding of Israeli Democracy: 1948-1967* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990), 8.

[23]Examples of this view can be found in: Dan Horowitz and Moshe Lissak, *The Origins of the Israeli Polity: Palestine under the British Mandate* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1978), 70; Samuel Sager, "Pre-State Influences on Israel's Parliamentary System," *Parliamentary Affairs* 25 (1971/1972).

23

political rewards, in terms of resources or political power.[24] Yet while Jewish women's

organizations provided the infrastructure, volunteer work force and leadership (Henrietta Szold

and Rachel Kagan) for the Department of Social Service during the 1930s and 1940s, the Ministry

of Social Welfare in the first Knesset was awarded by the Mapai- led government to its Orthodox

coalition party, the URF. Compensation for recognizing the political authority of the state

somehow did not, apparently, apply to the women's movement.

The tendency to overemphasize ideology as a catalyst for the creation of Israeli parties has

recently come under attack by Israeli political economists who have argued that economic forces

(namely economic competition between Jews and Arabs) and not ideology were at the heart of the

development of Socialist Zionism.[25] This criticism is pertinent here, albeit for a different reason.

Excessive focus on ideology diminished the importance of the non-socialist and supposedly

"nonideological" organizations of the pre-state polity, or those that are identified as material,

sectarian or interest-based. The consistent presence of the Women's Lists in all four pre-state

Elected Assemblies, the movement for women's suffrage rights, the campaign for legal equality,

and women's extensive involvement in the development of a system of social welfare are thus

perceived as marginal issues which had little impact on the overall character of the development of

the Israeli political system.

One attempt to break away from the theoretical devaluation of non-labour parties is by

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[24]Daniel Elazar, *Israel: Building a New Society* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1986).

[25]Michael Shalev, "Jewish Organized Labor and the Palestinians: A Study of State/Society Relations in Israel," in *The Israeli State and Society: Boundaries and Territories*, ed. Baruch Kimmerling (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1989).

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examining small parties and lists as examples of minor parties.[26] Minor parties usually have a

limited life span; the majority cease operation immediately following an electoral defeat,

sometimes reconfiguring or being absorbed into other parties or lists.[27] Nevertheless, the

Women's Lists endured for more than thirty years, so that the status of minor party cannot be said

to apply to them.

The discussion of interest parties is another departure from dominant discussions of Israeli

political parties. Yael Yishai defines an interest party as:

> a voluntary association which existed prior to the elections and which decided to
> present an electoral list. It generally focuses on one identifiable issue; it appeals
> mainly to a distinct constituency, whether characterized by a specific demographic
> attribute (e.g. age or gender) or by an ardent concern over a particular public
> policy.[28]

Interest parties do not seek to replace political parties:

> those groups attempting to obtain parliamentary representation were not the
> economic organizations wishing to substitute party rule, but the frustrated and
> marginal - in terms of power rather than numbers - constituencies whose needs
> have not been satisfactorily articulated by the established parties.[29]

Yishai argues that functional, socioeconomic and structural factors account for the

proliferation of Israeli interest parties. The functional argument claims that whereas political

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[26]Rael Jean Isaac, *Party and Politics in Israel: Three Visions of a Jewish State* (New York: Longman, 1981).

[27]David Schnall, *Radical Dissent in Contemporary Israeli Politics: Cracks in the Wall* (New York: Praeger Publishers, 1979); Hanna Herzog, "Towards a Reassessment of Minor Parties," in *The Elections in Israel -1984*, ed. Asher Arian and Michal Shamir (Tel Aviv: Ramot Publishing, 1986), 101.

[28]Yishai, *Land of Paradoxes*, 121-22.

[29]Ibid., 134.

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parties enjoyed a pervasive role in social service provision at the state's establishment, over time their all-encompassing involvement in the lives of citizens has been diminished by the "growth of government, the increasing autonomy of the bureaucracy, and the expanding power of the electronic media."[30] Compounding this has been the failure of the largest parties to articulate emerging interests and "values" thereby encouraging the growth of interest parties to fill the void.

Socioeconomic explanation posits that social cleavages "have already been drawn and there are a few untapped bases of electoral support; however, some marginal facets of social cleavages have induced the formation of interest parties."[31] Structural factors include the fact that the Israeli electoral system encourages interest groups and movements to participate in electoral politics. Requirements to enter electoral politics in Israel are not stringent, and the state encourages the entry of new political parties and lists by providing them with free media broadcasting.[32] Yishai argues that the major cleavages in Israel are generational, ethnic, and gender. According to Yishai, interest groups which enter electoral politics become interest parties and are differentiated from regular parties, in size and scope.[33]

Yet here too, the formulation of "interest party" does not accurately describe the WIZO Women's List of the first Knesset since, as shown in Chapter 3, by 1949, WIZO was primarily a

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[30]Ibid., 126.

[31]Ibid.

[32]In order to run "a candidate need fulfill only minimal requirements: be an Israeli citizen, aged twenty-one or older; the list (i.e. the party) is required to submit signatures of bona fide supporters (in 1988, 1500 were required) and to deposit a small sum of money, which is not returned" if the party does not obtain one percent of the vote. Ibid.

[33]Ibid., 121.

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social welfare voluntary organization, not an interest group conducting political advocacy on behalf of women. In this case the discussion of interest parties explains an organization's entry into, not exit from, electoral politics.

Nevertheless, the number of instances of women's parties and lists running for election is sufficiently high to warrant the comparative study of the phenomenon. Women's lists and parties ran for election in several Scandinavian countries from the early 1900s to the 1920s, as well as in Europe and Canada during the 1970s and 1980s.[34] Women's parties and lists usually have a number of goals in addition to electing their own candidates. They try to pressure contending parties to take positions on women's status in their campaigns in order to bring women's issues onto the campaign agenda. They also try to increase the percentage of women candidates by focusing attention on the total number of women representatives elected to the legislature.[35] Women's parties and lists seldom dwell on the effects of women's representation on substantive issues, but simply assume that a higher percentage of women in the legislature will provide women with, if not necessarily a feminist, at least a sympathetic presence in debates and legislative

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[34]A. Styrkrsdóttir, "From Social Movement to Political Party: The New Women's Movement in Iceland," in *The New Women's Movement: Feminism and Political Power in Europe and the U.S.A.* ed. Drude Dahlerup, (London: Sage Publications, 1986), 140-157; Ingunn Norderval, "Party and Legislative Participation Among Scandinavian Women," *West Europe Politics* 8 (1985):71-89; Elina Haavio-Mannila et al., *Unfinished Democracy: Women in Nordic Politics*, (Oxford: Pergamon Press, 1985); D. Zaborsky, "Feminist Politics: The Feminist Party of Canada," *Women's Studies International Forum* 10 (1979): 613-621.

[35]Matthew Shugart, "Minorities Represented and Underrepresented," in *Electoral Systems in Comparative Perspective: Their Impact on Women and Minorities*, ed. Wilma Rule and Joseph Zimmerman, (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1994), 31-41.

committees.[36]

But discussions of separate women's parties and lists in the Israeli context tend to lead to an impasse regarding the most effective way for women to organize. In Israel, separate political organizing is one of the major ways organized women have attempted to enter national and local politics. In addition to moving up through the ranks of mainstream parties, or relying upon a high public profile to gain party candidacy,[37] organized women in Israel frequently seek office in women's wings of political parties before running as a candidate for the party itself.[38] The National Religious Party (NRP), Herut (Liberation) and the Labour Party all established women's sections. Of these Na'amat, (Hebrew acronym for Movement of Working Women and Volunteers), the women's wing of the Labour Party, is the most prominent and has sent the

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[36]Anne Phillips, *Engendering Democracy* (University Park: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 1991), 49.

[37]Veteran politician Geula Cohen was active in broadcasting and in the *Irgun* (Organization), a pre-state underground association, as was Esther Raziel-Naor. Rachel Tsabari was in the *Haganah* (Defence), the pre-Independence Jewish defence force in Mandatory Palestine. Esther Herlitz worked for the Jewish Agency before becoming second-in-command of *Chen* (the Women's Corps) of the I.DF. Shulamith Aloni was a well-known lawyer, journalist and human-rights activist. Sarah Doron and Chaika Grossman were involved in local politics. Many women politicians after 1977 have built their political careers in this manner. Dalia Izik built her reputation in local politics. Limor Livnat was active in student politics, and was a political appointee of the Likud government before running for the Knesset herself. Naomi Blumenthal was a well-known actress while Yael Dayan was a writer, but better known as the daughter of 1967 war hero Moshe Dayan. Golda Meir, of course, was secretary-general of the WWC. Y. Rozman, *Lexicon of Women in Israel* (Tel Aviv: Am Oved Publishers, 1991).

[38]Azmon further divides this strategy between "women's divisions, which are part of the party, and those used by women's voluntary organizations that are party-affiliated." Yael Azmon, "Women and Politics: the Case of Israel," *Women and Politics*, 10 (1990): 52.

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largest number of women representatives into public office.[39]   After 1970, women experimented

with a number of different options including primaries, quotas, and lobby groups, although none

of these has fundamentally changed the ratio of women and men in the Knesset (See Table II).[40]

Both Israeli feminist activists as well as scholars have extensively debated whether

separate organizing by women is effective or if it is one of the causes of women's inability to raise

their legislative presence. Among activists, the discussion has its roots in the pre-state period.

Ada Maimon, the prominent women's labour leader, suggested that organizational independence

for women within the Histadrut was imperative if women intended to protect and advance their

position in the labour force.[41] In 1947, Sarah Azaryahu, the head of the Union for Equal Rights

for Women (UER) argued that Women's Lists were a temporary measure which was necessary

until women were gradually incorporated into other political parties in numbers equal to men.[42]

The founders of the 1977 Women's Party also debated the likely response a

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[39]The origins of Na'amat were in the Working Women's Council (WWC), an organization
dedicated to protecting women's labour rights. Former Labour MKs Golda Meir, Beba Idelson,
Tamar Eshel and Masha Lubelsky were all secretaries-general of Na'amat. Others, such as former
MK Shoshana Arbeli-Almoslino and Ora Namir were politically active in Na'amat. Leah Simmons
Levin, "Setting the Agenda: The Success of the 1977 Israel Women's Party," *Israel Studies* 4
(1999): 46.

[40]Avraham Brichta, "Women in the Knesset 1949-1969," *Parliamentary Affairs* 28
(1975): 256-274.

[41]Deborah S. Bernstein, *The Struggle for Equality: Urban Women Workers in Pre-State
Israeli Society* (New York: Praeger, 1987), 145.

[42]Sarah Azaryahu, *The Union of Hebrew Women for Equal Rights in Eretz Yisrael:
Chapters in the History of the Women's Movement of Eretz Yisrael* (Jerusalem: Union of Hebrew
Women for Equal Rights in Israel, 1948), 2.

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Table II
Representation of Women in the Knesset
1949-1999

Year	Number of Women Elected	Percentage
1949	11	9.1
1951	11	9.1
1955	11	9.1
1959	9	7.5
1961	10	8.3
1965	9	7.5
1969	8	6.6
1973	8	6.6
1977	8	6.6
1981	9	7.5
1984	10	8.3
1988	7	5.8
1992	11	9.1
1996	9	7.5
1999	15	18

Source: *Divrai HaKnesset* for the Years Cited

woman's party would receive from the electorate.[43] In 1992, faced with the prospect of a new women's party running for election, women politicians polled by a magazine responded that separate political organizations for women would hold back the political advancement of women.[44]

Israeli scholars are also divided over whether separate organizing for women in Israel has advanced or held back women's political status. Both Deborah Bernstein and Dafna Izraeli claim that the absorption of the Working Women's Council (WWC), which was an organization founded to protect the interests of women workers within the male-dominated Histadrut, led the former to become an adjunct of the labour movement devoid of real power or influence.[45] Avraham Brichta maintains that women's parties, along with women's auxiliaries of political parties, perpetuate women's segregation and devalue so-called women's issues in the platforms of other parties.[46] Yael Azmon argues that the strategies that organized Israeli women rely upon prevent them from maximizing their political potential. In her view, women will not gain strength through a particular strategy of organizing but by diversifying their support for political leaders and supporting "candidates from diverse occupational backgrounds and channels of activity."[47]

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[43]Lesley Hazleton, *Israeli Women: The Reality Behind the Myth* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1977), 185-190.

[44]Ina Friedman, "It's a Man's World in the Knesset," *Jerusalem Report*, October 1992, 26-27.

[45] Deborah Bernstein, *The Struggle for Equality: Urban Women Workers in Pre-State Israeli Society* (New York: Praeger, 1987), 155-160; Izraeli, "The Zionist Women's Movement," 87-114.

[46]Brichta, 273.

[47]Azmon, "Women and Politics," 54.

31

Likewise, Hanna Herzog argues that public hostility toward separate women's organizing in Israel, as in other democracies, is culturally entrenched. She asserts that separate women's organizations are stigmatized immediately upon establishment. A partial exception to this is manifested in the religious sector where "women can fairly easily mobilize traditional conventions in order to pose a challenge, organize independently, and speak in the name of women."[48] The same cannot be said of the secular sector in which "liberal ideology, which espouses gender equality and equal civil rights and emphasizes the individual's achievements in an open competitive system, is a powerful mechanism working against legitimation for separate women's organizing."[49]

In contrast, Sylvia Fogiel-Bijaoui argues that the effectiveness of women's organizations depends on their ideological position. She divides Israeli women's groups into two categories: those allied with the establishment and grassroots women's organizations. The latter are more influential since they are more willing to take radical stances on issues. In Fogiel-Bijaoui's view, therefore, organizational independence is only useful when accompanied by an ideological commitment to feminism.[50] Yael Yishai agrees with this view. She claims that the new Israeli feminist movement which emerged in the 1970s (Chapter 6) has challenged the conservative positions of the established women's organizations, WIZO and Na'amat, which have always been

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[48]Herzog, *Gendering Politics*, 165.

[49]Ibid., 166.

[50]Sylvia Fogiel-Bijaoui, "Women's Organizations in Israel: The Current Situation," *International Problems* 31 (1992): 65-76 (in Hebrew).

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reluctant to publicly identify with feminism.[51]

But that lack of consensus in the debate regarding the advantages of separate women's organizing is not unique to Israel and indicates that there is little point in seeking a definitive answer to the issue. Moreover, the fact that separate Women's Lists *did* successfully enter representative politics shifts the question from whether there is something specific in the nature of separate women's organizations, to what was the nature of the process by which organized women pulled out of representative politics in Israel in 1951. Indeed by the late 1980s, feminist scholarship began to view the behaviouralist perspective as a theoretical trap which failed to perceive the ways in which the analytical categories of women and gender were themselves constituted. In particular, feminist research has increasingly focussed on the state and nationalism as two forces which are central in the determination of the meaning of gender.

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[51]Yishai, *Between the Flag and the Banner*, 88.

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2.2 Approaches to Understanding the 1951 Withdrawal of
Organized Women from Electoral Politics in Israel

Feminist scholars are widely divided over the effects of the state on women. One school

of thought argues that because the state is deeply implicated in the construction and reproduction

of gender hierarchy, feminists should not look to the state to support feminist goals. [52]

According to this perspective, feminists should seek, indeed, to mitigate state power.[53] In

contrast, other feminist scholars suggest that there is a necessity for "state feminism" that is,

feminist policies implemented by the state.[54] Chapter 6 examines whether Israeli governmental

initiatives since the 1970s, which established departments to advance women's status, might be

considered examples of "state feminism" and to what extent they have reversed the effects of the

withdrawal by organized women from electoral politics in 1951.

The way in which nationalism reproduces specific gender conceptions in Israel is also

discussed in Chapter 6. Feminist scholars argue that nationalist movements rely upon support

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[52]Sue Ellen Charlton, Jana Everett and Kathleen Staudt, *Women, the State and Development* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1989); Nira Yuval Davis and Floya Anthias, *Woman - Nation - State* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1989); Nira Yuval Davis, *Gender and Nation* (London: Sage, 1997); Valentine Moghadam, *Gender and National Identity: Women and Politics in Muslim Societies* (Karachi: Oxford University Press, 1994).

[53]Shirin Rai and Geraldine Livesley, *Women and the State: International Perspectives* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996); Chandra Taplade Mohanty, Ann Russo and Lourdes Torres, *Third World Women and the Politics of Feminism* (Bloomington: Indianna University Press, 1991); Georgina Waylen and Vicky Randall, *Gender, Politics and the State* (New York: Routledge, 1998).

[54]Amy G. Mazur and Dorothy McBride Stetson, *Comparative State Feminism* (Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications, 1995).

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from women in distinctive ways.[55] But case studies reveal that particular patterns tend to unfold

for women in nationalist movements. The first is that women's right to vote is rarely, if ever,

sufficient to guarantee women an equal or even significant presence in positions of political

power. Another is that whatever the relative strength of women and women's movements before

statehood, after nationalist movements attain power, inevitable processes unfold at the point of

independence which have specific and predictably deleterious results for women. A third

observation is that nationalism and feminism have not managed to coexist, and that, usually,

nationalism takes precedence over, and eventually eliminates feminist movements, although this

claim has been the subject of debate.[56]

Case studies of women in national liberation movements tend to refer to four stages which

women pass through during struggles for national independence. In the first phase women

organize separately to achieve equal rights while working in concert with nationalist movements.

During the second phase of nationalist revolutions women participate in military offensives against

military powers, acting as combatants in underground movements.[57] Third, after the retreat of

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[55]Linda Berber, "May all our Citizens be Soldiers and all our Soldiers Citizens: The Ambiguities of Female Citizenship in the New Nation,"in *Women, Militarism and War*, ed. Jean Bethke Elshtain and Shelia Tobias (Totowa: Rowman and Littlefield, 1990); 89-104; Andrew Parker et al., *Nationalisms and Sexualities* (London: Routledge, 1992), Lois A. West, *Feminist Nationalism* (New York: Routledge, 1997).

[56]Jan Jindy Pettman, *Worlding Women: A Feminist International Politics* (St. Leonards: Allen and Unwin, 1996), 54-59.

[57]There have been few, if any, quantitative analyses of how many women have actually participated in armed revolt. In the case of Algeria, one former revolutionary woman has suggested that "a few individual cases...struck popular imagination. Doria Cherifati-Merabtine, "Algeria at the Crossroads: National Liberation, Islamization and Women," in *Gender and National Identity: Women and Politics in Muslim Societies*, ed. Valentine Moghadam (Karachi: Oxford University Press, 1994), 47, 49. During debates over the conscription of women into the

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colonial powers ascendent nationalist movements either refute women's claims to equal status, or undermine formal equality legislation by ceding to religious authorities control over key aspects of women's lives. They do so on a number of grounds: religious traditions supposedly prohibiting women from occupying public office; cultural authenticity in which a public role and equal rights for women is equated with Western individualism; and the demand for nationalist unity in the face of military hostility in which the demand for women's rights is denounced as undermining national independence.[58] Fourth, nationalist movements strive to eliminate the political independence of women's organizations and to remove women from public office.[59]

As participants in a movement of national liberation, the experience of Israeli women has largely followed the course of women in other nationalist movements. As elsewhere, Israeli women participated in military action against the colonial power, and after independence were forced to chose between loyalty to the nation or "individualist" rights diametrically opposed to nationalist needs. Zionism, a nationalist movement, incorporates women primarily as mothers,

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Israeli army Members of Knesset who supported drafting women referred to examples of women who used arms prior to and during the War of Independence. The labour Zionist movement constantly associated itself with the image of the Jewish woman fighter of the pre-state period. *Divrai Knesset*, 1949-1951.

[58]The nationalist movement which came to power in Algeria established both civil rights in the constitution and enforced jurisdiction of Sharia over family law. In Iran Khomeni oversaw the reversal of legislation which had "curbed some of men's unilateral rights." Nayereh Tohidi, "Modernization, Islamization and Women in Islam," in Moghadam, (Karachi: Oxford University Press, 1994), 123.

[59]Amrita Basu, *The Challenge of Local Feminisms: Women's Movements in Global Perspectives* (Boulder: Westview, 1995); Joan W. Scott, Cora Kaplan, Debra Keates, *Transitions, Environments, Translations: Feminisms in International Politics* (New York: Routledge, 1997); Guida West and Rhoda Lois Blumberg, *Women and Social Protest* (Oxford University Press: Oxford: 1990).

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and secondarily as soldiers. As Chapter 6 points out, because military service forms one of the major qualifications of Israeli citizenship (the other is belonging to the Jewish people) Israeli women claim citizenship on an entirely different basis from men. Perhaps the most damaging consequence of nationalism and militarism is how these forces quash internal dissent and debate through asserting the need for internal unity to ward off external threats.

Chapter 5 looks at how the perceived threat of *kulturkampf* (cultural war) between the religious and secular sector was invoked selectively during debates over the military conscription of women and during the debate over the Equal Rights for Women Law. In both cases the intention and consequence of the threat was to prevent extensions of equality legislation for women. Jan Jindy Pettman asserts that nationalist movements may provide temporary benefits to women since their "involvement may unsettle gender roles and relations and politicize and radicalize those women who join, initially in defense of their maternal and family responsibilities."[60] Still, the case of women in Israel confirms that women "remain trapped in the symbolic uses made of them and by the tendency of mobilized or besieged nationalisms to underline and reassert women's roles as mothers and bearers of the nation's traditions."[61]

While nationalism may exacerbate gender hierarchy, understanding why the 1949 WIZO List was withdrawn from electoral politics requires looking at how processes occur *within* nationalism; for example, how a "type of discontinuous political change in which critical junctures" (in this case the first Knesset) "'dislodge' older institutional patterns" such as the five

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[60]Jan Jindy Pettman, *Worlding Women: A Feminist International Politics* (New York: Routledge, 1996), 195.

[61]Ibid.

successive Women's Lists of the pre-state period. Historical institutionalism offers both a "theory and method" to examine this question. Historical institutionalism is one branch of new institutionalism, a theoretical perspective which considers how structural and institutional factors affect political change. The historical institutionalist approach is premised on the arguments that explanations of political evolution cannot be reduced to a single cause and that individual political behaviour is not necessarily based upon rational calculations, and so cannot be analysed as such.

2.3 New Institutionalism and Historical Institutionalism

Scholars do not agree if new institutionalism is an original intellectual perspective, a reversion to older methods of political analysis, a methodological or an analytical approach. They disagree over its intellectual sources; some suggest that its main concepts were developed by Machiavelli and Rousseau, while others claim that new institutionalism is a reaction to the perceived failure of the behaviourism and modernization frames of analysis, as well as a result of cynicism toward American political institutions in the wake of the Watergate scandal. Compounding this confusion is scholarly disagreement over the boundaries between, tenets of, and sometimes even the correct names by which to refer to the constituent parts of new institutionalism.[62]

At the centre of the new institutionalist approach is its emphasis upon institutions as bodies which offer the key to understanding why politics and history develop in the ways they do.

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[62]Peter A. Hall and Rosemary C. R Taylor, "Political Science and the Three New Institutionalisms," *Political Studies*, (1996):936-957; Junko Kato, "Institutions and Rationality in Politics- Three Varieties of Neo-Institutionalists," *British Journal of Political Science*, 26 (1996): 553-582; Karen L. Remmer, "Theoretical Decay and Theoretical Development," *World Politics* 50 (1997): 34-61.

New institutionalism treats institutions as political actors which, like people, "learn" through a combination of "education, indoctrination, and experience."[63] What it is that institutions learn affects which decisions are made and which policies are adopted.

According to the new institutionalism, individual decision-making is greatly dependent on the institutional context in which individuals operate. Rather than viewing individuals as basing decisions on individual considerations, new institutionalists contend that decisions result from how individuals understand "duties" and "obligations" as they appear in a particular institutional context. As James G. March and Johan P. Olsen suggest, "what is appropriate for a particular person in a particular situation is defined by the political and social system and transmitted through socialization."[64]

New institutionalism also criticizes the assumption of "optimum" or "efficient" historical outcomes. Instead, new institutionalism asks how political institutions affect historical processes. Understanding the influence institutions exert on history has application to understanding the development of policy, which in turn structures subsequent political processes.[65] Four schools of thought are understood to make up the new institutionalist perspective. These are rational choice, organizational institutionalism, sociological institutionalism and historical institutionalism.[66]

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[63]James G. March and Johan P. Olsen, "The New Institutionalism: Organizational Factors in Political Life," *American Political Science Review*, 78 (1984): 739.

[64]Ibid., 741.

[65]Paul Pierson, "When Effect Becomes Cause: Policy Feedback and Political Change," *World Politics*, 45 (1993): 595-628.

[66]B. Guy Peters, "Political Institutions, Old and New," in *A New Handbook of Political Science*, ed. R.E. Goodin and H.D. Kingemann, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), 207-215. Peters also refers to normative institutionalism which he argues is an off-shoot of

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Despite their diversity these perspectives share a range of ideas which can be grouped into three broad categories of orientations regarding institutions, individuals and political process. Rational choice theory has many variations, but its underlying argument is its claim that individual behaviour is both predictable and explicable depending upon the institution within which individuals operate, regardless of historical and political context.[67] Political actors go about achieving political goals by maximizing options. Rational choice theorists use game theory to show that when political frameworks or institutions change, outcomes also change. One of the arguments of rational choice theorists is that political conditions stabilize into what they term an 'equilibrium' in certain conditions, that is, when political actors do not perceive gains resulting from opting out of specific arrangements. Rational choice theory suggests that institutional patterns are, therefore, central to explaining why political actors choose particular options.[68]

While scholars such as Kathleen Thelen and Sven Steinmo maintain that rational choice theory has much in common with other new institutionalist branches (particularly historical institutionalism) others have levelled a number of criticisms against it including the fact that it fails to account for the institutionalization of social inequality, that it is excessively individualistic and

organizational theory, social institutionalism as well as structural institutionalism.

[67]Kato, 564.

[68]Margaret Levi, "A Model, a Method, and a Map: Rational Choice in Comparative and Historical Analysis," in *Comparative Politics: Rationality, Culture, and Structure*, ed. Mark Irving Lichbach and Alan S. Zuckerman, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997),19-41; John Alddrich, "Rational Choice Theory and the Study of American Politics" in *The Dynamics of American Politics: Approaches and Interpretations*, ed. Lawrence C. Dodd and Calvin Jillson, (Boulder: Westview Press, 1994),208-233.

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ahistoric.[69] Another new institutionalist branch, organizational institutionalism, has developed a "critique of rationality" in its discussion of the multiple limits and constraints individuals face when involved in decision-making.[70]

Some scholars argue that the third branch, sociological institutionalism, is predominantly concerned with understanding "why organizations take on specific sets of institutional forms, procedures or symbols" and "how such practices are diffused through organizational fields or nations."[71] Others point to sociological institutionalism's efforts to incorporate the "classical period of sociology," and in particular its incorporation of economic principles.[72] Peter C. Hall and Rosemary Taylor suggest that sociological institutionalism is set apart from other new institutionalist branches by its broad definition of institutions, its view that "institutions play a formulative role in defining (not just shaping) individual preferences" and its claim that organizations may sometimes adopt a disadvantageous decision "because it enhances the social

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[69]Peters, 210; Philip J. Ethington and Eileen L. McDonagh, "The Common Space of Social Science Inquiry," *Polity* 28 (1995):85-90; Elaine K. Swift and David W. Brady, "Common Ground: History and Theories of American Politics," in Dodd and Jillson. By contrast, Kathleen Thelen advocates what she calls "creative borrowing" between rational choice theorists and historical Institutionalists. Kathleen Thelen, "Historical Institutionalism in Comparative Politics," *Annual Review of Political Science* (1999), 380.

[70]Ellen M. Immergut, "The Theoretical Core of the New Institutionalism," *Politics and Society*, 26 (1998):14. Immergut says that because organizational theory argues that individual decisions result from institutional context and not deeply informed consideration, that the former is actually quite similar to rational choice theory.

[71]Hall and Taylor, 947.

[72]Victor Nee, "Sources of the New Institutionalism," in *The New Institutionalism in Sociology*, ed. Marcy C. Brinton and Victor Nee, (New York: Russell Sage Foundation, 1998), 12.

legitimacy of the organization or its participants."[73]

Closely associated with sociological institutionalism is historical institutionalism, the approach which frames this thesis.[74] Like the other new institutionalist perspectives historical institutionalism seeks to reveal why specific political routes are taken by looking at how institutions affect the parameters of individual choices. Unlike the other branches, however, historical institutionalism relies primarily upon historic processes to explain institutional and political change.

The intellectual origins of historical institutionalism have been traced to what its adherents argue is the ahistoricism of paradigms such as behaviourism, structural-functionalism, pluralism, and the modernization school.[75] As is the case with other new institutionalist branches, scholars disagree over the extent to which historical institutionalism is distinct from other new institutionalist branches.[76] The historical institutionalist approach has been employed in a wide variety of case studies, including the development of public policy, comparative institutional analysis, theories of the state, and cultural identity.[77]

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[73]Hall and Taylor, 949.

[74]In fact, Kato does not distinguish between the two schools; he places them together as 'socio-historical institutionalism' a term which other scholars have not accepted. Kato, 553-555.

[75]Ira Katznelson, "Structure and Configuration in Comparative Politics" in Lichbach and Zuckerman.

[76]See the following for three different views: Elinor Ostrom, "New Horizons in Institutional Analysis," *American Political Science Review* 89 (1995): 174; Thelen, 370, Kato, 555.

[77]Sven Steinmo, Kathleen Thelen and Frank Longstreth, *Structuring Politics: Historical Institutionalism in Comparative Analysis* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992). Thelen, Steinmo and Longstreth's volume offers a variety of historical institutionalist case studies;

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A number of distinct perspectives characterize historical institutionalism. First, historical institutionalist analyses make explicit the importance of historical context.[78] They reject "single-variable" and "structural determinism" as explanations for historical decisions and, instead, argue that historical events are contingent.[79] Hall and Taylor argue that historical institutionalism "rejects the traditional postulate that the same operative forces will generate the same results everywhere in favour of the view that the effect of such forces will be mediated by the contextual features of a given situation often inherited from the past."[80] Chance, "quirks of fate" and "accidental combinations of factors" are weighed as causes behind historical processes which "stand beyond logic" and that "can only be grasped through historical analysis."[81]

A second aspect of the historical institutionalist perspective is its view of institutions as products of political and historical processes. Just as historical institutionalists refute arguments of historical inevitability they do not accept theories of institutional determinism. Institutions are defined relatively loosely as "formal organizations or informal networks."[82] Karen Orren and

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Peter B. Evans, Dietrich Rueschemeyer and Theda Skocpol, *Bringing the State Back In* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1985); Paul Pierson, "The Path to European Integration: A Historical Institutionalist Analysis," *Comparative Political Studies* 29 (1996); André Lecours, "Theorizing Cultural Identities: Historical Institutionalism as a Challenge to the Culturalists," *Canadian Journal of Political Science* (2000):1-15. For a more comprehensive bibliography of historical institutionalist case studies, see Thelen, 401-404.

[78]Dennis Kavanaugh, "Why Political Science Needs History," *Political Studies* (1991):479-495.

[79]Thelen and Steinmo, 13.

[80]Hall and Taylor, 941.

[81]Immergut, 19.

[82]Theda Skocpol, "Why I am an Historical Institutionalist," *Polity*, 28 (1995): 103-106.

Stephen Skowronek refer to the different times at which institutions are established as an indication of how "the political impact of institutional action is reshaped at each unique conjuncture." [83] Institutions can be defined as political (as opposed to social) when they strive to control behaviour of non-members. Institutions create rules in order to achieve goals, and political institutions create other political institutions. [84]

Taking into account the historical evolution of institutions is also necessary for understanding the processes of development and implementation of public policy. Paul Pierson finds that historical institutionalist analyses posit a wide range of effects, from encouraging the formation of interest groups, to expanding the "capacity" of the state, to offering "sources of information and meaning for mass publics." [85] Margaret Weir illustrates how policy development is linked to the concept of path dependency: "Decisions at one point in time can restrict future possibilities by sending policy off onto particular tracks, along which ideas and interests develop and institutions and strategies adapt." [86]

Historical institutionalism contends that individuals do not always make decisions which maximize their self-interest. Ellen Immergut refers to this as "alternative rationalities" in which "individuals and collectivities may develop interpretations of their interests and goals -

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[83]Karen Orren and Stephen Skowronek, "Beyond Iconography of Order: Notes for a 'New Institutionalism" in Lawrence C. Dodd and Calvin Jillson.

[84]Ibid., 323. Strictly speaking of course, it is not institutions, but individuals who make decisions which institutions then implement. Reference to institutions making decisions assumes an aggregation of individuals.

[85]Pierson, "When Effect Becomes Cause," 595-628.

[86]Margaret Weir, "Ideas and the Politics of Bounded Innovation," in Thelen and Steinmo, 292.

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worldviews- that deviate from those predicted by means-ends rationalities."[87] Historical

institutionalism emphasizes the importance of institutional constraints in narrowing the range of

possible decisions, suggesting that political actors "use institutions for strategic purposes" but that

institutions limit political actors too.[88] Hall and Taylor suggest that historical institutionalists

diverge into two approaches regarding individual "behaviour" or action, calculus and cultural.[89]

In the first, individuals act strategically and rationally to gain specific goals. An alternative to this

view is the cultural approach in which individual behaviour is based upon "the interpretation of a

situation rather than on purely instrumental calculation.[90]

The relative scope for action that individuals (or groups) enjoy within institutions informs

a fourth principle of historical institutionalism: that attention to human agency is central to any

historical examination and that institutions have in-built mechanisms which may favour different

groups in different historical periods.[91] For historical institutionalists this point has both academic

and normative implications. Attention to human agency is more accurate than single-cause

explanations for uncovering how political decisions are reached. It helps explain why social

groups have differential access to power, and why certain policies, rather than others, are

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[87]Immergut, 18.

[88]Lecours, 9.

[89]Hall and Taylor, 939.

[90]Ibid. For a critique of Hall and Taylor's approach and the division of calculus and cultural behaviours in particular see Colin Hay and Daniel Wincott, "Structure, Agency and Historical Institutionalism," *Political Studies* (1998):951-957.

[91]Lecours, 7.

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adopted.[92] Normatively, historical institutionalism allows contemporary political actors to "understand better the range of constraints and opportunities their political circumstances present to them."[93] As David Brian Robertson suggests "past decisions shape the institutional constraints and opportunities of later periods, including the present."[94]

2.4 Historical Institutionalism and the Study of the Israeli Women's Movement

WIZO's decision in 1951 to withdraw from electoral politics determined the boundaries of publicly acceptable political involvement for organized women and consequently changed the course of Israeli feminism for the next twenty years. There was no "clean break" between the first (1920-1950) and second-wave (1970s) Israeli women's movements; the former exerted a profound impact on the latter. The historical institutionalist claim that historical processes are not inevitable but "path dependent" facilitates the problematization of the particular route adopted by organized women in 1951. Skowronek advises to "[work] backwards from the particular event to be explained to locate the historical/institutional construction of the behaviours observed and their particular claims to authority."[95] This thesis is therefore relying on the "theoretical, conceptual and methodological tools" of historical institutionalism to conduct an historical inquiry informed by the institutionalist theoretical perspective.[96]

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[92]Weir, 188-211.

[93]Rogers M. Smith, "The Conditions of Their Choosing,"*Polity*, 32 (2000):340-344.

[94]David Brian Robertson, "Politics and History's Lessons," *Polity* 32 (2000):19.

[95]Stephen Skowronek, "Order and Change," *Polity* 28 (1995), 95.

[96]Lecours, 8.

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The use of historical institutionalism to examine this question rejects the deductive method of rational choice theory, since it is impossible to understand the choices made by the women's movement in the early 1950s by reference only to endogenous factors, such as institutional constraints. Instead, historical context is essential for understanding the WIZO decision, for the following reason: while only WIZO members participated in the vote over women's separate electoral representation, WIZO was only one of a number of women's organizations politically active at that period. Yet WIZO's decision that women should refrain from partisan politics on their own list was upheld by all organized women from 1951 to 1977. While it could be argued that organized women accepted the justice of WIZO's decision, in light of the relatively low bar set against small parties and lists at that period, there were, therefore, structural factors which dissuaded organized women, (particularly those, including Rachel Kagan who opposed the majority decision) from attempting to sponsor their own Women's Lists. These structural reasons were directly related to the power relations between the women's organizations which had developed over the course of the 1920s to the 1940s and the consequent shift in political goals as a result of it. The causes behind WIZO's decision lie in the *institutional* history of the women's movement over an extended period of time and, therefore, require an understanding of the structural factors which led to WIZO's 1951 decision. The following 'building blocks' of historical institutionalism are thus essential to understand the 1951 decision.

The Israeli women's movement, its component women's organizations and the Women's Lists should be viewed as institutions. While Theda Skocpol's loose definition of institutions as "informal networks" adequately describes the women's organizations of the women's movement,

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Orren and Skowronek's more rigorous four-point criteria are also applicable.[97] That is, the organizations of the women's movement were established at different historical times; they were political, and not social organizations (they attempted to exert influence and control beyond their memberships through their political work); they structured their activity according to rules (in this case women's organizations were bound by their own constitutions), aimed at achieving specific goals (women's political and legal rights, as well as a social welfare network); and, finally, they were established by other institutions (in this case other women's organizations which usually were amalgamated into the larger newer women's organization).[98] Historical research demonstrates that the women's organizations of the pre-state movement were centrally involved in the pre-state Jewish self-government in different political contexts. While the Women's Societies lobbied for women's suffrage, the Organization of Hebrew Women (Histadrut Nashim Ivriot) and the UER began its their political involvement in electoral politics by fighting in favour of women's political and legal rights. The latter two organizations assumed even greater public responsibility when their representative, Henrietta Szold, was asked by the National Council in 1931 to establish the Department of Social Service. The women's organizations of the pre-state period thus constantly changed their issue emphasis in order to retain political relevance.

Institutions of the women's movement also underwent change as a result of the introduction of "new actors" in already existing institutions. The arrival of WIZO on the pre-state social welfare scene caused tremendous upheaval within the women's movement by generating organizational competition and vying for dominance in the supply of social welfare

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[97]Skocpol, 103; Orren and Skowronek, 315.

[98]Ibid., 323-328.

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services, which, hitherto, had been provided by Hadassah and the Organization of Hebrew Women (HNI). From 1920 to 1951, women's organizations underwent radical change in both rhetoric and strategy as a result of a shift in power relations between women's organizations. As a result the drive to establish a social welfare network displaced women's political and legal rights issues.

Thelen and Steinmo refer to "exogenous changes" which "can produce a shift in the goals or strategies being pursued within existing institutions."[99] For the pre-state women's movement this included the WIZO's financial domination of smaller women's organization, as well as the transfer of political authority from the pre-state Representative Assemblies to the independent and sovereign Israeli legislature. The Israeli women's movement responded to the transformation of the larger political context by denying the necessity of a separate political framework through which women could seek electoral representation. Institutional dynamism may occur when "political actors adjust their strategies to accommodate changes in the institutions themselves."[100] In the case of WIZO, emphasis on the special responsibility and connection of women to the provision of social welfare services all but eradicated the historical commitment of the women's movement to securing women's political and legal equality. This fits in with the historical institutionalist argument that decision-making is not necessarily utility maximizing. Hall and Taylor's "cultural approach" in which individual behaviour is based on "interpretation" rather than "instrumental calculation" reflects how organized women sought to comply with Prime Minister David Ben-Gurion's demands for political unity by admonishing groups to relinquish sectarian

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[99]Thelen and Steinmo, 17.

[100]Ibid.

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claims in order to support the process of state-building.[101]

A central component in the historical institutionalist emphasis on history is the concept of critical juncture.[102] For the women's movement, this critical juncture occurred from 1949-1951. A critical juncture can be defined as a decisive historical point which has the potential to "establish certain directions of change and foreclose others in a way that shapes politics for years to come."[103] Collier and Collier suggest that the critical juncture can be plotted along the following lines. A "base line" represents the "antecedent conditions" from which second, the "cleavage or crisis" arises and sets off the critical juncture. Following the critical juncture a "legacy" is gradually created through "mechanisms of reproduction" which may include "ongoing institutional and political processes."[104] Collier and Collier argue that there must be "rival explanations invoking "constant causes" and finally, "the eventual end of the legacy, which inevitably must occur at some point."[105] Examining critical junctures illustrates the ways in which political decisions have unintended consequences, in this case, depriving Israeli women of separate political representation. Such studies are usually comparative and "focus on variables that capture important aspects of the interactive features of ongoing political processes, and on ways that explain important differences in regime and institutional outcomes across a range of cases."[106]

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[101]Hall and Taylor, 939.

[102]Collier and Collier, 29-39.

[103]Ibid., 27.

[104]Ibid., 29.

[105]Ibid., 30.

[106]Thelen, 390.

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The struggle for suffrage and political and legal rights by the early women's movement was the base line of antecedent conditions from which a second line, the cleavage or crisis arose and set off the critical juncture. In this case the establishment of sovereignty and statehood ignited the crisis of the women's movement's deliberation regarding its continuation in electoral politics. Once the critical juncture has taken place, a legacy evolves through mechanisms of reproduction which may include "ongoing institutional and political processes." The "protective" legislation of the 1950s and 1960s coupled with the conscious refusal by the women's movement to engage in partisan politics was the legacy which maintained and "reproduced" the 1951 decision. Finally, there is "the unavoidable 'end of the legacy'" with the arrival of the second-wave women's movement and its articulation of explicitly partisan feminism.[107]

The end of the legacy of the critical juncture of 1949-1951 refers to organized women's new acceptance of electoral activism. But their decision was influenced by the experience of the early Israeli women's movement which played a profound role in the shaping the development of the women's movement of the 1970s and subsequently. The tactics adopted by the second-wave women's movement were very much a product of what the movement collectively "knew" about the experience of its predecessor , in terms of electoral feasibility and public acceptability of feminism in the context of Zionism and nationalism. Whereas the initial women's movement had no experience in the consequences of refusing to engage in electoral politics, the subsequent movement viewed the women's movement's apolitical posture as a dangerous trap which prevented women from achieving feminist goals. The second-wave women's movement thus "learned the lessons" taught by organized women's abandonment of partisan politics by reversing

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[107]Collier and Collier, 31.

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this policy.

The historical institutionalist argument that institutions "learn" through a combination of education and experience is certainly relevant in the case of WIZO by the 1950s. Lawrence C. Dodd defines political learning as an "historical process that may take several generations to come to full fruition" in which "participants, confronted by potentially catastrophic crises induced by their obsession with outmoded beliefs, orthodox institutions and shortsighted interests, can develop new and more appropriate understandings of politics made possible by societal change."[108]

While some historical institutionalist analyses have argued in favour of viewing the state as a separate and relatively autonomous entity, Skowronek's view seems apt: "To synchronize the institutions of a polity or gear them to produce one coherent, overarching system would entail at the very least creating or recreating all of them simultaneously, and that is a task even the most radical revolution is unlikely to accomplish."[109] It cannot be claimed that the Israeli state played a significant part in the process by which organized women were excluded from political power because in 1951, the contours of the state were still in the process of being determined.

So, for example, while the Women's Equal Rights Law (1951) became part of the state's orientation toward dealing with the status of Israeli women it is nevertheless important to remember its legislative origins. That is, while analysts of gender and nationalism and the state often argue that nationalism exerts certain pressures on women to conform to the goals of

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[108]Lawrence C. Dodd, "Political Learning and Political Change: Understanding Development Across Time," in Dodd and Jillson, 356.

[109]Skowronek, 95.

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nationalist movements, the political exclusion of Israeli women sprang full-fledged from the state

or statehood. Instead, it is necessary to emphasize that the promulgation of policies cannot be

properly understood without an examination of the historical context in which they were adopted.

Skowronek's advice to "work backwards" leads to examining the process by which laws and

regulations concerning women's status were passed in order to support, redress or even retard,

women's full equality. This perspective thus follows Midgal's proposal to treat the state as

"limited" and try to take up a "process-oriented view of the state-in- society."[110]

The failure to appoint organized women, despite their foundational work in establishing

the social welfare system, to the new Ministry of Social Welfare under the first government of

Israel in 1949, was the beginning of the critical juncture resulting in the legacy in which organized

women renounced partisan politics for over two decades. The critical juncture period continued

to 1951 with an internal crisis in the women's movement over whether to pursue women's legal

and political equality or an agenda based upon the creation of a social welfare network. This rift

was created against the background of over thirty years of separate political representation by

organized women. The critical juncture model is based here on an institutional analysis of the

women's movement. The circumstances which gave rise to the cleavage which set off the critical

juncture of 1951 can only be understood by reference to three shifts which occurred among

women's organizations during the course of the 1930s and 1940s. These were a shift in the

balance of power from local to international Jewish women's organizations, the increasing

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[110]Joel Migdal, "Studying the State," in *Comparative Politics: Rationality, Culture, and Structure*, eds. Mark Irving Lichbach and Alan S. Zuckerman (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 209. See also Timothy Mitchell, "The Limits of the State: Beyond Statist Approaches and their Critics," *American Political Science Review* 85 (1991): 77-96.

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emphasis by women's organizations on social welfare and a concomitant de-emphasis on women's political and legal equality, and a new stance articulated by women's organizations which held that the creation of a social welfare network was apolitical, and so achievable outside party politics. The fusion of these factors meant that the Israeli women's movement failed to perpetuate itself as a political force.

Thelen and Steinmo's discussion of four sources of "institutional dynamism" is used to trace these factors.[111] "Institutional dynamism" derives from new external political conditions, the introduction of "new political actors" into already existing institutions; a redirection of the political strategies and goals of institutions and finally, the changing of individual strategies to "accommodate changes in the institutions themselves."[112] Each of these sources respectively explains the internal shifts of the women's movement; its struggle for political and legal rights to social welfare, the changing balance of power between the organizations following the establishment of new Jewish women's organizations, the transfer of external political authority from the pre-state Elective Assemblies to the Knesset, and organized women's decision to switch from party politics to non-partisan lobbying.

The mechanics of production of the legacy of the critical juncture was established by the consensus among organized women to seek favourable legislation for women and to make a social welfare agenda their priority without criticizing or challenging statist governmental policies. The mechanics of reproduction were set through organized women's abandonment of Women's Lists and their complete immersion in volunteer social welfare activism.

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[111]Thelen and Steinmo, 16.

[112]Ibid.

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The legacy ended in the 1970s when Israeli feminists demanded separate political representation for women in order to push forward a feminist political agenda. One of the effects of the legacy of this critical juncture was organized women's loss of political expertise and legitimacy. The second-wave feminist movement was compelled to start the process of feminist organizing "from scratch" in order to gain legitimacy in a political environment that viewed feminism as an alien Western imposition. Because of its absence from partisan politics, for nearly twenty years, the new feminist movement was not able to draw upon organized women's lengthy experience of political activism, and the new Israeli feminist movement found itself effectively blocked from political representation.

CHAPTER 3

ANTECEDENT CONDITIONS:
THE PRE-STATE JEWISH WOMEN'S MOVEMENT

According to Collier and Collier's model, a crisis or a cleavage arises out of a specific context and triggers the critical juncture. The crisis or cleavage must itself be understood as arising from a specific context, which Collier and Collier isolate as antecedent conditions. Beyond its constitutive importance to the model of critical juncture, the antecedent conditions also serve as a point of reference for the legacy following the critical juncture. That is, in order to argue that the critical juncture model is appropriate to a particular case, it is necessary to demonstrate clear differences between the antecedent conditions and the legacy of the critical juncture.

The emergence of five major women's organizations discussed in this chapter were the antecedent conditions of the critical juncture of the Jewish women's movement which took place between 1941 to 1951. The women's Zionist movement of the 1920s to 1940s linked international and Palestinian Jewish women's organizations together through joint projects, funding, and electoral politics. The movement for women's suffrage mobilized Jewish women and provided a solid institutional and organizational basis for the later electoral activity of the women's movement. The antecedent conditions, that is, the emergence of the Zionist women's movement and the fight for women's suffrage created the context for the crisis or cleavage which later triggered the critical juncture of 1951. The legacy of the 1949 to 1951 critical juncture was the period during the late 1950s and 1960s when the Jewish women's movement was fractured and organized women rejected the necessity of women's presence in electoral politics.

3.1 Zionism and the Mobilization of Organized Jewish Women

Similar to other nationalist movements of the nineteenth century which promised to restore national collectives to authentic pasts, Zionism held up the promise of Jewish national emancipation.[1] Theodor Herzl (1860-1904), an assimilated and secular Viennese Jewish journalist, developed the most influential vision of Zionism at the turn of the nineteenth century while he was covering the Dreyfus trial in France for a Parisian newspaper. The Dreyfus trial concerned an assimilated French Jewish officer who was falsely accused of espionage. The trial was crucial in convincing Herzl and other Zionists that neither the easing of restrictive legislation nor complete assimilation would enable Jews to become fully accepted citizens. No matter the degree to which Jews assumed the outward appearance and behaviour of their hosts, Herzl argued, Jews would always be considered outsiders and, as such, suspect. Herzl developed his vision in two tracts, *Der Judenstaat* (The Jewish State) published in 1896 and the utopian novel, *Altneuland* (Old New Land), published in 1902. *Altneuland* described a land in which Jews made up the majority, passed their own legislation, and reestablished themselves in the biblical Land of Israel creating a new culture as a free people.[2]

Although he was not the first to envision an autonomous Jewish entity, Herzl's vision catalysed the beginnings of a Zionist movement which gained supporters mainly among eastern European Jewry, many of whom had already turned to socialism and communism as methods of social transformation. Dozens of Zionist youth groups sought to prepare young Jews

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[1]Ze'ev Sternhell, *The Founding Myths of Israel*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1998).

[2]Sholomo Avineri, *The Making of Modern Zion: The Intellectual Origins of the Jewish State* (New York: Basic Books, 1981), 88-100.

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ideologically and physically for their new life in Palestine. Zionist youth groups combined Zionism with different strains of socialism, often rivalling each other to gain the loyalty of new adherents. While masses of Eastern European Jews emigrated to North America at the turn of the century, the Zionist groups focussed on sending their adherents to Palestine. Herzl's statement that Zionism would settle a "people without a land" in a "land without a people" became the organizing principle of Zionist associations and groups and set off concerted diplomatic appeals to bring about Jewish sovereignty over Palestine.[3]

The First Zionist Congress in Basel in 1897 created the political programme and representative institution of the Zionist movement. The "Basel Programme" was dedicated to "the creation for the Jewish people of a home in Palestine secured by public law" through its representative, the Zionist Organization.[4] The latter was recognized as the representative of the Zionist movement under international law in 1920, and in 1922 the League of Nations designated the Zionist Organization, the "Jewish Agency," the official body of the Zionist movement. The Zionist Organization held regular meetings at the Zionist Congress which "in its composition, functions and procedures, possessed most of the attributes of a parliament" in exile.[5]

As part of the Jewish national collective women were also affected by Zionism's promise of national emancipation. But in addition to offering women redress as members of a religious minority, for Jewish women Zionism had the additional dimension of ignoring religious prohibitions against women's public representation. The Zionist movement granted women

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[3]Walter Laqueur, *A History of Zionism*, (New York: Rinehart and Winston, 1972), 335.

[4]Sager, "Pre-State Influences," 30.

[5]Ibid.

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formal equality within its representative bodies relatively early in its history: the first Zionist

Congress granted women the right to vote in the Second Zionist Congress in 1898.[6] One scholar

suggests that the granting of women's suffrage to women at this early date does not necessarily

signify a profound commitment to gender equality on the part of the Zionist Congress, but, rather,

a method of increasing low membership as well as a recognition of the symbolic value of Jewish

women:

> The cultural Zionist approach placed great importance on the revival of the Jewish tradition as part of a strong Jewish national consciousness. Hence, it was virtually impossible to bypass women in their capacity as the traditional 'guardian of the Jewish house'. Zionist suffrage thus proves to be at least a Janus-faced present: exceptional rights for this time on the one hand and- more or less consciously - taking women into service for the Jewish cause on the other.[7]

In a similar vein, another historian has suggested that political rights granted to women by the

Zionist movement did not eliminate the deeply-rooted subordination of Jewish women to Jewish

men prevalent even in Zionist literature.[8]

In any case fewer Jewish women than men participated in the first ten Zionist Congresses,

the international representative body of the Zionist movement.[9] Appeals to women to join the

Zionist movement began as early as the Second Zionist Congress in1898 and were articulated

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[6]In the first Zionist Congress Herzl informed delegates that "The ladies are of course very honoured guests, but will not take part in the vote." Priska Gmüer, "'It is not up to Us Women to Solve Great Problems': The Duty of the Zionist Woman in the Context of the First Ten Zionist Congresses" in *The First Zionist Congress in 1897: Causes, Significance, Topicality*, ed. Heiko Haumann, (Basle: Karger, 1997), 292.

[7]Ibid.

[8]Rachel Elboim-Dror, "Gender in Utopianism: The Zionist Case," *History Workshop Journal*, (1995)116.

[9]Haumann, 292.

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sporadically in subsequent Zionist Congresses.[10] Herzl raised the question of women's

involvement in the Zionist movement in 1901 in an address to the Women's Zionist Society of

Vienna.[11] Herzl asked why women had not yet fully participated in the Zionist movement, and

distinguished among three types of European Jewish women. The impoverished Jewish women of

Eastern Europe were not expected to assist the Zionist movement since they were fully occupied

with keeping themselves and their families alive. A second category of Orthodox women sought

to fulfill religious commandments. Herzl idealized these women as the "Old Jewesses" who

preserved the tradition and culture which had sustained the Jewish people throughout political and

religious persecution. It was for a third category of Jewish woman, the "new Jewesses," that

Herzl reserved criticism, but also optimism that they might become Zionists:

> We must reckon with the Jewesses of the new type, those who have turned away
> from us since Jews have been living in easier circumstances. They are
> distinguished from the Jewesses of the old type in that they do not concern
> themselves with preparations for the day of rest, with cherishing the Sabbath, from
> which emanated all the fragrance of Jewish poetry. At the same time they do not
> come into touch with life. The husband of the one as of the other shields the wife
> against all knowledge of disagreeable things. The new Jewesses too, live sheltered
> lives - the new Jewesses whose indolence causes our bitter plaint.[12]

Herzl argued that such women required an awareness of Jewish suffering if they were to support

the Zionist movement, and that this could be supplied if Jewish women would collectively assume

the task of teaching about Zionism:

> Every woman is the centre of a circle, small or large. In her limited circle she can

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[10]Ibid.

[11]Theodore Herzl, "Women and Zionism," reprinted in *The Maccabaean*, 1917, Hadassah
Archives, 155-156.

[12]Ibid.

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do much. She can educate disciples, agitators who, according to such a snowball system, will in turn become the centres of circles in society. They will develop new circles and educate new disciples, the disciples becoming mistresses of the Zionist idea.[13]

Not only could women expand support for the Zionist movement, involvement in the Zionism movement itself would benefit women:

> The forms of life that assert themselves with Zionism as their centre, stimulated by it and stimulating those that come into contact with it, would enable them to show that it would be a much finer occupation for leisure hours and even for occupied hours to become acquainted with the Jewish idea and to act for it than to prattle at afternoon teas or lose one's household allowance at cards or kill time in all sorts of useless ways. This would be a form of self-education and self-development which, widely different from empty pleasures, would be of use to the children, for a woman who is a good Zionist must also be an attentive and farsighted mother... A mother who understands Zionism will cherish the idea not only for herself but also for her children. It is thus a way of passing the time that is both beautiful and useful, even if one uses the hours that are devoted to recreation.[14]

Yet despite Herzl's disparaging view of Jewish womanhood, Jewish women had been actively forming and joining associations and organizations at the turn of the century, in Europe, Great Britain and the United States.[15] In fact, the emergence of the Zionist women's movement, and the particular shape it took, resulted from Jewish women's extensive involvement at the end of the nineteenth century in the provision of social service as a means of Jewish self-help. As early as 1896 the (American) National Council of Jewish Women presented what was then a novel and controversial view, that philanthropy should be organized:

> When we try to impress on the mind of the average supporter of our charitable

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[13]Ibid.

[14]Ibid.

[15]Linda Gordon Kuzmack, *Woman's Cause: The Jewish Women's Movement in England and the United States, 1881-1933.* (Columbus: Ohio State University, 1990), 1-28.

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societies that better and greater results could be obtained through the aid of scientific methods, he resents the idea as something necessarily cold-blooded or unkind, and constantly makes use of the argument that the paid agents or officials of societies have no heart, and do their work in the most perfunctory manner. That this accusation is as unjust as it is unfounded is best shown by the splendid results achieved in those cities where Charity Organization principles have been carried out in the most approved ways. You may say, as has so often been said to me, that conditions vary, and the problems which we Jews have to solve are different, and therefore must be treated differently. I agree with you that conditions vary, but none will deny that human nature is the same the world over, and though the causes that produce the poverty may be different, yet the treatment should be very much the same, and the thought underlying all attempts at relief should be that even temporary aid must be made to tend to permanent advantage of the receiver, and so to the lessening of poverty and pauperism.[16]

Jewish women's organizations thus joined new methods of "scientific" welfare dedicated to improving the lives of Jews and the well-being of Jewish communities. In 1904, in Germany, for example, Bertha Pappenheim established the Jewish Women's Federation (Jüdischer Frauenbund) which advocated Jewish nationalist regeneration, but not Zionism. Another prominent Jewish women's organization was the Jewish Women's Association for Cultural Work in Palestine (Verband jüdischer Frauen für Kulturarbeit in Palästina), which was established in 1907 and supported a wide range of self-help projects for Jewish women in Palestine.[17] In Great Britain and the United States Jewish women set up philanthropies as well as national and international women's social service organizations, including trade unions, settlement houses, and suffrage associations.[18]

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[16]*Proceedings of the First Convention of the National Council of Jewish Women*, Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society of America, 1897, Hadassah Archives, 238.

[17]Michael Berkowitz, *Western Jewry and the Zionist Project, 1914-1933* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 181.

[18]Kuzmack, 184.

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The Zionist movement channelled Jewish women into a new area of activity: the creation

of a new society and polity, and offered them a forum for international organizing.[19] But Jewish

women appropriated an area of nation-building in which they assumed men would have little

interest, social service, and in which they would have free rein to develop and adjust their own

programs to better suit the needs of Jewish women in Palestine. Their engagement in this work

eventually led to the creation of a social welfare system which became a central part of Israel's

infrastructure. The emergence in the 1920s of five major Jewish women's organizations which

sought to provide social assistance for the Jewish population, particularly women, in Palestine, as

well as ensure women's rights and equality thus became an intrinsic part of the new political entity

and meshed into a politically active and conscious women's movement.

3.2 The Union of Hebrew Women for Equal Rights (UER)
and the Movement for Women's Suffrage

The Union of Hebrew Women for Equal Rights (UER) was established in Palestine during

the controversy between the secular and religious sectors regarding the right of women to

exercise political rights within the self-governing Jewish structure permitted by the British

Mandate. The history of women's suffrage in the Jewish settlement of Palestine has not been well

documented by Israeli historians.[20] In the context of the critical juncture of organized women in

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[19]"Jewish Women Extend Aim," 13 May 1923, *New York Times*.

[20]The few exceptions are Menachem Friedman, *Society and Religion: the Non-Zionist Orthodox in Eretz Israel, 1918-1936* (Jerusalem: Yad Yatzek Ben Tsevi, 1977) (in Hebrew); Sylvia Fogiel-Bijaoui, "On the Way to Equality? The Struggle for Women's Suffrage in the Jewish Yishuv, 1917-1926," in *Pioneers and Homemakers: Jewish Women in Pre-State Israel*, ed. Deborah S. Bernstein, (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1992), 261-282.

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Israel between 1949-1951 it is important to emphasize the centrality of the movement for women's suffrage in the emergence of the pre-state Jewish women's movement.

The movement for women's suffrage in Palestine is unique among European and North American case histories. Whereas most, if not all, women's suffrage movements were forced to seek political rights by extra-parliamentary means (since women were denied the right to vote and run for public office) Jewish women in Palestine possessed the right to run on separate political lists dedicated to securing approval of women's political rights from the beginning of efforts to establish a political order in Palestine. Further, while most women's suffrage movements concentrated on incremental measures such as the repeal of restrictive legislation, the Jewish women's suffrage movement sought the approval of women's suffrage rights as an operating principle, which once granted, did not require further amending.

The singular circumstances which allowed Jewish women to participate in a system which had not yet approved women's political rights resulted from the political vacuum left by the collapse of the Ottoman Empire at the end of the First World War, and the British conquest of Palestine. Israeli historians distinguish between three periods of pre-state history. In the first period, before 1882, most of the Jewish community living in Palestine was divided rigidly between two religious communities, Ashkenazi (Jews of European background) and Sephardi (Jews of Middle Eastern and North African background). These two communities, and the period during which they lived are commonly referred to by scholars as the "Old Yishuv."[21] These communities strictly observed their own religious traditions, and both subsisted on financial support from

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[21]Raphael Patai, *New Encyclopedia of Judaism and Israel*, (London: Fairleigh Dickson University Press), 1246.

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European Jewish charities. They utterly rejected political Zionism since it denied the biblical promise that the Jews would return to the Land of Israel with the coming of the messiah. As a religious minority living under the rule of the Ottoman Empire, Jews of the Old Yishuv in Palestine were permitted "autonomous cultural-religious rights" administered by religious authorities.[22] Local governance codes of the 1880s endowed rabbis with political and religious authority, but by 1891 the principle that local authorities should be democratically elected had been largely accepted "as a model for village government."[23] The second distinct period to which historians refer is 1882 to 1918 (the New Yishuv- the Jewish community which settled in Palestine after 1882). Under Ottoman Rule the municipalities in Palestine had a very narrow scope of authority. Writing about the responsibilities permitted to the municipalities under Ottoman rule, Zionist leader Isaac Ben-Zvi stated that:

> The municipalities are competent to deal with cleaning and sanitation, security, water supply, lighting, and traffic. Cleaning and sanitation include the supervision of slaughter and so forth. The municipality has the right to levy taxes on dwellings, on slaughter, and on the issue of various licenses, payment being assured by the local police. [24]

The replacement of Ottoman rule by the British Mandate led to efforts by the Zionist movement to gain greater autonomy and economic independence.

The pre-state structure has been referred to as "a state within a state" or a "state in the

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[22]Sager, "Pre-State Influences," 38.

[23]Patai, 1247.

[24]Isaac Ben-Zwi, "Local Autonomy in Palestine," *The Annals of American Academy of Political and Social Science* 164 (1932) : 30.

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making."[25] Three institutions formed the main pillars of the autonomous structure. The Elected

Assembly met once a year and was made up of representatives elected by proportional

representation. The National Council, selected by the representatives of the Elected Assembly

(Assefat HaNivharim) was responsible for administrative matters. The National Council (Vaad

Leumi) chose a smaller body, the Executive Committee (Vaad Poel or Hanhala) which was "to

administer Community affairs through a number of departments of which the major ones were to

be social welfare, culture, health, education and religious affairs."[26] It is important to note that

"the four Elected Assemblies of the Community, elected at irregular intervals, were each quite

different in size and composition and spanned a period during which the electorate increased more

than ten-fold, primarily through immigration."[27]

The movement for women's suffrage took place within the process of determining the

self-governing arrangement of the Jewish community in Palestine. The earliest controversy

concerning women's political rights in Palestine took place during an attempt in 1903 to replace

separate Jewish local councils with a unified representative structure.[28] At this time seventy-nine

representatives were elected to an assembly by 2,157 dues-paying members (less than ten percent

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[25]Sager, "Pre-State Influences," 38; Horowitz and Lissak, 1.

[26]The size of the National Council (ranging from twenty-three to over forty) meant that the Executive Committee, with six to seventeen members, was more effective at implementing policies. Sager, "Pre-State Influences," 38-39.

[27]Ibid., 41.

[28]Margalit Shilo, "The Transformation of the Role of Women in the First Aliyah, 1882-1903" *Jewish Social Studies: History, Culture and Society*, Volume 2, No. 2, Winter 1996, 64-86. For a first hand account of the debate see, Trager, Hannah "Votes for Women," *Journal of Women's History*, (Spring, 1990), 196-199.

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of the Yishuv) who were required to be Jewish, male, at least twenty-two years of age and not dependent on charity.[29] These representatives discussed a proposed autonomy scheme submitted by Zionist leader Menachem Ussishkin who supported giving women full political rights within the proposed structure. Ussishkin's proposal was defeated by twelve votes and the remaining representatives abstained in support of the Orthodox opponents of women's equality.[30]

With the disintegration of this first attempt to unify the Jewish community amid a leadership quarrel, the issue of women's political rights became a local issue championed by individual women before their local councils. In her memoirs of the movement for women's suffrage, Sarah Azaryahu refers to an individual attempt by Hannah Zahavi (Zlotoyevski) of Petach Tikva who "would appear at Council headquarters while meetings were in progress to protest the injustice done to the women of the settlement by denying women farmers the right to participate in the management of the village."[31] Another participant in the movement for women's suffrage claims that women lobbied the local councils to recognize the right of women to vote and stand for election (active and passive suffrage), but it is not clear to what extent these efforts were coordinated.[32]

The issuing of the Balfour Declaration in November 1917 signalled to the Jewish

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[29]Moshe Burstein, *Self-Government of the Jews*, (New York: Bloch, 1934), 67-70.

[30]Ibid.

[31]Sarah Azaryahu, *The Union of Hebrew Women for Equal Rights in Eretz Yisrael: Chapters in the History of the Women's Movement of Eretz Yisrael* (Jerusalem: Union of Hebrew Women for Equal Rights in Israel, 1948), 2.

[32][Adifa], "First Steps" in *Alim* [Literary Collection in Memory of Sarah Thon] edited by the Union of Hebrew Women for Equal Rights in Palestine, (Tel Aviv: HaPoel HaZair, 1922), 84-90 (in Hebrew).

community that it was authorized by the British government to lay out a mechanism for self-rule.[33]

The earliest stage of this process entailed the meeting in 1917 of representatives of Jewish

residents and organizations. Although one newsletter aimed at Diaspora Jewry claimed that

"equal suffrage is being accepted as a matter of course" by Jews of Palestine, in actuality there

was deep opposition to women's political rights.[34] The opponents of women's suffrage were

mainly the ultra-Orthodox parties, opposed to both active and passive suffrage for women (the

right of women to vote and be elected to office). The ultra-Orthodox found allies among several

other parties, including the modern-Orthodox party, the Mizrahi Party (an abbreviation of Merkaz

Ruhani - Spiritual Center), whose position on women's suffrage was largely determined by

TABLE III
Women's Lists' Candidates Elected to the Representative Assemblies

Assemblies	1st (1920 - 1925)	2nd (1926-1930)	3rd (1931-1943)	4th (1944-1948)
List	Women's Society List-UER	UER	UER-HNI	UER-WIZO
Delegates Elected	5	13	3	4
Number of Total Delegates	314	221	71	181

UER- Union of Hebrew Women for Equal Rights
HNI- Organization of Hebrew Women
WIZO- Federation of Hebrew Women
Source: Burstein, passim.

political variables rather than strict religious considerations; the Farmer's Party, which was

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[33]Sager, "Pre-State Influences," 38.

[34]"Woman Suffrage in Jewish Palestine," *The Maccabaean*, June 1918.

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socially conservative; and "ethnic" lists, such as the Yemenites and Sephardim, who opposed women's equality on religious grounds.[35] Although the allies of the Women's Societies were ostensibly the Labour Zionist parties which were theoretically committed to gender equality, their overriding concern was to create the conditions necessary for Jewish autonomy under the British mandate. In particular, the Labour Zionist movement feared that the Orthodox threat to boycott the self-governing structure would undermine these efforts.[36]

Unable to settle the question of women's suffrage (despite a petition by sixty-seven women in favour of political rights for women) the first Preparatory Assembly (Assefat Mekhonnenet) deferred the issue to a select body called the Temporary Committee (Vaad Zemani) which was charged with setting the guidelines for a larger assembly.[37] The appointment of a woman, Sarah Thon, to the Temporary Committee set off a controversy.[38] A condition of Thon's appointment to the Temporary Committee was that as a female delegate she would not exercise the right of speech. Thon ignored this stipulation, leading the Orthodox delegates to boycott the proceedings of the Temporary Committee.[39]

Despite its internal strife the Temporary Committee oversaw the convening of the second

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[35]Friedman, Chapters six and seven; Burstein, 85.

[36]These parties were Poalei Zion (Workers of Zion), HaPoel HaZair (the Young Worker), and Ahdut HaAvodah (United Labour). Burstein, 85.

[37]Burstein, 90.

[38]Sarah Thon was known in the Jewish women's movement for establishing textile workshops for women as a means of self-help. Esther Smoira, "A History of the Organization of Hebrew Women in Eretz Israel," unpublished, n.d., file 49 1442, CZA, (in Hebrew).

[39]Smoira, 2.

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Preparatory Assembly in June 1918 which approved the principle of women's right to vote. The third Preparatory Assembly, December 1918, recognized the right of women to vote and run for office.[40] Yet the approval of these two basic rights of voting and standing for election was not considered definitive. The Preparatory Assemblies were universally recognized as preliminary stages in the overall processes of determining self-rule and a further stage in this process, the meeting of the Constituent Assembly (Assefat Mayassedet), was set for May 1919.[41] The tentative nature of the first assemblies, and the continued oral attacks by opponents of women's political rights activated the first concerted campaign by organized women who realized the high stakes for women were their political rights to be refused. The labour leader, Ada Maimon, exhorted women:

> This Assembly will be the representative leadership both for Jews living in Palestine, and abroad. This election will provide us with the founding core of the General Union of Jews of Palestine. There will be many decisive questions which will face the leadership. In this Assembly the Hebrew woman must not be absent from her place. The Hebrew woman will participate in the election and as half the Yishuv she has the ability to make the decisions for the bad or the good of the community... Women of Israel! Prepare yourselves for election! Two of our interests are at stake: the future of the Yishuv and women's rights... If we do not participate in this Constituent Assembly the election will not be legal![42]

For Jewish women opposition to their political rights extended beyond Palestine, and threatened to undermine their attempt to gain representation in the Zionist movement internationally. For example, the American Zionist, Henrietta Szold, feared that opposition to women's political rights

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[40]Burstein, 90.

[41]Ibid.

[42]Ada Maimon, *Along the Way* (Tel Aviv: Am Oved, 1972) 32, (in Hebrew).

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might scuttle her chance of sitting on the Zionist Commission.[43]

Although there are few reliable records, sources indicate that the first attempt by Jewish women in Palestine to organize in support of their political rights occurred when a number of women's associations called the Women's Societies began to mobilize on behalf of women's suffrage on the local level.[44] However, it also appears that the Women's Societies were not new entities but associations of women which had been involved in philanthropic causes which now rallied to the question of political rights.[45] A notice in a 1921 issue of the *Palestine Weekly* comments that the Women's Societies had elected a "Committee to work out a scheme for unified organisation and common work."[46]

According to the women's suffrage activist, Sarah Azaryahu, the Women's Societies presented a political list for election which was a "national nonparty-affiliated women's organization whose primary task would be that of winning civil and political rights for Hebrew women in Eretz-Israel [Land of Israel]."[47] The name of the new organization, the Union of Women for Equal Rights was significant for its members:

> At the time of the founding of the Union –during the 1920's– almost all of the women's organizations around the world that fought for equal rights for women customarily called themselves *suffrage* organizations. But the achievement of

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[43]Marvin Lowenthal, *Henrietta Szold: Life and Letters* (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1975), 117; The Zionist Commission was an investigative body instructed by the British Foreign office to report on the political conditions in Palestine.

[44]Smoira, 2.

[45]Ibid.

[46]*The Palestine Weekly*, January 14th, 1921.

[47]Azaryahu, 10.

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'suffrage' for women is only one of the means, or, more correctly, one of the stages that leads to the ultimate goal –the equality of women in the human community. The organizers of the Union, in opposition to custom, set for itself this ultimate goal in its totality immediately upon its founding.[48]

Azaryahu claims that:

the UER directed its campaign primarily towards non-party-affiliated women. It strove to instill the consciousness that, in woman's fight to extend her rights, she must first of all rely on her own strength. The UER argued, therefore, that it is necessary that women send as many delegates as possible to the Representative Assembly, for in this way they would have the power to defend women's interests.[49]

Directed by an executive committee, the Women's List was led by Dr. Rosa Walt-Strauss, a

Russian Jewish veteran of the American women's suffrage movement, who was also a founding

member of the International Women's Suffrage Alliance.[50] Although the Women's Societies

formed the initial base of membership, Azaryahu claimed that the Women's List drew women

from the labour Zionist movement as well as "women from conservative and religious groups."[51]

The UER held a national convention for its members in 1922.[52]

The apprehension of organized women that their political rights might be reversed was

founded on demands by the Orthodox sector to boycott the upcoming assembly if women's

suffrage rights were not summarily cancelled. Fearful of being outnumbered by the left-leaning

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[48]Ibid., 11.

[49]Ibid., 12.

[50]Other members of the executive were Dr. Miriam Nofesh, Fanya Matman-Cohen, Esther Yanin, Hasya Feinsod-Sukenik and Sarah Azaryahu. Ibid., 11.

[51]Ibid., 10.

[52]Ibid., 17.

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labour Zionist movement if the Orthodox sector did not attend, the Farmer's Party also announced its boycott of the assembly.[53] The threat of large-scale secession from the assembly was particularly acute since it had the potential of delegitimizing Jewish autonomy in the estimation of the British administration. In order to forestall this possibility a number of compromises were reached to placate the Orthodox sector. The name of the upcoming assembly was changed from "Constituent" to "Elected" in order to convey the impermanent character of the body. Elections were carried out by proportional representation in which political parties presented slates of candidates. Orthodox voters were provided with segregated voting booths for men only, and their ballots were accorded double weight.[54]

Five candidates out of a total of fourteen women were drawn from the Women's List. The remaining parties which included women on their electoral slates were the Progressive Party, the United Labour List, and the Young Workers Federation.[55] The Orthodox parties were infuriated by the appointment of a woman, Rachel Yanait, one of the founding members of an egalitarian collective, to the National Council (Va'ad Leumi) and its Executive Committee (Va'ad HaPoel) which had the task of overseeing the implementation of the decisions of the assembly.[56]

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[53]Friedman, Chapters six and seven.

[54]Burstein, 97.

[55]On the UER's slate were Esther Yanin, Nachama Pohchevski, A. Gisin-Shravit, Chemda Rosemberg, and Hannah Chopin (Sefat). The women elected on the Progressive Party list were Sarah Ozerkovski (Azaryahu) and Yehudit Katinka (Haifa). Elected on the United Labor List were Esther Becker, Sarah Glickleich, Ada Geller Rachel Yanait, and Manya Schochat. The women from the Young Workers Federation were Cayuta Busel and Hanna Meizel. Azaryahu, 13.

[56]The National Council was set the responsibility of "administering the affairs of the Yishuv between the sessions of the Assembly and of preparing a draft constitution for the

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Yanait ignored the compromise made with the Orthodox parties which stipulated that her position was to be purely nominal, and according to Ada Maimon, "took active part in all the deliberations."[57]

The Orthodox sector was joined by the religious Mizrahi party and both boycotted the first session of the Elected Assembly. The National Council's statement that women were to be granted full political rights caused the Mizrahi and Orthodox parties to return to their previous boycott of the legislative proceedings. In order to draw the Orthodox back into its proceeding the National Council was asked to ratify a compromise, proposed by the Orthodox, that a secret ballot be held on women's suffrage, the results of which would determine whether the Orthodox would remain in the assembly.[58]

The compromise was rejected and the boycott by the opponents of women's suffrage continued. However, at this stage the Orthodox asked the Palestine Zionist Executive to recognize a separate Provisional National Council formed by the Orthodox in order to elect a separate Elected Assembly. This tactic placed organized women in a difficult position since their intransigence might be blamed for the failure of the Zionist movement to achieve independence.

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autonomous Jewish community, including the qualification of its voters." Patai, 1247. The scope of the National Council's powers was also limited to "educational, welfare, and religious affairs." Eliahu S. Likhovski, *Israel's Parliament: The Law of the Knesset*, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1971),10.

[57]Ada Maimon, Women Build a Land, 239. Rachel Yanait was "a central figure in the Woman Workers' Movement," a founding member of the Jewish self-defence group Hashomer Hazir, and Sejera, a egalitarian collectivist settlement. See, Deborah Bernstein, *The Struggle for Urban Equality*, (New York, Praeger, 1989), 15, Marie Syrkin, "Introduction," in Rachel Yanait, *Before Golda, Manya Shochat* (Sunnyside: Biblio Press, 1989).

[58]Friedman, Chapter seven.

This required a firm stance. Azaryahu recalled that:

> among the 'progressive' circles there were those who demanded of women –in the name of 'peace and unity,' that they concede 'this time' and wait for a 'riper,' more suitable moment. To have acceded to this demand would have been tantamount to delaying the solution of the woman question until the end of days. Concession would have been interpreted as a formal recognition of the existence of a regime in the Yishuv in which women were second-class citizens.[59]

Hadassah, the Women's Zionist Organization of America, supported the movement for women's suffrage.[60] It pointed out that had the Orthodox sector succeeded in setting up its own assembly:

> the world would have been treated to the spectacle of the young Jewish community split into two camps, when united it has not yet been able to develop an effective national body. On the other hand, the vexatious feature of the opposition to women's voting rights was that, if the adversaries succeeded with their policies, for the first time it would have happened that, once political rights had been gained by women, they were to be deprived of them, a situation much more to be reprobated than not to grant such rights to begin with.[61]

With the denial of the petition, the Orthodox sector was forced back into negotiations with the National Council. A further compromise was proposed in which a referendum be held on women's suffrage, but that women be allowed to participate, and the results be binding. The Orthodox refused on the grounds that religious matters could not be decided by political means. The Mizrahi Party, however, accepted the majority opinion, thus splitting the opposition and allowing formal approval of active and passive suffrage for women.[62]

Women's political rights were approved by second Elected Assembly in 1926. The

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[59]Azaryahu, 16.

[60]"3,000 Greet Woman Palestine Leader," 1 May 1923, *New York Times*.

[61]"Women's Suffrage Rights," *Hadassah News Letter*, August 1925, 14.

[62]Friedman, Chapters six and seven.

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Women's List, now named the Union of Hebrew Women for Equal Rights in Eretz Yisrael (UER) elected thirteen delegates. Of the fifteen lists, the UER was the fifth largest. Two of their representatives were also appointed to the National Council. With the approval of women's suffrage the UER turned its attention to other political and legal issues: women's political rights on the local level, over which the Elected Assembly did not have jurisdiction, and to the profound legal inequality suffered by women under the Orthodox administered religious law.[63] The movement for women's suffrage had endowed organized women with the political skills, consciousness and institutions through which subsequent Zionist women's organizations were to seek to achieve their agenda.

In his study of the British women's movement in the inter-war period, Martin Pugh discusses the question of whether a women's party was a viable option in Britain following the granting of women's suffrage in 1918. Given the low rate of women's election to Parliament, Pugh asserts that the decision by British women *not* to organize themselves into a separate political party in order to further their political gains was politically significant:

> There was nothing inevitable about the strategy actually pursued by the women's movement after the Great War. The historical record shows that political parties have been based upon philosophies, social class, religion, language, regional and national loyalty; and some of the most significant parties- the Indian National Congress, the Irish Nationalists, and even the British Labour Party- seemed an unrealisable dream for considerable periods of time. In post-1918 Britain women enjoyed a 40 percent share of the electorate, a well-defined programme and philosophy, and a wealth of practical experience. There was nothing inherently

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[63]Bernard Joseph, "Palestine Legislation Under the British," *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 164 (1932) : 39-46; George Antonius, "The Machinery of Government in Palestine," *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 164 (1932) : 55-61.

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improbable about turning this potential into a new party.[64]

Pugh points to two potential catalysts which might have lead to the creation of a women's party in Britain: widespread public discontent regarding the pre-war parties and the existence of a strong and capable leadership for a women's party. He argues that the British Conservative party seriously considered the consequences of a women's party, while other British parties debated the likelihood of whether women would vote as a unified front. An added impetus was the formation in 1916 of the National Women's Party in the United States which presented a potential model for British women who had closely followed the American women's suffrage movement. Yet, for a variety of reasons organized British women declined to establish a women's party, leading Pugh to conclude that:

> The failure to attempt a new party for women is comprehensible: women never felt driven to so extreme or ambitious a remedy. This is a reflection partly of the strength of party loyalties in Britain, the habit of working for party causes, and the timely concessions made around 1918 to accommodate women supporters. It may also be that the social divide was always too great to bridge: feminism always had difficulty mobilising working-class women even without the opposition of an organised labour movement. It is also the case that the psychological moment for launching a new party was fairly short - by 1924, when four general elections fought under women's suffrage had elapsed, it had definitely passed.... Finally, one must recognise that many feminist leaders with their long experience of dealing with the established parties had some grounds for believing that they were likely to achieve their aims by working along broadly the same lines as before.[65]

In contrast to the British women's movement of the 1920s the pre-state women's movement in Palestine was relatively strong after winning suffrage in 1926. Despite internal rivalry and power struggles it enjoyed broad organizational and financial cooperation. While the

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[64]Martin Pugh, *Women and the Women's Movement in Britain, 1914-1959* (London: Macmillan, 1992), 67.

[65]Ibid., 71.

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contours of the pre-state women's movement shifted after 1926, this was due less to the attrition

of support than to organizational realignment and the emergence onto the scene of new

organizations.

3.3 Hadassah, the Women's Zionist Organization of America

A second major women's organization active in Palestine was Hadassah, the Women's

Zionist Organization of America, founded in New York City in 1912. The nucleus of Hadassah

met at the initiative of Emma Gottheil, the wife of the first President of the American Federation

of Zionists following her return from the Second Zionist Congress in 1898. Gottheil's group of

women first met as a study circle, and branches of the group expanded across New York City. It

was the involvement of Henrietta Szold, born in Baltimore to an Orthodox Jewish family of

Hungarian descent, which led to the massive expansion of Hadassah. As a young woman Szold

had pioneered the first night school in America, in which she gave English language instructions

for new Jewish immigrants. She was later to become the first woman accepted to the Jewish

Theological Seminary of America (although not for rabbinical studes). Szold was already well-

known and regarded in Zionist and Jewish circles as an editor for a Jewish book series. After her

return from a visit to Palestine in 1909 she called for the creation of a "nationwide federation of

American Zionists."[66] The founding meeting of Hadassah presented a mandate far beyond Zionist

educational work, proposing "the promotion of Jewish institutions and enterprises in Palestine and

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[66]Marlin Levin, *Women of Valor: The Story of Hadassah* (Tel Aviv: Beth Hatefutsoth, 1987), 1.

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the fostering of Jewish ideals."[67] Hadassah developed into the largest and most powerful Jewish

women's Zionist organization in the United States. Smaller women's organizations shared its

social welfare focus.[68] These included the labour Zionist Pioneer Women, which was linked to the

Working Women's Council (WWC), the Women's League for Palestine and the People's Relief

based in New York City.[69] American Zionist women also concentrated their activities in the

support of particular social welfare institutions such as hospitals and educational institutions.[70]

Hadassah's work was guided by Szold's commitment to the ideals of American Progressivism

which was "characterized by the desire to apply the methods of the natural sciences to most areas

of human endeavour."[71] According to Joyce Antler, the impetus for Hadassah lay in both the

confines of the Zionist movement and restrictions on women's non-domestic activity:

> Szold and the founders of Hadassah believed that their association could provide
> for women a special home that did not exist for them in general Zionist
> organizations. Arguing that it made sense to organize a separate women's Zionist
> society because the very basis of Zionism was the group, they believed that in
> providing an arena for practical service and a 'natural grouping of friends,'
> Hadassah would appeal to both middle-class and immigrant women occupied with

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[67]Ibid..

[68]Mary McCune, "Social Workers in the *Muskeljudentum*: 'Hadassah Ladies,' 'Manly Men' and the Significance of Gender in the American Zionist Movement, 1912-1928" in *American Jewish History* 86, 2 (June 1998): 135-65.

[69]"Letter to Mrs. Edward Jacobs," 25 February, 1931, RG7/Box 12/F127, Hadassah Archives, 3.

[70]Ibid., 4.

[71]Michael Brown, *The Israeli-American Connection: its Roots in the Yishuv, 1914-45.* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1996), 145.

traditional domestic concerns who sought broader outlets.[72]

Hadassah grew quickly, both in terms of its membership and its projects. In 1913, it raised funds to send two nurses to Palestine and to support the operation of a medical clinic. By 1914, Hadassah had 200 members organized in eight chapters. At the end of the First World War, Hadassah "constituted the largest portion of Zionist membership in the United States."[73] By 1929 Hadassah's membership in America was estimated at 40,000.[74]

In 1916, Louis Brandeis, then Chairman of the Zionist Executive Committee, appealed to Hadassah to send medical support to Palestine.[75] It did so by establishing the American Zionist Medical Unit, which set up hospitals and clinics across Palestine. Szold referred to Hadassah's undertaking of medical work as the decision of American Zionist women "to do a piece of actual, practical work in Palestine...something here for which America had won a fair name - nursing."[76] Although Hadassah had approximately 10,000 members and "liquid assets of less than $3,000" the organization raised $30,000 of the Unit's $265,000 budget.[77] The massive organizational undertaking of setting up the American Zionist Medical Unit (AZMU) sealed Hadassah's reputation as a competent and skilful women's organization, and ensured Henrietta Szold's place

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[72]Joyce Antler, "The Dream of a Jewish Homeland" in *The Journey Home: Jewish Women and the American Century* (London: The Free Press, 1997), 106.

[73]Berkowitz, 175.

[74]"Forty Thousand Jewish Women," *English Section Forward*, September 15, 1929.

[75]The Zionist provisional Executive Committee took over the responsibilities of the World Zionist Organization which was rendered impotent during the World War. Levin, 5.

[76]Letter to Mrs. Shure, 7 March 1923, file RGZ/HS/B10/F112, Hadassah Archives.

[77]Levin, 5.

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in the ranks of the Zionist leadership. Following its sponsorship of the AZMU, Hadassah publicly

assumed responsibility for most of the health care system in Palestine.[78] This meant that it raised

funds for medical services and planned to build an independent medical system in Palestine which

the Jewish autonomous government would eventually take over.[79]

But Hadassah's work extended beyond providing medical service; it included setting up

well-baby clinics (called Infant Welfare Stations) which supplied clean milk for babies, providing

free school luncheons, building playgrounds, and distributing clothing.[80] Considering the lack of

services offered by the Health Department of the British Administration, one public health official

pointed out in 1932 the importance of Hadassah's preventative health care work:

> In general, the Health Department has not manifested a progressive attitude with
> regard to these [Hadassah's pre-natal care] important preventive services. It has
> given only inadequate attention to the needs of the Arab population and none at all
> to those of the Jewish population. The shortsightedness of this policy is apparent
> in view of the high infant mortality and mortality of children under five years of
> age.[81]

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[78]Elbridge Sibley, "Palestine," in *The Near East and American Philanthropy: A Survey*, ed. Frank A. Ross, C. Luther Fry and Elbridge Sibley (New York: Columbia University Press, 1929), 214.

[79]Hadassah was always explicit that its sponsorship and administration of medical services was an interim measure until the Jewish autonomous government could assume the responsibility. "To the National Board of Hadassah," 8 December 1928. By 1933 Hadassah had turned its hospitals over to the Tel Aviv and Haifa municipalities. It also built and ran several health clinics in smaller settlements. Jessie Sampter, "Modern Palestine: A Symposium," Hadassah, New York, 1933, Hadassah Archives, 282.

[80]"To the Members of the National Board of Hadassah," 21 September, 1923; *Hadassah News Letter*, August 1927, Hadassah Archives, 9-10.

[81]I.J. Kliger was the director of the Malaria Research Unit in Palestine from 1922-1925. I.J. Kligler, "Public Health in Palestine," *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 164 (1932) : 167-175. Another observer stated that seven "percent of the Government budget for health and hygiene was expended for the Jews, while 93 percent was

For its part, Hadassah advised its supporters that infant welfare would nourish "strong healthy builders of the homeland."[82] Hadassah's self-imposed restriction to social welfare work did not imply that it thought women less politically competent than men:

> we live in the twentieth century. Women do men's work in the community, efficiently and with full realization of their responsibility. To be womanly, in twentieth century America, is to be comrade and partner. To be womanly in Zionism, means nothing less; to participate freely and completely in all that concerns the upbuilding of Palestine, to share the responsibility as well as the labor, to be fearless and resolute where the welfare of the Land of Israel is concerned.[83]

In doing so, Hadassah sought to effectively supervise its "non-medical work" in Palestine. In 1924 it created a post of a "steady Hadassah representative" in Palestine.[84] Demands on this post led to the establishment in 1930 of the Palestine Council of Hadassah.[85] In both cases, Hadassah tried to implement the principle advocated by Szold that tight supervision by Hadassah over its projects was needed to ensure that its funds were not wasted, and as a result, its donors angered. One component of this view was Szold's (and by extension, Hadassah's) claim that the organization's success, in terms of membership and finances, was based on the principle of

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spent on the Arabs." W. Preuss, "The Economic Effects of Jewish Immigration in Palestine," *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 164 (1932) :108-115.

[82]"Infant Welfare Work Under the Hadassah Medical Organization in Palestine: A Story, A Program and Appeal," New York: Hadassah the Women's Zionist Organization, 1923, Hadassah Archives.

[83]"If this be Politics-!" 11 May 1928, *Hadassah News Letter*, Hadassah Archives.

[84]"Miss Szold's Seventh Letter," *Hadassah News Letter*, June 1924, 7, Hadassah Archives.

[85]"Palestine Council of Hadassah," Lotta Levensohn, *Hadassah News Letter*, February 1937, Hadassah Archives.

ensuring that its membership retain complete control over its projects.

Indeed, Hadassah's refusal to turn over its funds to the Zionist Organization of America was the cause of a dispute between the two organizations.[86] The dispute grew from a 1921 argument among Zionist leaders over the future of Zionist political work. One faction, headed by the American Zionist leader, Louis Brandeis, argued that the issuance of the Balfour Declaration concluded the political task of Zionist leaders, that the World Zionist Organization now required decentralization, and that international Zionism should be limited to fund-raising and economic support. An opposing perspective was held by the president of the World Zionist Organization, Chaim Weizmann, who argued in favour of diplomatic lobbying and against the decentralization of the World Zionist Organization.[87] With its amalgamation with the Zionist Organization of America Hadassah lost control over its funds as well as its projects. Following the failure of Brandeis to impose his vision on the Zionist movement, Szold, then living in Jerusalem, and no longer holding the presidency of Hadassah, appealed to Hadassah chapters to refuse to turn over funds to the ZOA and to channel funds to the medical work in Palestine instead. In Szold's view the ZOA failed "to recognize the psychological value of a specific task for women."[88] To punish Hadassah members for their intransigence, 5000 Hadassah women were deprived of voting rights within the ZOA.[89]

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[86]Berkowitz, chapter five.

[87]Levin, 3.

[88]"To the National Board of Hadassah," 23 September 1929, file RG7/HS/Box 31/f356, Hadassah Archives.

[89]"5000 Zionist Women Disfranchised," *Hadassah News Letter*, May 25, 1928, Hadassah Archives.

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Some Zionist leaders held that the argument that women needed control over specific

projects actually increased the inequality against which women claimed to be struggling. In a

1928 article in defence of the Zionist Organization, the prominent Zionist Maurice Samuel

asserted that Hadassah contributed to differential perceptions of men and women:

> the identity of masculine and feminine psychology in American Zionism has been
> denied not by the Administration of the Zionist Organization, but by the leadership
> of Hadassah. Over and over again the Hadassah leaders have pleaded with the
> Organization that a special piece of work, limited in scope (though important in
> nature) is best suited to engage the sympathies and enlist the activities of Jewish
> women. Over and over they say: 'Unless our work has a separate identity, unless
> the women can see the special things they are working for set apart, unless they
> gauge its particular growth, they will not work as well. It is all right for the
> Zionist movement as a whole to be interested in an anonymous piece of work
> which is the whole of the building of Palestine. But it is woman's weakness that
> unless she is identified with a separate institution, (the Hospital, the Penny
> Luncheon Fund) and can point with individual pride to its progress, she feels no
> spur to work. It is this narrowing down of interest which is the strength of
> Hadassah.' This assumption of the limitation of outlook on the part of the Jewish
> woman in Zionism, of her inability to derive sufficient inspiration from the larger
> work from the national revival as a whole, is not particularly respectful to the
> intelligence of Jewish womanhood.[90]

In Samuel's view, for example, Hadassah made special use of its "political primitiveness" to gain

"special privileges" which it then exercised to assert "the political superiority or political

domination of the women in Zionism."[91]

Nevertheless, Szold consistently argued that the organization's control over funds and

projects was essential for Hadassah to retain relevance. Specifically, Szold argued that the

organization needed to adhere to two basic principles, authority over its own funds, and control

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[90]Maurice Samuel, "Women's Rights in Zionism: Equality and Special Privileges - But Not
Domination," New Palestine, June 15, 1928, Hadassah Archives, 627.

[91]Ibid., 627.

over projects. In a letter to the National Board of Hadassah in 1929 she asserted:

> I am now, as I have always been, of the opinion that women can produce the best results of which they are capable, if they assume a specific responsibility within the frame of the upbuilding program for Palestine. I define a 'specific responsibility' as a project in Palestine within the framework of the general upbuilding program for which the women will collect the whole budget, in exchange for which service they shall have the right and duty of laying out and determining the plan and the policy as expressed in the items of the budget. The determination of the plan and the policy should be kept separate in this discussion from their execution in Palestine.[92]

Jessie Sampter, an American poet affiliated with Hadassah, who emigrated to Palestine wrote that Hadassah operated according to the

> fundamental theory...that an organization is strengthened by having a concrete and definite project in hand and especially that women work with greater energy toward a clearly defined goal. This basic motivation has never been abandoned, although when the organization had become powerful, it was frequently subjected to pressure, either to divert its energies to other ends or to work for aims less clearly defined.[93]

By 1933 Hadassah members had wrested their independence from the ZOA.[94] In outlining Hadassah's terms of agreement with the ZOA, Hadassah president Rose L. Halprin argued that actually Hadassah, if it so chose, possessed the capability of dominating the ZOA:

> Hadassah has been autonomous in fact, and in practice, since 1921. Psychologically, this autonomy was both sound and essential. Hadassah, the largest Zionist group in this country, with a well defined program of activity, for which it is responsible financially and administratively, could not function properly unless it had complete autonomy. In addition, however, Hadassah had rights in the Zionist Organization of America which were accorded its membership because that membership also paid dues to the Zionist Organization of America. Thus Hadassah Chapters possessed the right to elect delegates to Zionist Conventions,

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[92]"To the National Board of Hadassah," 23 September 1929, Hadassah Archives.

[93]Sampter, "Modern Palestine."

[94]Berkowitz, 175-265.

on the same basis as the districts, and Hadassah was represented nationally on the governing body of the Zionist Organization of America. If Hadassah had been numerically weaker than the Zionist Organization, this would not have constituted any real difficulty. Since, however, Hadassah is numerically stronger, it could if it so desired, by the number of Hadassah delegates at Zionist Conventions, influence decisions pertaining to matters of internal administration, in the Zionist Organization.[95]

The idea that women had a special, differentiated task within the Zionist movement was reiterated almost two decades later, by the American Zionist leader, Louis Lipsky. Writing about the American women's Zionist organization, Hadassah, he stated:

> There is women's work to be done in Zionism, which the men cannot do. Hadassah has added colour and quality to the Zionist movement. The rough, uneven work dealing with miscellaneous elements by various methods - the work done on the Jewish street - of necessity had to be done by men. Hadassah has acted more quietly, more systematically, with more attention to detail, preferring a slow growth rather than a mass progress. It has aimed to convert its members not only to Zionism, but to a knowledge of what Zionism means. The Zionist organization appreciates what it has done, and feels the influence of its activities in the larger fields of Zionist endeavours.[96]

The right of women to operate autonomously from men was thus a principle for which Hadassah had fought in the context of American Zionism, and which it applied in its work in Palestine. Hadassah's phenomenal success thus rested on two aspects, the control it maintained over the projects for which it raised money, and Henrietta Szold's astute leadership. Hadassah influenced the formation of the pre-state Jewish women's movement in two ways. The first was that through its extensive provision of medical assistance, Hadassah demonstrated that organized women were capable of providing vital services for the Jewish settlement in Palestine. While

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[95]Rose L. Halprin, "Hadassah Makes a New Agreement with the Zionist Organization of America," *Hadassah News Letter*, November 1933, Hadassah Archives, 2-3.

[96]"Hadassah's Anniversary, "Louis Lipsky, *The Maccabaean*, 1917.

women's organizations traditionally provided social assistance in the form of philanthropy, Hadassah turned women's activism in a different direction by advocating that the interim Jewish government assume responsibility for the medical institutions which Hadassah created. Hadassah provided the means for organized women to create infrastructure, rather than limit themselves to the rather narrow educational role which the Zionist movement had originally envisioned for women.

Second, Hadassah played a crucial role in the Jewish women's movement through the involvement of its founder, Henrietta Szold, in the Women's Lists of the second and third Elected Assemblies (1931 and 1944). Szold did not claim to be a feminist, but she supported equal rights for women. In a 1923 speech to American Zionists she argued that Jewish women's organizations would help to "modernize" Palestine. She stated:

> Today a Jewish woman in Palestine cannot be the guardian of her children in accordance with Jewish law, and under certain circumstances she cannot inherit the fortune which she may have helped her husband to accumulate. That is the line of adjustment to modern conditions along which the women who have formed an organization for that purpose have been working. Their efforts, whether crowned immediately with success or not, will lead to the consolidation of the Jewish community in Palestine. For, the development of law once begun in this direction will be continued in many other fields. In our pre-Palestinian days, before we had won our political victories, it was one of our aspirations, that a large Jewish community in Palestine would bring about a development of the old Jewish law in accordance with the demands of modern life.[97]

Szold also ran at the head of the Women's Lists with the goal of establishing a Department of Social Services in the autonomous government. The involvement of Szold on the Women's Lists consequently brought together the dual goals of seeking political equality for

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[97]Henrietta Szold, "Jewish Palestine in the Making," in *My Brother's Keeper: Fostering Projects in the Jewish National Home*, volume 5, *American Zionism: A Documentary History*, eds. Aaron S. Klieman and Adrian L. Klieman (New York: Garland Press, 1990), 1-12.

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women, and emphasizing the supposedly special connection between organized women and social service provision.

Third, Szold played a central role in the establishment of a Palestinian Jewish women's organization, the Histadrut Nashim Ivriot (HNI), which, as a result of her influence, was subsidized for a period by Hadassah. The HNI was a sponsor of the Women's Lists and one of the causes of the subsequent cleavage within the women's movement between those advocating a political rights agenda and those who wanted the organization to provide social services only.

3.4 The Histadrut Nashim Ivriot - the Organization of Hebrew Women (HNI)

The Histadrut Nashim Ivriot (HNI) was established in 1921 through the efforts of an educated Russian Jew who first emigrated to the United States and later to Palestine, Batsheva Kesselman. Once in Jerusalem, Kesselman was approached by women's charitable groups to witness the unsanitary conditions in which women gave birth, and appealed to her for financial assistance which they assumed Kesselman could procure from American Zionists. Kesselman however, favoured a self-help rather than charitable model of assistance and called a preliminary meeting of women in Jerusalem to discuss the possibility of establishing a women's organization. Conscious that Szold was due to arrive in Palestine, and hoping to recruit Szold as the leader of a new women's organization, Kesselman left the mandate and guidelines of the organization deliberately vague.[98] Szold's initial reaction to the establishment of the HNI was less than enthusiastic:

This organization was pushed upon my shoulders by Mrs. Kesselman, who, upon

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[98]Smoira, 4.

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my arrival [in Palestine] urged me to help her out with something for the mothers and children in Palestine. I was dragged into the thing against my wishes and before I could acquaint myself with the conditions here. In one respect I was betrayed into a fundamental error and one in thorough contradiction to all my principles as an organizer. The Society in a measure duplicates the work of a long existing Society... When we started last summer, just about one year ago, I was horrified by my undertaking. It seemed to me impossible ever to whip the thing into shape.[99]

Recounting the first meeting of the HNI to Hadassah members in New York City in 1926, the American poet and member of the HNI, Jessie Sampter, emphasized the unfamiliarity of women in Palestine with the protocols of organizational behaviour:

> Almost five years ago, Miss Szold called a meeting (after a few preliminary meetings of American women) of all classes of Jewish women in Jerusalem- women, many of whom had never attended any kind of meeting who didn't know how to speak in order. About forty came. There were educated women and illiterate women, European women, Yemenites, Sephardim [Jews of North African descent]...We conducted the meeting in Hebrew, but had to translate it into four languages. It was hard to persuade the women to speak in order. Slowly the organization developed. A year or two later we had two or three hundred members. We had Hebrew classes; the meetings were orderly; the addresses didn't have to be translated.[100]

The HNI quickly adopted strict procedures and guidelines for its operation. Membership was open to all dues paying "Hebrew women" who adhered to the duties set out by its constitution. Leading the organization was a central committee which met monthly. The central committee consisted of a president, two vice-presidents, a secretary and four regular members. Its work was carried out by neighbourhood committees each of which sent a chairwoman to represent it on the central committee, and positions on the central committee were to be decided

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[99]"Letter to Mrs. Danziger," 9 June 1921, Hadassah Archives.

[100]"Histadruth Nashim in Rehoboth," *Hadassah News Letter*, Number 4, January 1926, Hadassah Archives, 6.

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at annual meetings open to all members.[101]   Any woman's group with at least fifteen members

was permitted to become a branch of the HNI.[102] According to Szold, by 1922 the HNI's

membership was approximately 575 people. Szold boasted that its budget was "26 pounds" and

its work "was being done by four sub-committees, whose records are modern to the last dot."

That same year women in Haifa and Jaffa requested that Szold assist them set up similar

organizations.[103] By 1924, the HNI held its first conference for its constituent branches in

Jerusalem, Haifa, Tel Aviv, Tiberias, Sefat and Rehovot.[104] The constitution of the HNI declared

that the organization was dedicated to the "protection and improvement of the status of women

and children" in Palestine.[105] Sampter claimed that:

> The object of this organization [the HNI] was to further Infant Welfare Work and,
> in general, social work among women and children. Its deeper object was to
> organize the women of Palestine for welfare work. It cooperated with the Infant
> Welfare Department of Hadassah. It sent volunteer workers to help nurses in the
> clinics and in home visiting. It found out conditions and came to Hadassah asking
> that new stations be started...We offered to pay the rent and to provide whatever
> milk was necessary, to provide for the cleaning of the house, if Hadassah would
> send the nurse and equipment. We have a very charming station; we are

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[101]Constitution of the Histadruth Nashim Ivriot in Jerusalem," n.d. (in Hebrew), file 49 1445, CZA.

[102] "Jewish Women's Organization in Palestine," *Hadassah News Letter*, July 1924, Hadassah Archives.

[103]Lowenthal, 75.

[104]"Jewish Women's Organization in Palestine," *Hadassah News Letter*, July 1924, Hadassah Archives.

[105]Constitution of the Histadruth Nashim Ivriot in Jerusalem," n.d. (in Hebrew), file 49 1445, CZA.

responsible for its appearance and are proud of it.[106]

The HNI's reputation as an important women's organization in Palestine came from its administration of "Milk Stations," clinics which provided milk and health care for infants and pregnant women.[107] The Milk Stations formed part of the Hadassah Medical Organization's Infant Welfare Work, and as Szold hastened to point out, the "whole budget" was raised by Hadassah.[108] In one instance, though, the Milk Stations were supported by Zionist women in Lithuania.[109] The HNI also pioneered other social welfare services, such as a Baby Home for orphans in Jerusalem, which opened in 1924.[110] In 1929, Henrietta Szold offered the following summary of the HNI's work in its fourteen branches across the country:

> It has been acting in its local branches as a voluntary, social investigating agency for the Hadassah Medical Organization in connection with the Infant and Maternity work of the latter organization; providing milk for the babies at the Stations who require milk according to a physician's formula; it established a Baby's home in Jerusalem and a Day Creche in Tel-Aviv; it founded kindergartens in Jerusalem and Haifa; and in the latter place furnished luncheons; in Haifa it sponsors and runs a summer camp; in some of the rural settlements it furnishes rent and service to the Hadassah Infant Stations; and in one case contributes to the salary of the nurse; it functions as the agent of Hadassah, the Women's Organization of America in the distribution of the clothing made by Hadassah's 800 sewing circles; it has made an

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[106]"Histadruth Nashim in Rehoboth," *Hadassah News Letter*, Number 4, January 1926, Hadassah Archives.

[107]"To the Members of the National Board of Hadassah," 24 August, 1923, Hadassah Archives.

[108]"Miss Szold's Seventh Letter," *Hadassah Newsletter*, June 1924, Hadassah Archives.

[109]"To the Members of the National Board of Hadassah," 12 September 1924, RG7/HS/B17/F168A, Hadassah Archives; "Rehoboth and Lithuania," *Hadassah News Letter*, January 1927, Hadassah Archives.

[110]"Baby Home of the Histadruth Nashim Ibriot in Jerusalem," by Dr. Benno Gruenfelder, *Hadassah News Letter*, March 1928, Vol. XIII, No. 15, Hadassah Archives.

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excellent beginning at encouraging home industries (Shani) especially among Yemenites and other Eastern women; it arranges Evening Courses in Hebrew for Housewives; etc...Underlying all its activities there is a connecting fundamental purpose; the welding of the Jewish Women of Palestine into an instrument for every sort of women's activity.[111]

One of the earliest members of the HNI was the future representative of the WIZO list in the first Knesset, Rachel Kagan. Born in 1888, Kagan had studied mathematics at the University of Odessa. Kagan emigrated from Russia to Palestine in 1919, and "impressed with the crude contrast between the life of the agricultural pioneers and the Ghetto-like existence of the impoverished masses in the Old City and in other slum quarters of Jerusalem," joined the HNI.[112] In 1929, Kagan moved with her family to Haifa, where she became the Chairwoman of the HNI. Kagan served as the honorary treasurer and Chairman of the Committee for Child Welfare of the HNI, and was one of the founders of the Milk Stations, and its Baby Home.[113]

The HNI quickly ran into financial trouble as a result of its inability to raise sufficient funds to support its projects, a point which will be developed in greater detail in Chapter 3. Szold's insistence that the HNI be financially independent further drove the HNI into difficulty,

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[111]"Memorandum I On Women's Organizations in Palestine" May 1929, file RG7/HS/Box 31/f356, Hadassah Archives.

[112]"Rachel Kagan - A Woman Leader in Israel," file F49 1957, Central Zionist Archives.

[113]When Henrietta Szold founded the Department of Social Service in 1931, Kagan became the head of a prototype social work bureau in Haifa, upon which Szold intended to model other social work offices across the country. Kagan took over from Szold as the head of the Department of Social Work in 1946. After her term in the first Knesset (1949-1951) Kagan did not enter electoral politics until 1961, when she was elected to the fifth Knesset on the Liberal party ticket. Because WIZO was adamant that it not be identified with partisan politics, Kagan was compelled to resign her position as the Chairwoman of the Israel Federation of WIZO during the term of the fifth Knesset (1961-1965). Nevertheless, when Kagan left electoral politics after 1965 she was elected Honorary Life President of the Israel Federation of WIZO. "Rachel Kagan's 70th Birthday Greetings" file F49 1957, CZA

since Szold blocked the HNI's attempts to appeal to Hadassah donors. Although Szold

envisioned the HNI as the legitimate center of the international women's Zionist movement, the

HNI quickly lost its independence as a result of the appearance of the fourth major women's

organization in Palestine, the Women's International Zionist Organization, (WIZO).

3.5 The Women's International Zionist Organization - WIZO

Early in its existence the HNI and Szold had to contend with the involvement of a fourth

Jewish women's organization coming into Palestine, the Women's International Zionist

Organization (WIZO). WIZO was established at an international conference called by British

women active in the Zionist movement who were dissatisfied at the narrow role the Zionist

movement assigned to women.[114] WIZO founders were part of Britain's Jewish establishment;

several were married to men who served on the Zionist Commission.[115] The Russian-born Vera

Weizmann was a medical doctor and the wife of Chaim Weizmann, head of the Zionist

Commission. She was renowned for children's welfare work in Manchester, England. Rebecca

Sieff was married to Israel Sieff (one of the founders of the Marks and Spencer department store)

who acted as secretary to Weizmann during his term on the Zionist Commission. Edith Eder, a

former member of the Fabian Society, was married to David Eder, the president of the Zionist

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[114]WIZO leaders rarely expanded on why the need for a separate women's organization
was necessary. Rebecca Sieff simply noted that women needed to organize without men to
overcome "the traditional prejudice of men towards their female colleagues, except in the case of
exceptional personalities." Martha Hoffman, *Ten Years of WIZO* (Vienna: Friedrich Holzer and
Co., 1930), (in German), 19.

[115]Professor Michael Brown has expressed the view that WIZO was founded as a
European counter-weight to the American Hadassah. I have found no historical evidence for this
idea, but it is a possibility that deserves greater scholarly investigation.

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Commission. Lady Herbert Samuel was married to the first High Commissioner of Palestine.

Other founding members, such as Romana Goodman, were active in the Zionist movement. She

had served as the head of the first Zionist women's organization in Great Britain and had been

active in the women's suffrage movement, which according to her cofounder, Rebecca Sieff, gave

Goodman "a touch of feminist attitude."[116] Henrietta Irwell had been involved in social welfare

work in London.[117]

As the wives of the members of the Zionist Commission, the founders of WIZO had

visited Palestine with their husbands and formed specific opinions of what problems faced the new

Jewish community in Palestine. According to Vera Weizman, they

> found the education of women as then existing to be quite inadequate and based on
> a misconception of the principles of education. Girls went through the same
> curriculum as boys. They received little or no instruction in the things which would
> matter most to them afterward. Domestic science, which was urgently needed in a
> country like Palestine, was, for the most neglected. Young women who went to
> Palestine from Eastern lands found themselves untrained and totally unequipped to
> meet the needs of the new life. It was the duty of Jewish women to come to their
> assistance, to help them secure the essential training which would enable them to
> take their positions either as land workers, farmers or colonists' wives.[118]

When they returned to Britain this group established the Federation of Women Zionists,

which had its head office in London, but which formed branches across England.[119] Rebecca Sieff

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[116] Rebecca Sieff, "WIZO and its Founders," in Hoffman, 19.

[117] Israel Sieff, *Memoirs* (London: Wiedenfeld and Nicolson, 1970); Vera Weizmann, *The Impossible Takes Longer* (London: Hamish Hamilton, 1967).

[118] "Women in Zionism: An Interview with Dr. Vera Weizmann," by Meir Zev, *The New Palestine*, March 21, 1924, 226.

[119] Rosalie Gassman, "The Jewish Woman and Israel," *The Gates of Zion: A Quarterly Review of Judaism and Zionism*, October, 1963, Volume 18 No. 1, 17.

later claimed that the idea of creating a larger body of women Zionists emerged from "the dire need for a great international force of women workers, conscious of their duties and responsibilities, in the great hour of national redemption, to carry out the day-to-day tasks necessary for national regeneration."[120]

In July 1920, the Federation of Women Zionists called a conference of European women Zionists.[121] The conference met in London and according to WIZO's president, Rebecca Sieff, included women Zionists from "Great Britain, Germany, Holland, Poland, and guests from South Africa, American Hadassah, Russia and Palestine."[122] One new member recollected, "The idea of a nonparty Zionist women's organization, independent, and on a global scale, with a programme of constructive work in Palestine for women, children and youth," was greatly appealing to European Zionist women.[123]

WIZO reacted creatively to its financial difficulties. In order to offset the low rate of exchange of European currency, and to raise funds WIZO set up a fund to which Jewish women in Europe, China and Singapore could donate jewels in order to raise funds in English pounds.[124] Likewise, the establishment of a hostel for young women immigrants was supported by the donation of furniture and other materials by Jewish women in Germany, Czecho-Slovakia, and

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[120]Rebecca D. Sieff, "Genesis," n.d. file F49 1873, WIZO Archives.

[121]Zev, 226.

[122]Rebecca D. Sieff, "Genesis," n.d. F49 1873, WIZO Archives.

[123]"The Early Days...I Remember," n.d., WIZO Archives.

[124]This method of raising funds was also used by the American Zionist philanthropist, Mrs. Nathan Straus, who, in 1920, rasied $18,500 which she donated to the Zionist movement. "Mrs. Strauss Gives Jewels," 18 June 1920, *New York Times.*

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Poland.[125] By 1923, WIZO had an operating budget of $85,000 US.[126] By 1924, WIZO membership was estimated to be 8,000 across 24 countries.[127]

Like Hadassah, WIZO did not confine itself to the purely educational role that Theodore Herzl had envisioned for Jewish women, but saw its role as helping nation-building. Implicit in this vision was the principle on which Szold built up Hadassah as an organization: that women should take on specific responsibilities, notably social welfare and education independently and autonomously from men. One WIZO leader explained the necessity of allowing women to operate separately from men:

> The special needs of women are better understood by women than by men. Only women understand these needs, only they feel them and try to find solutions. It is, therefore, no accident that institutions for women were established by women's organisations. Therefore, certain branches of work concerning women, which are not considered sufficiently by those men who are directing affairs of the Yishub [pre-state Jewish settlement] and the building up of Palestine, as it is not given to them to feel the needs of women; neither can they value sufficiently the influence of women on life generally and on the building up of the land particularly. Those special needs of women demanded expression and found it in the WIZO. On the other hand, the WIZO found its programme of work in them, and from the great and vital importance of this programme WIZO derived its inner strength and its prestige.[128]

WIZO envisioned a profound change in gender relations within the new nation. One of WIZO's founders, Dr. Vera Weizmann stated that:

> Our organization aims at the creation in Palestine of a new social life for women

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[125] "To the National Board of Hadassah," 23 March, 1929, Hadassah Archives, 226.

[126]"To the National Board of Hadassah," 226.

[127]"Reorganization of W.I.Z.O.," December 1926, *Hadassah News Letter*, Hadassah Archives.

[128]Maisel-Schochat , "Affiliation," file F49 1443, WIZO Archives.

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and hopes to avoid those mistakes which have been the bane of civilization in many countries. We expect to make our schools and institutions in Palestine a model for the rest of the world and we hope that from the gates of Nahalal [an agricultural training school for young women] will go forth a new generation of young women trained and self-confident, ready to take up with willing and competent hands the work which awaits them.[129]

Yet to a certain extent WIZO duplicated the work of the HNI, for example, by setting up similar baby clinics. But WIZO's involvement in agricultural training for young women reflects the degree to which the organization was bound up with assisting the broader women's movement as well as trying to carve out a place for itself as a voluntary women's organization assisting the task of nation-building. These dual goals converged in WIZO's receptivity to the ideas of Hanna Maisel, a European Jewish doctor of agronomy and the founder of the first agricultural training farm for girls and young women in Palestine in 1911. Maisel was elected to the first Elected Assembly on the Young Workers Federation List, and was ideologically committed to labour Zionism.[130] Nevertheless, she approached WIZO with the argument that women were a social sector and as such could ensure that agricultural work would retain its centrality among Jewish settlers. Under Maisel's influence, WIZO supported several agricultural institutions.[131] By 1942, WIZO operated two "Agricultural Training Schools for Girls" (at Nahalal and Ayanot), a school

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[129]Meir Zev, "Women in Zionism: An Interview with Dr. Vera Weizmann," *The New Palestine*, 21 March 1924, Hadassah Archives.

[130]Azaryahu, 13.

[131]"Memorandum I. On Women's Organizations in Palestine," May, 1929, RG7/HS/Box 31/F356, Hadassah Archives; Isaac Berkson, "Jewish Education in Palestine," *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 164 (1932), 148.

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of Domestic Science, and three Training Farms.[132]

Consistent with its commitment to teaching women agricultural skills, in 1927 WIZO established the Instruction Department which provided training and funds for women to cultivate small farms. The Instruction Department also dispatched lecturers to schools and kibbutzim. The role of the Instruction Department in attempting to fulfill the nationalist agenda of expanding the agricultural sector was given official recognition by the National Council in 1931, and in 1934 the Tel Aviv Municipality contributed funding to the Instruction Department for its educational work.[133] WIZO leaders often referred to the Instruction Department as proof that WIZO's commitment to non-partisanship endowed it with political advantages.[134]

Another instance of how providing labour skills for women dovetailed with nationalist needs was that by sponsoring agricultural training, WIZO offered the educational training that Jewish immigrant girls to Palestine required by the end of the 1930s in order to be admitted into the country by the Mandate government.[135] One method WIZO proposed to deal with the influx of young women immigrants was the establishment of a Girls' Hostel which was intended to help acclimatize new young women immigrants and teach them necessary skills. A WIZO document noted that:

> Sooner or later most of the girls are confronted with the duty of conducting a
> household, whether in town or in a colony, and it is most essential that each girl

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[132]Seraphina Pollak, "WIZO - Educator of Palestine's Women," *Hadassah News Letter*, April 1942, 20, Hadassah Archives.

[133]Herzog and Greenberg, 70.

[134]Rebecca Seiff, "Genesis," n.d., file F49 1873, WIZO Archives.

[135]Pollak, 21.

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should receive some training in rational cooking and household management from the very beginning. And even if they live singly in town on their wages, an understanding of how to make the most of them is necessary.[136]

WIZO's involvement in the absorption of young women also illustrates its close ties to WWC and Hadassah. Both WIZO and Hadassah funded training facilities which enrolled the immigrant girls, while the WWC administered the training courses.[137] WIZO's dual work in vocational and agricultural training prompted WIZO leader Romana Goodman to declare in 1930 that WIZO had brought about "national reconciliation of civic and chaluzist [pioneering] conceptions in the Palestinian construction work."[138]

The involvement of WIZO in Palestine substantially altered the vision that Szold had worked for through Hadassah, that the organizations and institutions actually located in Palestine should become independent and take the place of the international organizations as the locus of Zionist activity. Although WIZO's federation in Palestine took part in Women's Lists, WIZO's refusal to defer to a Palestine-based women's organization eventually led to its domination of the Jewish women's movement.

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[136]"Memorandum on Hostel Prepared by the Secretary for Women's Work of the P.Z.E. and Representative of the W.I.Z.O.", n.d. file RG7/HS/Box 31/f356, Hadassah Archives.

[137]Pollak, 21.

[138]Romana Goodman, "The Development of WIZO until the Present," in Hoffman, 28.

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3.6 The Working Women's Council (WWC)

Ironically, the formation of women workers into a separate labour organization intended to protect and advance their labour rights did not serve as a basis for their politicization separately from men, as did the nonsocialist Jewish women's organizations. While the WWC formed part of the Jewish women's movement in Palestine, its subordination to the larger, male-dominated Jewish general trade union, the Histadrut, meant that the members of the WWC could not participate on the women's lists of the pre-state period unless they were prepared to abandon their ties to the labour movement. This meant that by the first Knesset in 1949, the women representatives of the dominant party of the labor movement, Mapai, did not enjoy the institutional independence necessary to vote against the decision of the majority of their party. In the vote for legislation supporting women's equality, therefore, representatives of the WWC were forced to choose loyalty to the party over that of solidarity with the women's movement.

The WWC was created in reaction to the perceived exclusion of women from the new general trade union, the Histadrut, established in 1920. The Histadrut was designed to incorporate the institutions of the labour Zionist movement. Upset that the women selected to attend the founding convention of the Histadrut were selected by the political parties of the labour Zionist movement, and not by women voters, the prominent women's leader Ada Maimon declared that women would establish their own organization within the Histadrut, and that if they were not represented on the Histadrut Council, the new organization would present a separate electoral list for the subsequent council election. In response, the Histadrut leadership acceded to the demand for positions for representatives of women workers. The founding conference of the WWC was held in 1921. Forty-three delegates represented 485 women workers. This conference

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"officially established the WWC as the organizational arm of the women workers' movement within the Histadrut" and "elected an executive committee and representatives to each of the major departments within the Histadrut."[139] In 1922, thirty-seven delegates represented 600 women workers.[140] The efforts of Jewish women to integrate themselves into the labour force became a staple of Zionist rhetoric. Referring to the women of the labour Zionist movement, one observer remarked in 1927 that:

> She [the Jewish woman of the Yishuv] has as many rights within the workers organization in Palestine as any other woman in any other group or party in or outside of that country. Nor is it life's burdens at which she chafes. She is ready to share the hardships of the workman; she has as much self-sacrificing zeal as he, - she is toiling as hard and suffering as much as he. You will find her work with as great devotion in the workers' institutions as the man. You will see her in the street preparing mortar for a building in the process of erection. You will notice her laying tiles on the floor of your new house. You will meet her on the road sitting and breaking stones for the causeway. She is always ready, nay, she is happy to do all this. She did not come to Palestine merely to improve her economic condition. She came there to participate in the building up of the country, and in it to build up a working, creative community. But she came for something else besides: to build up her womanhood into humanhood, - to lead a life as independent as that of the man, to assert her individuality and give vent to a self-expression as freely as he.[141]

A number of conflicts marked the relations between the WWC and the Histadrut, although it is not clear to what extent the existence of a separate women's organization within an organization which claimed to represent the entire labor sector caused conflict between the Histadrut and the WWC. It is possible that conflict was generated by the struggle for power

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[139]Izraeli, 104.

[140]Ibid.

[141]A. S. Waldstein, *Modern Palestine: Jewish Life and Problems* (New York: Bloch Publishing Company: 1927), 188.

between two dominant labour factions, Achdut HaAvodah (United Labour) and HaPoel HaZair (the Young Worker) to which influential leaders of both the Histadrut and the WWC belonged.[142] In a 1923 Histadrut conference Achdut Haavoda leader David Ben Gurion stated that "there is *still* [Ben Gurion's emphasis] a need for a special institution for women workers which will stand guard and concern itself with the social and economic position of the female worker so that she will not be discriminated against within the community of workers."[143]

Dafna Izraeli argues that leaders of the Histadrut asserted control over the WWC in three ways. The first was that the Histadrut authorized the Histadrut Central Committee to veto unwelcome WWC nominations to Histadrut committees.[144] Several Histadrut leaders attempted to influence who assumed leadership positions in the WWC. For example, the Histadrut leadership supported Golda Meir as the WWC secretary although Meir had little interest in the specific problems of working women. A third method according to Izraeli was through asserting control over a network of local committees which the WWC had set up to represent women

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[142]The future prime ministers David Ben Gurion and Golda Meir both belonged to Achdut Haavoda (Labour Unity). Golda Meir, while no feminist, became the head of the WWC in 1927. The advocate of women's political and labour rights, Ada Maimon, was a member of HaPoel HaZair (the Young Worker). Golda Meir's lack of involvement in the women's movement is a topic which is beyond the scope of this study, but which may offer some interesting insights into the general political views of labour women.

[143]Izraeli, 107.

[144]Izraeli claims that Ada Maimon "was removed from the important immigration committee because she fought for 50 percent representation for women among those allocated immigration permits to Palestine." However, since Maimon, a member of HaPoel HaZair was replaced by a member of Achdut Haavoda, her removal may have also been a by-product of the party struggle for dominance within the Histadrut. Ibid., 109.

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workers in local councils.[145] Whereas members of the WWC such as Ada Maimon called for the women's committees to be elected directly, others argued that committee members be directly appointed by the WWC in cooperation with the local council. Izraeli argues that the WWC lost its organizational independence by 1927 at which point it "served ancillary political functions, the most important of which was mobilizing female support for the party at elections."[146]

Because of its close identification with the labour Zionist movement, and its organizational connection to the Histadrut, the WWC formed part of the pre-state women's movement in a different way from the UER, Hadassah, the HNI or WIZO. Unlike the UER, the HNI and WIZO, members and the leaders of the WWC did not participate in the Women's Lists, but remained loyal to specific parties within the labour movement. This meant that women labour leaders called for women's suffrage rights within their own parties. For example, labour movement women leaders Rachel Yanait and Manya Schochat who had co-founded the egalitarian agricultural collective Sejera were elected to the first Elected Assembly on the United Labor Party list.[147] Hanna Meisel, the leading supporter of agricultural training for women, was elected to the first Elected Assembly on the Young Workers List.[148] The WWC also never submitted a separate list of candidates for election.[149]

While the supporters of the WWC conducted their electoral activity within the boundaries

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[145]Ibid.

[146]Izraeli, 113.

[147]Azaryahu 13.

[148]Ibid.

[149]Burstein, 97.

of the labor Zionist movement, the WWC was ideologically committed to enabling women to engage in agricultural labor through "the creation of alternative institutions (agricultural training farms, women's collectives, and cooperatives) which provided women with basic needs and created a system of mutual aid and support."[150] Certain efforts brought the WWC into close contact with WIZO, especially when the latter underwrote projects which the WWC had started, but could not support.[151]

3.6 Conclusion

The first stage of the critical juncture model, the antecedent conditions, form the "base line" from which the crisis or cleavage which then sets off the critical juncture can be traced. The antecedent conditions thus provide the context for the development of the later cleavage and critical juncture. They also provide a point of comparison to the legacy: without a substantial difference between the antecedent conditions and the legacy, the critical juncture cannot be said to have taken place.

Chapter 3 argued that the pre-state women's movement's pursuit of political and legal rights and the campaign to create a social welfare infrastructure were the antecedent conditions which eventually led to the 1949-1951 critical juncture. This chapter refuted the claim that the pre-state women's movement declined after the granting of women's suffrage and following the WWC's loss of autonomy to the Histadrut, both in the mid-1920s. The relative strength of the women's movement is apparent in its continued sponsorship of the Women's Lists, which

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[150]Bernstein, *The Struggle for Equality: Urban Women Workers in Prestate Israeli Society*, (New York: Praeger, 1987), 158.

[151]Bernstein, *Struggle for Equality*, 101, 106, Berg, *Zionism's Gender*, 150.

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followed its victory of women's suffrage by winning two successive elections to the Elected

Assembly in 1931 and 1944. By expanding the definition of the pre-state women's movement to

include organizations primarily committed to social welfare organizations, such as Hadassah, the

HNI and WIZO, Chapter 3 sets the context for the emergence of organizational disagreements

within the women's movement and the cleavage between political partisanship and non-partisan

social welfare activity in the next stage of the critical juncture model.

CHAPTER 4

CLEAVAGE:

SOURCES OF INSTITUTIONAL DYNAMISM AND THE TENSION BETWEEN ELECTORAL POLITICS AND THE SOCIAL WELFARE AGENDA

In the critical juncture model, the antecedent conditions lead to a crisis or cleavage which triggers the critical juncture.[1] Chapter 2 presented the antecedent conditions, that is, the growth of a pre-state women's movement which pursued the dual goals of legal and political equality for women and also campaigned for the creation of a social welfare network. Chapter 3 examines the emergence within the women's movement of a cleavage between two models of political engagement, political partisanship and support for nonpartisan social welfare activism. This cleavage can be grasped only by reference to the conflicts which emerged in the Jewish women's movement during the 1920s and 1930s. These become evident by applying the theory of "institutional dynamism" developed by Kathleen Thelen and Sven Steinmo which focuses on understanding what prompts organizations and institutions to change.[2] The first source of institutional dynamism is the introduction of new political actors. The involvement of WIZO and Henrietta Szold on the Women's Lists of the third and fourth Elected Assemblies had dual consequences for the Lists. Szold's inability to win WIZO over to her vision of subordinating international women's organizations to those in Palestine meant that with its growing influence WIZO asserted its dominance over the women's movement.

A second source of institutional dynamism is change in political context which may cause

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[1]Collier and Collier, 33.

[2]Thelen and Steinmo, 16.

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minor institutions to augment their importance and change pre-existing policy.[3] This was certainly the case for the Women's Lists with the appointment of their top representative, Henrietta Szold, to the National Council as the head of the incipient Department of Social Service. Szold's recruitment of volunteer women for the provision of social welfare services contributed to the entrenchment of the social welfare orientation of the women's organizations. The cumulative effect of these sources of institutional dynamism, the introduction of new political actors and a change in political context led to a shift in power relations between the women's organizations which by the first Knesset resulted in the decision to embrace an apolitical stance following thirty years of successful electoral participation.

4.1 The Introduction of New Political Actors: Organizational Conflict between Henrietta Szold and WIZO

As a prominent American Zionist leader now living in Palestine, and the engineer of Hadassah's rapid expansion, Henrietta Szold was strictly committed to cultivating the growth of autonomous Jewish institutions in Palestine. Her reaction to the entry of WIZO into the field of social welfare activity in Palestine was to attempt to ensure that WIZO would not undermine the position of the existing women's organizations, particularly the HNI. By contrast, WIZO sought to expand its organizational influence, not to cultivate, as did Szold, the growth of independent women's organizations in Palestine. The new political actors in the Jewish women's movement in Palestine, Henrietta Szold and WIZO, drew the Women's Lists into three controversies which had been developing since the early 1920s.

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[3]Ibid.

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Henrietta Szold was initially optimistic about what a new Zionist women's organization might accomplish in Palestine and even allowed for an exception to be made to her strongly-held belief that any efforts at organizing in Palestine should be carried out by the Jewish population actually residing there:

> In urging the organization of the women of Palestine, as a measure precedent to the undertaking of particular work here by women, I am taking the attitude that hereafter no work should be planned and executed wholly on the outside. Of course my intention would be to substitute for the Zionist Commission [the wives of the members of the Zionist Commission] with its irresponsible methods, a body of women responsible to the womanhood of Palestine and also to the Zionist womanhood on the outside. To establish such an organization inside and outside and to establish an authoritative public opinion among Zionist women is an undertaking of ten years at least.[4]

Realizing Szold's stature as the foremost female Zionist leader, WIZO asked Szold in 1921 to assume a leading position in the organization. Although Szold thought WIZO might have potential she also foresaw disorganization among women's organizations in Palestine and feared that WIZO would squander precious resources. In a private letter, she wrote:

> I see no chance of my staying out of the International [WIZO]. I have to do the work anyhow, and I can't stand by and see them making a mess of things. They are going to get some funds, it seems, and I have such excellent opportunities for knowing what is needed here [in Palestine] that I cannot let their funds be dissipated without taking a hand.[5]

Publicly Szold declined WIZO's offer, stating that Hadassah women had already committed themselves to supporting the American Zionist Medical Unit of which she was the

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[4]"To Mrs. Danzinger," 9 June 1921, file RGZ/HS/B10/F112, Hadassah Archives.

[5]"Letter to Mrs. Danzinger," 13 January, 1921, file RGZ/HS/B10/F112, Hadassah Archives.

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head, and that therefore, Szold could not take on an additional project.[6] Szold also felt

responsible for maintaining the HNI:

> A few weeks ago we had our first annual meeting. You know that I am not prone
> to boasting, but I am not the only one to express amazement at what was
> accomplished, in concrete work undertaken on the one hand, and in the method of
> organization on the other hand. But the result presents a huge expenditure of
> effort. Based on my experience with the Jerusalem organization [the HNI] I
> realize, first, how valuable an organization of women in Palestine can be made,
> and, second, how much time will be required to accomplish it. Hence my desire to
> withdraw from the work of the International Women's Organization [WIZO].[7]

In 1921, Hadassah suggested it could coordinate operations with WIZO if WIZO were to

establish a committee in Palestine "to advise and guide the women in the Diaspora."[8] It was

Hadassah's view that the presence of former Hadassah members on the Palestine WIZO

committee would prevent financial mismanagement.[9] Szold was also reassured by the fact that, by

permitting groups of Zionist women living outside Palestine to finance and retain responsibility for

specific projects in Palestine, WIZO approved of the Hadassah model of management. She wrote:

> I need not remind you that during all these seventeen years I have been a strong
> advocate of special responsibility for Hadassah - for women. I have lived to see
> my estimate of feminine psychology vindicated and confirmed. The Women's
> International Zionist Organization is going the Hadassah way - the women of
> South Africa do not even want to join the Women's International Zionist
> Organization, they want Kfar Yeladim Givat Ha-Moreh [a children's educational
> institution] as their very own and are fighting for it - within the Women's
> International Zionist Organization and the Romanian Zionist women as well as the

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[6]"Letter to Mrs. Danzinger," 29 August, 1920, file RGZ/HS/B10/F112, Hadassah
Archives.

[7]"Letter to Mrs. Danzinger," 9 June 1921, file RGZ/HS/B10/F112, Hadassah Archives.

[8]"Letter to Miss Szold," 6 April 1921, file RGZ/HS/B10/F112, Hadassah Archives.

[9]Ibid.

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membership in other countries are insisting upon special pieces of work.[10]

But Szold feared the effect WIZO might have on Hadassah projects by replicating

projects, diverting funds, and interfering with Hadassah's systematic plans. In 1924, Szold

warned the National Board of Hadassah that:

> The W.I.Z.O. is going about the country announcing that it has [funds] ready with
> which to start a dietetic hospital. I think for our own protection we must steal a
> march upon them, and when they announce their readiness to start it, we must be
> in a position to show that it is unnecessary, because there already is one... I did
> what I could to prevent the execution of a W.I.Z.O. plan for a school to train
> Infant Welfare Nurses. My reasons were [that] we were so situated that we had a
> complete Hospital system to fall back upon and we were training nurses at any rate
> as part of our great undertaking; while the W.I.Z.O. was going to begin again with
> the importation of teachers from abroad (England) who would not know the
> Hebrew language.[11]

Szold explicitly hoped that the HNI would become the primary Jewish women's

organization in Palestine, to which international Jewish women's organization would defer when

planning projects in Palestine. Two attempts were made to draw WIZO into closer cooperation

with the HNI. One was through a monthly publication put out by the HNI and sponsored by

Hadassah, and the other was a planned council of Jewish women's organizations which was to be

based in Palestine, and under the auspices of the HNI.

Szold was ambitious about the potential of the HNI's publication, *"Ha Isha [The Woman]*

- A Monthly Journal Devoted to the Life and Activities of Women in Palestine." Financed by

Hadassah, the HNI retained full editorial control over *Ha Isha*. After about a year the circulation

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[10]"To the National Board of Hadassah," 23 March 1929, RG/7/HS/B17/F/68B, Hadassah
Archives.

[11]"To the National Board of Hadassah," 12 September, 1924, file RG7/HS/B17/F168A,
Hadassah Archives.

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of *Ha Isha* was modest: approximately 400 subscribers in Palestine.[12] Its articles covered the range of concerns of organized Jewish women both in Palestine and affiliated with the Zionist movement, including pieces on Hebrew culture, women's legal status, the development of nursing as a new profession in Palestine, as well as an article presenting a "systematic and scientific study of household management."[13]

The circumstances surrounding the publication of *Ha Isha* offer some insight into the divergent visions Hadassah and WIZO held regarding the proper involvement of international women's organizations with organized Jewish women in Palestine. In a column announcing the publication of the journal Szold outlined its purpose and illustrated Hadassah's perspective on women's organizations in Palestine:

> Primarily it was felt that such a journal would become the organ through which the women of Palestine could become thoroughly well organized, while at the same time Zionist women all over the world would be put in touch with the Jewish women's work in Palestine. This end would be achieved through the medium of the Hebrew language, the possession of Jews everywhere, which would thus make another appeal to the Jewish woman in the Diaspora who has not yet devoted herself to its study.[14]

But in the same column Szold publicized WIZO's refusal to assist Hadassah in financing the journal.[15] Szold carefully pointed out that WIZO rebuffed Hadassah's hope that the journal "could unite all the organized Zionist women of the world with each other and then with the

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[12]"Ha-Isha – Ha Isha's Magazine of Palestine," *Hadassah News Letter*, November 1926, Hadassah Archives, 8.

[13]Ibid.

[14]Henrietta Szold, "Ha-Isha- First Women's Journal in Palestine," June 1926, *Hadassah News Letter*, Hadassah Archives.

[15]Ibid.

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women of Palestine."[16] In what was surely intended as a slight to WIZO's European membership Szold asserted that "an intimate connection has been established between the Zionist women of America and the Jewish women of Palestine."[17]

In Hadassah's view *Ha Isha* was a vital tool for educated American Zionists and Hadassah supporters of developments in Palestine, and it was also issued in English for its American audience.[18] Szold's original desire that eventually WIZO would share Hadassah's financial sponsorship of the publication quickly faded. Szold had overseen the establishment of the HNI as distinct from Hadassah in order to allow Jewish women in Palestine an independent forum, to which she hoped international women Zionists would eventually defer owing to their commitment to Zionist nation-building. WIZO, by contrast, had no such aspirations. As one WIZO leader argued, it was only logical that WIZO would have a branch in Palestine:

> [WIZO's] members who came to Palestine from Galut [Diaspora] countries, have not thereby lost their privilege to work for the Zionist idea in their way and to be members of the Women's International Zionist Organization. The aims and objects of the WIZO are also their objects and aims. Had they remained in their former countries, they would naturally be members of WIZO groups there. After coming to Palestine, they could, therefore, not do otherwise but found here a branch of the WIZO called Histadruth Arzit [WIZO Palestine] in order to fulfil their duties as an organised body and in accordance with the conditions of our country... the fact that there are branches of the WIZO in the whole of the world, gives it the right to call itself International. Also Palestine is one of the countries, and its Zionist women have the right and also the duty to recognize the WIZO and to participate in its work in a material and moral manner.[19]

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[16]Ibid.

[17]Ibid.

[18]"*Ha-Ishah-* Ha Isha's Magazine of Palestine," *Hadassah News Letter*, November 1926; *Hadassah News Letter*, August 1927, Hadassah Archives.

[19]"Affiliation- Memorandum by Mrs. Maisel-Schochat," n.d. F49 1443 CZA, 1.

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Clearly, WIZO was not interested in fostering independent women's organizations in Palestine.

Six months after Szold expressed the hope that *Ha Isha* "should become the forum for Jewish women of the whole world" the *Hadassah News Letter* presented a more sober vision of the publication, describing it as "a joint undertaking of Palestinian and American women [which] aims to assist the Jewish woman in Palestine to prepare herself for her duties in the community."[20] The journal also was criticized for being too "high-brow" which prompted the resignation of one of its editors.[21] A subsequent issue of the journal clearly showed that the journal had lowered its aspirations, advertising that, "For Palestinian readers, engrossed in immediate practical problems of child education and household management, the special articles on 'Puerperal Fever and its Prevention,' 'The Timid Child,' and 'The Nutritive Values of Fruits and Vegetables' are of special interest."[22] Eventually it appears that Szold gave up her belief in the potential of *Ha Isha* to provide an international forum for Zionist women. After 1928, she described it as a "channel of communication" which offered "an intimate knowledge of the conditions of life in Palestine."[23]

A second controversy between Szold and WIZO was generated by the HNI's inability to raise funds to support its own projects. In Szold's view the issue of financial independence was connected to principle and practicality. Since its establishment the HNI had been tied to Hadassah by virtue of the fact that its founding leaders were members of Hadassah, and because it received

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[20]"Six Months of Ha-Ishah," *Hadassah News Letter*, February, 1927.

[21]"To the National Board of Hadassah," 14 October 1928, file RG7/B17/F168A, Hadassah Archives.

[22]"Ha-Ishah," *Hadassah News Letter*, December 1928, 6.

[23]Ibid.

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sizeable subventions to support its Milk Stations and to publish Ha-Isha[24] Its other funds derived

from Palestine, and donations from Central Europe.[25]

In 1922, two years after the HNI started its operations Szold claimed that she had

stipulated to the HNI that she would assist the organization only if it were self-sufficient, that she

would not undertake to raise money from America to support it, and that its projects would have

to function without relying on support from Hadassah. This stance was typical of Szold's firm

dedication to the principle of self-reliance.[26] She continually stated

> the need of preaching the doctrine of not beginning new undertakings in Palestine
> until we have an assured income, either from the country itself or from the outside,
> to meet the fundamental needs that are enumerated in the program of the *Keren
> Ha-Yessod* [a collection fund for investment in Palestine] and for other
> undertakings already begun.[27]

Szold adamantly refused to allow the HNI to turn to Hadassah supporters for donations:

> Unless something is done to regulate the appeals from Palestine, we will have the
> most magnificent sort of a Halukah [charity] system that was ever known or there
> will be a complete break-down of all collections. One will paralyze and neutralize
> the other. Twenty and more enterprises for Palestine are competing for the public

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[24]The extent of Hadassah's financial involvement in the Infant Welfare Stations is apparent in the budget submitted to the National Board of Hadassah, September 12, 1924, file RG7/HS/B17/F168A, CZA; Letter, September 21, 1923, file RG7/HS/B17/F168A, CZA; Letter March 7, 1923, file RG7/HS/B10/F112, CZA; "Six Months of Ha Isha," *Hadassah News Letter*, Hadassah Archives.

[25]"Memorandum I On Women's Organizations in Palestine" May 1929, file RG7/HS/Box 31/F356, Hadassah Archives.

[26]Szold wrote about the HNI, "My triumph is that I do nothing - the committee must do everything, under my direction. But it's been like holding in wild horses. They have wanted to jump when they did not know how to crawl. And the chief lesson I have carried home is a co-operation with the agencies that actually exist." Lowenthal, 209.

[27]"Letter to Mrs. Felix M. Warburg," 17 May 1929, file RG7/HS/B6/F51, Hadassah Archives.

field. Even the most particularized, those which busy themselves with a single institution, resort to the publicity methods first developed and applied by the large central funds. They have as it were stolen their thunder.[28]

There were two additional reasons why Szold opposed the HNI's independent requests for donations. She argued that there was a ceiling to the amount of money which could be raised by donations and that financial mismanagement and irresponsibility on the part of voluntary organizations would alienate potential donors.[29] In Szold's view the multiplicity of organizations competing for public funding would alienate the public and torpedo efforts of the central Zionist collection agency (the Keren HaYesod). Szold favored a systematic approach for "a solution of the social welfare problem" which would reduce the demand for private donations from individual organizations.[30] Additionally, Szold argued that if women's organizations solicited money independently of a coordinating bureau, funds would be committed to ill-conceived projects would squander funds and alienate the goodwill of American donors.[31] Szold's fear rested on the fact that American donors usually consulted her before committing funds to any particular project, and in several instances discovered that their donations were being used for entirely different purposes. In one instance an American donor was informed that her donation was to help prevent the closure of a care center for infants, but discovered that in fact her money was used to buy

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[28]"Letter to Rose Vitales," 12 Feb. 1931, file RG7/HS/Box 12/F127, Hadassah Archives.

[29]"Letter to Gertrude Rosenblatt," 20 February, 1931, Hadassah Archives.

[30]"Letter to Rose Viteles," 12 Feb. 1931, file RG7/HS/Box 12/F127, Hadassah Archives; Letter to Rose Viteles, 20 February 1931, RG7/Box 12/F127, Hadassah Archives.

[31]"Letter to Mrs. Wise," 24 February, 1931, RG7/Box 12/F127, Hadassah Archives; "Memorandum II: On the Plan Submitted by the Women's League for Palestine," May 1919, Hadassah Archives; Letter to Mrs. Jacobs, February 25, 1931, RG7/Box 12/F127, Hadassah Archives.

additional land for an entirely new institution.[32] Szold argued that this reflected poorly on her as well as on Jewish social welfare work in Palestine. She recommended to the National Board of Hadassah in New York the setting up a committee in Palestine which would coordinate appeals to American donors:

> One point of strategic value might be this: that your Committee find out what funds come into Palestine from America for various institutions, send you an account of such American interests in Palestine in the social service and welfare field, you publish the information in discreet form in the News Letter, and send marked copies of the News Letter to the donors in America. Each account would be headed by an introductory note explaining the functions of the Committee. In that way the Committee will become known as being in the field of social welfare and social welfare work, and at least individuals...would know to whom to turn.[33]

But lack of funds meant that the HNI was incapable of maintaining control over its projects and it was forced to surrender control of two of the Milk Stations to Hadassah in 1922. An attempt to open a third station resulted again in control being handed to Hadassah. In Szold's view it was imperative that the HNI act as a federation:

> Only a common fund controlled by the central executive committee, and disbursed to the branches after a consideration and comparison of all needs, will bind your branches together. At the start such a system may mean that all branches suffer equally, none getting the maximum attainable. In time it will mean that all branches will benefit to the extent of their legitimate needs.[34]

The HNI also struggled to contend with the presence of WIZO which as a well-financed organization with an international membership presented a threat to the HNI. On one hand, the

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[32]"To the Executive Committee of the Histadrut Nashim Ibriot," March 1, 1931, RG7/Box 12/127, Hadassah Archives.

[33]"Letter to Mrs. Edward Jacobs, President, National Board of Hadassah," February 25 1931, RG7/Box 12/F127, Hadassah Archives.

[34]"To the Executive Committee of the Histadruth Nashim Ibriot," 1 March, 1931, RG7/Box 12/127, 3.

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HNI feared that WIZO was encroaching on the HNI's volunteer worker base and on its ideas: the Milk Stations received such a positive response from the population that WIZO began to duplicate them as early as 1922. In 1923, WIZO opposed HNI plans to establish an HNI center in Tel Aviv because it "feared there would be competition between the organizations for active workers."[35]

Despite Szold's unwillingness to provide the HNI with financial backing from Hadassah sources, Szold supported the idea of drawing together local and international Jewish women's organizations, a goal which she had sought, but failed to achieve with the publication of Ha-Ishah. In one public letter to Hadassah Szold suggested that the multitude of women's organizations active in Palestine (the HNI, the UER, the WWC, WIZO and Hadassah) suggested "the need for an inclusive organization of Jewish womanhood in Palestine."[36] In 1924, the HNI issued an invitation to local and international women's organizations to discuss the possibility of establishing a Jewish Women's Council.[37] The proposed council would try:

> 1) to co-ordinate women's activities in Palestine and serve as a bureau of information on the needs of Palestine to Jewish women abroad who desire to engage in some enterprise in Palestine looking to the promotion of the well-being of the people of the country; 2) to administer such new enterprises as may be started abroad and entrusted to it; 3) to make propaganda for funds for the existing societies and for further undertakings.[38]

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[35]Herzog and Greenberg, 19, 29, 35.

[36]"Miss Szold's Seventh Letter," *Hadassah News Letter*, June 1924, 8, Hadassah Archives.

[37]Henrietta Szold, "Palestine - Two Conferences," *Hadassah News Letter*, October 1926, Hadassah Archives.

[38]Letter to Miss Ruth Cohen, 6 September 1925, file RG7/HS/B17/F168A, Hadassah Archives.

WIZO rejected the same proposal at its 1925 conference in Vienna.[39] Szold suggested that although WIZO "welcomed the attempt to secure harmonious and efficient cooperation between the women interested in the Jewish homeland inside and outside of Palestine" it nevertheless "rejected the plan proposed on account of certain details in the definition of functions and the province of the [council] and its relations to the outside organizations."[40] To some degree WIZO's refusal to allow the HNI to affiliate derived from the influence of Szold, whom WIZO consulted on the matter. Szold opposed the HNI's request to WIZO on the grounds that affiliation would undermine the HNI's status as an independent Palestinian Jewish women's organization. She wrote that there should be "a body of women responsible to the womanhood of Palestine and also to Zionist womanhood on the outside" but that such an effort required at least ten years of work.[41]

Attempts were made by Hadassah and WIZO to smooth over hostile relations between the organizations. In one meeting Szold, acting as "messenger," met with the Executive Board of WIZO to discuss the reasons why attempts to coordinate activity had been unsuccessful until that point. While the WIZO executive suggested that both organizations only needed to agree not to encroach on each others' projects, Szold argued that the real problem lay in WIZO's resistance to recognizing the authority and expertise of the Zionist Executive in Palestine as the proper source for information regarding which projects the international women's organizations should

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[39]Henrietta Szold, "Palestine - Two Conferences," *Hadassah News Letter*, October 1926, Hadassah Archives.

[40]Ibid.

[41]"Henrietta Szold, "Letter to Mrs. Danziger," 9 June 1921, file RGZ/HS/B10/F112, Hadassah Archives.

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support.[42] Szold also recommended that, in order to avoid duplicating specific projects (such as infant welfare stations, and educational training centers), the two women's organizations should agree to transfer funds committed for specific purposes, and that each organization should exchange representatives.[43]

Despite WIZO's refusal to participate, the HNI formed a Jewish women's council of some of the smaller women's social welfare and health care associations in Palestine, as well as the UER.[44] However, Szold recognized that the council's "purpose was not fulfilled" because the Working Women's Council also refused to send representatives.[45]

After meeting with Szold in 1929 and 1930, WIZO undertook to support Szold's goal of raising a budget to support Palestinian education. This decision was important on two fronts. WIZO's commitment to raise financial support for education signaled that, as with other social welfare fields, education had become a special responsibility of organized women. In addition, it represented affiliation between two of the main actors of the Jewish women's movement, WIZO on the one hand and Szold, as the founder of Hadassah and the HNI, on the other. A WIZO publication predicted hopefully that although "unity has not been established" eventually there would emerge a "truly and exceptionally united, inclusive world organization of Zionist

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[42]"Letter from Miss Szold," 21 December 1929," file RG7/HS/Box 31/f356, Hadassah Archives.

[43]Ibid.

[44]"Memorandum I: On Women's Organizations in Palestine," May 1929, Hadassah Archives, 2.

[45]Ibid.

women."[46]

Yet WIZO's decision to lend support to Szold in her position as holding the portfolio for education did not help the HNI's endeavor to create closer ties to WIZO. Since WIZO continued to refuse to participate in the HNI's proposal of a Jewish women's council, the HNI developed a new plan to amalgamate itself with WIZO.

This proposal generated several different responses. The Palestinian Federation of WIZO saw affiliation with the HNI as consistent with the close cooperation WIZO had enjoyed with the WWC and a solution to rivalry and duplication of the work of the two organizations.[47] But the international organization was severely split over the question. Opponents argued that by affiliating, "the main focus [of WIZO] would be shifted from agricultural training to the non-productive, non-economic sphere of social welfare."[48] This camp included Hadassah Samuel (WIZO leader), Hanna Meisel (the architect of WIZO's agricultural program), Ada Maimon (the leader of the WWC), and Anne Jaffe all of whom resigned their positions on the grounds that "budgetary preference had to be given to agricultural training over every other sphere and because they feared that the taking over of the Baby Home and Creches would cause a diversion from this policy."[49] Those in favour of affiliation argued that the HNI's social welfare work was as important for women as it was for "Zionist upbuilding" and therefore consistent with WIZO's

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[46]Hoffman, 17.

[47]"Affiliation" by Mrs. Maisel-Schochat, n.d. file F49 1443 3, CZA.

[48] Bertha Gudansky and Sylvia Satten Banin, "A History of the WIZO, 1920-1970," file F49 2253, CZA.

[49]Hadassah Samuel had rejoined by the following conference. Gudansky and Satten Banin, file F49 2253, CZA.

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platform.[50] They viewed the existence of different women's associations and organizations as counter-productive to the Zionist movement. These members argued that WIZO should constitute the main center of the women's movement in Palestine and in Europe simply by virtue of its very magnitude; that is, in terms of its ability to fund-raise and its membership base. If this meant branching out from agricultural work into numerous areas of activity, these supporters were in favour of doing so. Propaganda directed to a European audience stated that:

> It is necessary that the great women's organization that is WIZO listen to the voice of the country, to its manifold demands, to its manifold problems– and not close itself off to essential requirements, so that fulfilling them must remain in the distant future. That they do not tolerate the splitting up of the Jewish women's world, that they oppose through example and leadership the constitution of different groups. WIZO must and should remain the representative of women's work in Palestine before the world; it must study the total complex of questions, comprehend them and deal with them through initiatives. It should not conceive of the problems of Palestine as first, second or third ranked questions; it should know that the work of social recovery is the basis for educational work, that legal weaknesses evoke dangers which it should direct itself against, that besides the hundreds in the agricultural economy, still thousands of urban women await its efforts – it should know all that and, this is most important, do much.[51]

In another publication, WIZO leader Hadassah Samuel stated:

> If we look forward, we forsee a day--and it will depend on our own efforts-- a day when there will be only a single, worldwide organization in which Jewish women from all countries, who not only love service for the Palestine of the past but also the Palestine of the future with its unlimited possibilities, will come together in a unique, strong and mighty unity.[52]

The discussion of merger between the HNI and the Palestine federation of WIZO illustrates the main concerns of both organizations, but in particular those of the HNI which was

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[50]Nanny Margulies-Auerbach, "Harmony in Struggle and Work," in Hoffman, 80.

[51]Ibid.

[52]Lady Herbert Samuel, in Hoffman, 17.

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about to be absorbed into the larger international organization. As part of its terms the HNI stipulated that it was not to become a duplicate of the Palestine Federation of WIZO, but an integral part.[53] The HNI's major fear was that WIZO would deny the HNI delegate on the WIZO executive the position of representing social work in the Jewish settlement in Palestine. While the Palestine Federation of WIZO offered assurances that the position of representing social work would be given to the HNI it would not formally guarantee this promise. Another point of contention concerned the process by which the newly merged organizations were to embark on new projects. While the HNI assumed that its local branches would preserve their decision-making authority, the Palestine Federation of WIZO informed the HNI that the WIZO executive located in Europe issued directives based on information derived from its constituents, so that local branches were not independent.[54]

Ultimately five conditions for affiliation between the HNI and WIZO were stipulated. The first was that the HNI change its name to Histadruth Nashim, Palestine Federation of the Women's International Zionist Organization. The new organization was to be given limited rights of representation at WIZO meetings: three representatives at the Biennial Conference, two on the WIZO Council and one for the Palestine Executive of WIZO. The Histadruth Nashim was permitted to collect funds beyond what was allocated to them in the WIZO budget, but it was not allowed to solicit funds from outside Palestine. Its budget was to be submitted to WIZO for

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[53]"The HNI Response to WIZO's Proposal of Merger," n.d. F49 1449, CZA.

[54]"Minutes between the HNI and the Palestine Federation of WIZO," 30 April, 1931 (in Hebrew), F49 1443, CZA.

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"confirmation" and it was to keep a special reserve fund.[55]

In exchange for affiliation with WIZO the HNI agreed to surrender its independence. In agreeing to give financial support to the HNI, WIZO won for itself the role of representing Palestine women's interests in the Diaspora, which Szold had so adamantly insisted remain with a local women's organization. WIZO's demand that the HNI cease soliciting funds abroad was satisfied. In exchange WIZO agreed to support two of the HNI's operations (the Tel Aviv Day Creche and the Jerusalem Baby Home) and to create an Advisory Council "representing the women of Palestine."[56] This meant that the HNI could continue to function but that it was no longer independent. WIZO provided the budget for some of the HNI's operations but also became co-manager of those same operations, and demanded the same financial accountability from the HNI (in terms of monthly financial statements) as its WIZO operations. In addition, the HNI lost its right to approach the Diaspora for donations, although it retained its right to solicit funds in Palestine.[57] Its budget was now subject to approval by the Conference of WIZO, and WIZO stipulated that the HNI keep a reserve amount. Finally the HNI was to "assist in the verbal and written propaganda of the WIZO among the Jewish women of the Galuth [Diaspora]."[58]

These conditions fulfilled Szold's fears regarding the outcome of affiliation between the

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[55]"Terms of Affiliation of the Histadruth Nashim Ibriot to the WIZO," n.d., F49 1444, CZA.

[56]"Minutes of the Joint Meeting of the Palestine WIZO Executive with the Histadruth Nashim Ivriot," 10 May, 1930, F49 1455, CZA.

[57]"Joint Statement, WIZO/HNI" n.d. file F49 1445, CZA; Letter from WIZO to HNI, 11 April 1930, file F49 1445, CZA.

[58]Ibid.

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HNI and WIZO. While the HNI had always relied on financial support from international

donations, first under Hadassah and later under WIZO, it had enjoyed the freedom to choose

which projects to support and how to allocate its funds. If Szold had berated the organization for

failing to build up its own network of supporters, under the terms of the affiliation it had entirely

surrendered its ability to solicit support outside Palestine, consequently severely limiting the funds

it could hope to raise beyond WIZO's financial support. The financial constriction, in addition to

the stipulation that WIZO approve the Histadruth Nashim's "yearly programme" further ensured

the curtailment of the Histadruth Nashim's autonomy.[59] Szold's vision of international Zionist

women's organizations taking direction from the HNI in Palestine was now reversed: the HNI

now took its orders from WIZO headquarters in London.

WIZO members were dismayed by Szold's opposition. The organization viewed

affiliation as a means to avoiding the pitfalls caused by the multiplicty of social welfare

organizations of which Szold had warned. It rationalized its rejection of Szold's programme for

Palestinian women's organizations leading the Zionist women of the Diaspora. One WIZO leader

asserted that:

> It is not clear at all why such affiliation should, as in the opinion of Miss Szold,
> cause overlapping, bad organisation and unclear relations. We are, on the
> contrary, of the opinion that there is cause for such fears if no affiliation takes
> place. For, then, there will be rivalry, and lack of mutual information on the part
> of organisations working on the same field. This can be avoided by affiliation. It is
> true that affiliation will give them certain rights, but will also charge them with
> certain duties, and will bring about solidarity and collective responsibility. It is to
> be hoped that affiliation will create the possibilities of systematic work which will
> be a duty of all organisations. It will thus do away with overlapping and bring
> about cooperation, and avoid the creation of parallel institutions and waste of

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[59]"Joint Statement, WIZO/HNI" n.d. file F49 1445, CZA; Letter from WIZO to HNI, 11
April 1930, file F49 1445, CZA.

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means and energies.[60]

Yet the HNI did not immediately accept the terms of the agreement. It based its delay on the fact that the Advisory Council which was stipulated by the terms of affiliation had not yet been established. The WIZO executive in London issued a stern rebuke to the HNI:

> we are amazed to learn that because of the mere technicality of the Advisory Council not being formed, you feel justified in breaking every one of our agreements. You have not submitted either budgets or audited accounts, nor monthly statements to us. You have not only received sums of money from the Galuth [Diaspora] but have actually not informed the WIZO treasury of these sums, thus inflating the budget beyond £3,000 without our knowledge, except as we happen to hear it indirectly. You have not signed the joint statement for propaganda - on the grounds that the Council has not been formed. You have held meetings for the Baby Home, and have not invited the WIZO representative because these were meetings of the praesidium. We remind you that WIZO is entitled to fifty percent representation on all committees of the Creche and the Baby Home, and would call attention to the fact that our representative, Mrs. Roth, whom you failed to invite to the Meetings, secured for you the two houses in Talpiot, which WIZO holds in trust for you.[61]

The London executive warned that unless the HNI submitted "an audited account of income and expenditure" for its institutions, as well as a "monthly budget regularly presented" that WIZO "shall be reluctantly obliged" to reconsider its relations with the organization.[62] A joint meeting between representatives of the two organizations managed to smooth over but not quite settle the argument. Although the HNI apologized for delaying its signing of the Joint Agreement, and asked for assistance from London concerning how to raise further funds, it argued also that the

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[60]"Affiliation- Memorandum by Mrs. Maisl-Schochat," n.d. F49 1443 CZA, p.2.

[61]"Letter to the HNI from the WIZO Executive," London, 11 April, 1930, file F49 1445, CZA, 3.

[62]Ibid.

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Joint Agreement had hindered its ability to raise money for social work projects.[64] In further

correspondence it returned to financial details, the issue of the failure to set up Advisory Council

and reiterated the need to set up a council of women's organizations with the participation of

WIZO and the Council of Working Women.[65]

The formal affiliation between WIZO and the HNI was affirmed at the Sixth WIZO

Conference in June 1931 in Basle. At the same conference, WIZO affirmed its commitment to

agricultural training, and its willingness to work with the WWC. This in turn caused the

resignation of a number of leaders who objected to the direction of finances away from WIZO's

operations.[66] By 1933, the requirements of affiliation between the HNI and WIZO had been

ironed out. In 1933, the Palestine federation of WIZO and the HNI merged to form the

Organization of Zionist Women (Histadrut Nashim Zioniot -HNZ). The terms of affiliation

reiterated those of the previous merger, and affirmed that the organization's goals were the

"preparation of women for life and work in Palestine" and to engage in "social welfare work for

mother and child."[67] By this date the HNZ presented a slightly different account of how the

original HNI had come into existence. In a report to the WIZO executive the president of the

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[64]"Histadruth Nashim," December 3, 1930, F49, 1445, CZA.

[65]Histadruth Nashim Ivriot, January 5, 1931, F49 1443, CZA.

[66]These were Rebecca Sieff, Edith Eder, Miriam Marks, and Miriam Sacher from the London Executive, and Shoshana Persitz, Sari Berger, and Hedwig Gellner from the Palestine WIZO Executive. This document states that Kisch and Smoira also resigned from the Palestine Executive, but a year earlier Smoira had been on the negotiating body of the HNI From "Internal Conflicts" in Gudansky and Banin, file F49 2253, CZA.

[67]"Draft Statute of the Histadruth Nashim Zionoth (the Zionist Women's Organization of Palestine) the Palestine Federation of the W.I.Z.O." 26 May 1933, F49 1446 CZA.

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HNZ Esther Smoira suggested that the real purpose of the HNI was actually to organize and mobilize Jewish women in Palestine, but in order to reach them the organization claimed to better the social welfare of women and children.[68]

Yet the HNI's original proposal to form a council representing women's organizations within Palestine (the rejection of which had eventually led the HNI to seek incorporation into WIZO) was not abandoned. In 1936 the Council of the Jewish Women's Organizations of Palestine was established. Its members included representatives of the HNZ (the successor of the HNI), the WWC, the Palestine Council of Hadassah, and the Women's Equal Rights League. Notably, WIZO declined to send representatives.[69]

This instance of institutional dynamism in which new political actors, (Henrietta Szold and WIZO), change existing institutions reveals that while the women's organizations continued coordinated social welfare activity, an underlying development was taking shape. This was the loss of organizational autonomy by the HNI which left the UER as the only autonomous politically active independent women's organization in pre-state Israel.[70] This development had profound consequences for the Women's Lists of the third (1931) and fourth (1944) Elected Assemblies, which themselves were subject to a second source of institutional dynamism.

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[68]Smoira, 2.

[69]"Palestine Council of Hadassah," Lotta Levensohn, *Hadassah News Letter*, February 1937, Hadassah Archives, 21.

[70]The Working Women's Council (WWC) was allied with the labour Zionist movement and the Histadrut.

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4.2 Changes in Political Context:
The National Council and the New Importance of the Women's Lists

In addition to the introduction of new political actors, a second source of institutional dynamism is a change in political context. Thelen and Steinmo suggest that exogenous political change may cause institutions to become more politically influential.[71] But while Szold's appointment to the National Council as the head of the Women's List theoretically should have endowed the Women's Lists with greater political visibility, little political advantage accrued to the women's movement.

Formal recognition of women's political rights in 1926 eliminated only one of the issues on the political agenda of the Women's Lists which ran for the first and second Elected Assemblies. Two other issues remained outstanding after 1926. First, the rights of women to vote and run for election were not ensured by the Elected Assembly's recognition of women's suffrage to that body. The second issue concerned the extensive legal discrimination to which women were subjected as a result of the approval by the Mandate government of the authority of the religious establishment over the area known as family law, which governed marriage, divorce, inheritance, alimony, and guardianship. These two areas constituted one half of the political agenda of the Women's Lists which ran for the third and fourth Elected Assemblies. The other half was devoted to establishing a system of social welfare which was to fall under the aegis of the autonomous Jewish structure, rather than remain the responsibility of the women's organizations. It was for this purpose that Henrietta Szold took over the stewardship of the Women's Lists.

The women's organization which was most vocal regarding religious discrimination

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[71]Thelen and Steinmo, 16.

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against women under religious law was the UER. The British Mandate had preserved the "millet" system of the Ottoman Empire whereby each religious community was permitted to administer its own religious law. This meant that in specific matters, Jewish women were subject to the religious establishment's administration of Jewish law. In addition to fighting for women's suffrage during the early 1920s the UER also set up a chain of legal assistance offices in which women were provided with free legal advice. In its political campaign the UER focussed upon six areas which it argued required redress.

First, the UER opposed the Inheritance Law, which prohibited widows from inheriting property from their spouses and stipulated that women living separately from their husbands were not entitled to claim property acquired during marriage. The UER claimed that the Inheritance Law forced women into destitution or dependency upon their children for support. Second, the UER protested the lack of legal age of marriage, claiming that the lack of legal restrictions sanctioned child brides.[72] Third, Jewish law prohibits a married woman not living with her husband (regardless of whether her husband has disappeared, deserted her, or married another woman) from re-marrying. Under Jewish law a Jewish man in similar circumstances is permitted to re-marry. The UER argued that this law not only discriminated against women, but it left women in a state of limbo in which they could not settle their marital status without the consent of their husband, who, if not absent, might demand financial payment in exchange for permission to divorce. Fourth, the UER campaigned to tighten restrictions on parental support. Its argument was based upon cases it had documented of severe child poverty resulting from the refusal of

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[72] In 1937 the legal age was raised to fifteen which the UER argued was still unacceptably low.

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fathers to support children. Fifth, although the Ashkenazi religious establishment outlawed bigamy, Sephardi custom permitted it. Since each community was guided by its own Chief Rabbi, bigamy was prevalent among the Sephardi population. The UER called upon the Elected Assembly to pass legislation outlawing the right of any religious community to permit bigamy. Sixth, Jewish law stipulated that a widow with an unmarried brother-in-law is not entitled to re-marry unless a ceremony (*Halitza*) is performed by her brother-in-law, in which he repudiates his right to marry her. This custom led to two complications, first that it could be used to blackmail women into paying for ceremony to be performed, or, if the brother was under age thirteen, a widow be forced to wait to re-marry until the brother came of age. The UER argued that this custom was commonly used to pressure women financially and should not be tolerated in the new Jewish polity.[73]

The UER's expertise in women's legal status was widely recognized. In 1927, the Mandate Government consulted the UER regarding the administration of religious law in the Jewish self-government. The UER recommended that a court system parallel to the religious establishment be set up so that women would have the option of having their cases heard under civil law. However, their report was not implemented, and the British Mandate reaffirmed the authority of the religious courts.[74]

As the original backer of the Women's Lists in the first two Elective Assemblies, the UER was joined in the campaign for the third (1931) Elective Assemblies by the HNI and the Women's List. The main reason for Szold's representation on the Women's List was to gain a seat on the

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[73]Azaryahu, 47-55.

[74]Adifa, 84-90.

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National Council, the steering body of the Elective Assembly. By 1931, Szold already had considerable experience on the highest administrative bodies of the Zionist movement through her administration of the Department of Health and Welfare of the World Zionist Organization, through which, according to Michael Brown, she exerted "a major impact on Palestine education."[75] In 1927, the National Council requested Szold to head the Department of Education and Health. This position required her to set up departments of health and education, although she argued that the frequent absences of her colleagues meant she was often responsible for "directing the political work and conducting negotiations with the Palestine government, and adjusting its relations with the Yishuv."[76]

In 1931, the National Council appointed Szold, who had stood at the head of the Women's List in the election to the Elected Assembly of that year, as the head of the Department of Social Service. This marked the "beginning of central quasi-government, tax-supported, professional social work" in Israel.[77] In Szold's view, her recruitment into the National Council confirmed the apolitical character of her work setting up a social welfare system. A place on the Council was made available to Szold by a Labour Party representative resigning from a seat. Szold wrote that she was now "the member holding the balance."[78] Szold was offered a seat on the National Council in order to establish a Department of Social Service which would transfer

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[75]Michael Brown, *The Israeli-American Connection: Its Roots in the Yishuv, 1914-1945*, (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1996), 147.

[76]Lowenthal, 222.

[77]Eliezer David Jaffe, *Child Welfare in Israel* (Praeger: New York, 1982), 18.

[78]Lowenthal, 227.

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the responsibility for social welfare provision from the women's organizations to the new

government, a position until her resignation in 1939.[79] The first session of the Elected Assembly

which passed a resolution in 1931 approving the establishment of the Department of Social

Service, which was not intended "to engage in actual Social Service work" but "to influence and

assist the *Kehillot* [Jewish Community] to organize Local Bureaus, which will carry out the

concrete tasks devolving upon a Social Service system."[80]

Setting up a social service network under the auspices of the National Council was central

to Szold's vision of how to carry out the process of establishing the Jewish national home in

Palestine. Szold was firmly committed to facilitating the organic growth of institutions in

Palestine, both governmental and voluntary. For Hadassah, as Szold stated in one *Hadassah*

News Letter:

> The important thing is not to enumerate our interests...The important thing is for
> us all to understand that we are beginning to make of ourselves a Palestinian
> organization as we have been an American Organization, and that the process of
> acclimatization of Hadassah in Palestine must go on at an accelerated pace.[81]

She opposed what she viewed as the tendency of political actors to expect unstinting monetary

support from Diaspora Jewry for projects that were not financially sound, or which were

inattentive to the actual requirements of life in Palestine. One of the major complaints of Szold

and her allies working in administering the Hadassah Medical Organization during the 1920's was

that the Zionist administration in Palestine did little to foster the organization of a health care

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[79]"Department of Social Service: Waad Haleumi of the Kenneset Yisrael, Palestine,"
January, 1932, file RG7/HS/Box 12/Folder 127, CZA.

[80]Ibid.

[81]"Miss Szold's Seventh Letter," June 1924, *Hadassah News Letter*.

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system. Reflecting on the work of Health Committee of the Zionist Organization, a representative of the Zionist Executive complained that:

> The task of the committee has been a difficult one. It has endeavored to bring about cooperation and coordination on the part of institutions without infringing on their independence. It attempted to ramify the health activities in the country without making the burden of the Zionist Organization heavier than it already is. And despite the prevalent tendencies to diverge rather than converge our work and, furthermore, despite the unfavorable legacies of independent, and oftentimes haphazard activities in the past five years, a few men in the Va'ad Habriuth [Health Committee] succeeded in establishing alongside of the Zionist administration a nucleus for mutual discussion and enlightenment on matters pertaining to the furtherance of a unified and efficient health service in Palestine.[82]

Szold's plan for the operation of the Department of Social Welfare followed strict principles of efficiency. She advocated rationalization and organization so that the more than 445 social welfare organizations active in Mandate Palestine could be coordinated.[83] Szold argued that without central organization, organizations competed over funding, provided overlapping or uncoordinated services, and were entirely unregulated by the ruling authority.[84] Szold envisioned the professionalization of social work. She planned to establish social work departments in Haifa, Jaffa-Tel Aviv and Jerusalem in which a "trained social worker" would be employed.[85] In 1932, Szold established "local social welfare agencies," and in 1933, the Social Service Department of the self-governing body of the pre-state Israel, the Knesset Yisrael, was founded, and a school for

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[82]Dr. A. Katznelson, "Our Health Policy: Palestine's Medical Situation and its Relation to the Government," December 2 1927, *The New Palestine*, Hadassah Archives.

[83]"Jewish Community of Palestine General Council (Va'ad Leumi) Department of Social Service" file RG7/HS/Box 12/Folder 127, 6, CZA..

[84]Ibid.

[85]Lowenthal, 228.

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social work was founded in 1934.[86] Joseph Neipris emphasizes the importance of this latter

institution since it was established "in a community which was essentially rejective of the idea of

social assistance and which identified social work with traditional charity."[87]

Szold encountered considerable political opposition to setting up the Department of Social

Service. Szold argued that the political parties operating within the Jewish self-government had

little understanding of what a social welfare system actually meant. She claimed that:

> there is every sort of social service agencies functioning in Palestine today except -
> and what a big exception it is! - family case work, ordinary relief. Relief of the
> destitute is still a matter of hysteria. People must beg. There is no center in any
> community to which to refer them with the assurance that their case will be
> lovingly investigated and dealt with. The result is that, as I am convinced, much
> money is spent and little is accomplished. To a certain extent this problem has not
> been tackled because there are too many persons still in the Palestinian community
> who consciously and subconsciously hold that charity must be spontaneous. In
> other words, the people who spurn the use of the word charity and talk much of
> justice have not yet come to realize that the organization of charity is the only
> approach we have yet found to justice.

Szold's struggle to gain acceptance of systematic social welfare was not isolated. In the late

1920s in an article published in a German newspaper, the social work pioneer Helene H. Thon

also complained of the destructive results of the religious system of charity which she argued

"creates permanent dependency among its recipients and prevents them from doing anything

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[86]Brown 150, 153. For a personal account of Szold's school of social work see Sylva
Gelber, *No Balm in Gilead: A Personal Retrospective of Mandate Days in Palestine* (Ottawa:
Carleton Press, 1989).

[87]Joseph Neipris, *Social Welfare and Social Services in Israel: Policies, Programs and
Current Events,* (Jerusalem: Hebrew University, 1981), 11.

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about their situation."[88] Likewise, throughout her term, Szold was conscious of the lack of understanding of the need to create a system of social services, and under funding for her department.[89] Szold constantly complained about opposition to the creation of a modern social service system. She deplored the "resistance to technically trained forces" and the "partisan spirit" which viewed the provision of social services as the prerogatives of political parties seeking political support, or, negatively, as philanthropy.[90]

The "first recognition" Szold felt the National Council gave her and her department came in 1934 when it assisted her work in Haifa. She claimed another victory in September 1935 when she convinced the Zionist Congress to establish a Committee on Social Service.[91] Acceptance of the field of social service was also manifested in the growing numbers who attended Social Service Conferences; Szold noted that the first Social Service conference in 1933 was attended by fifteen people, the second in 1934 by sixty, the third, in 1935, by 220, and the fourth, in 1936 was attended "by over three hundred persons, many men among them, and also many from among the Labour Party, a recognition of the fact that the work is being done to their satisfaction, not

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[88]Frank M. Loewenberg, "Documents from the History of Social Welfare in Eretz Yisrael: Helene H. Thon (1886-1953) on Social Work in Palestine in the 1920's," *Journal of Social Work and Policy in Israel* 2 (1989).

[89]She wrote that "even if funds could be found, the sentiment of the community has not yet sufficiently developed on this aspect of the administration of social service." Lowenthal, 228. On Szold's views about the work of setting up the department of social services see letters in Lowenthal, 230-38; 240.

[90]Lowenthal, 267; 249.

[91]Ibid., 266, 283.

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philanthropically, but constructively."[92]

As the head of the Department of Social Service, Szold created and headed a Council of

Social Welfare, made up of seventeen of the most important social welfare organizations:

> The Bureau of Information of the Council of Social Welfare issued a detailed register of 445 local welfare institutions and supplied information to inquirers both in the country and abroad. The Council also worked out a plan for organizing committees for social work in the local Communities; some such Committees are already active.[93]

Szold planned that the Department of Social Service would carry out "the organization

and direction of the Social Service Bureaus of the *Kehillot* [Jewish Community] and the

development of sources of information on the status of the social service in Palestine for

educational, publicity, and propaganda purposes."[94] Szold also envisioned setting up within her

Department an Advisory Council which was to be:

> composed of representatives of all the local organizations, institutions, and societies bearing a welfare character. The functions of the Council were to be fourfold: laying down the social service policy of the community with a view to encouraging co-operation and avoiding duplication in service, passing on new projects, insistence upon the information service conveyed by the idea of a Social Service Exchange, and developing a financial policy that should, in the course of a year or two, lead to united drives.[95]

For Hadassah, Szold's seat on the National Council as the head of the Department of

Social Service was a signal that the pre-state community would begin to assume more and more

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[92]Lowenthal, 295.

[93]Burstein, 150.

[94]"Jewish Community of Palestine General Council (Va'ad Leumi) Department of Social Service" file RG7/HS/Box 12/Folder 127, 7, CZA.

[95]Ibid., 10.

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organizational responsibilities for the social and health care services which Hadassah had established, consequently diminishing Hadassah's administrative work. Hadassah's response to this development was to assert that its organizational justification now lay in an entirely new area, that of "Youth Aliya," that is, evacuating Jewish children and youth from Europe and resettling them in Palestine.[96] But while Hadassah claimed support for the National Council's increased role in health care and social service, it also suggested that the latter body was not entirely equipped to implement its plans. In 1935, the National President of Hadassah, Rose G. Jacobs stated:

> It must be pointed out, however, that the organized Yishuv [pre-state settlement], as represented in the Va'ad Leumi [National Council] is not sufficiently strong nor can it muster the maximum response of all the elements in Palestine for the support of fundamental needs. Perhaps Hadassah's earnest plan for the transfer of its Preventive Health activities will hasten the organization of a centralized and cohesive Yishuv. In any event the time has come for Hadassah to insist on the Yishuv's taking responsibilities which it should and can assume.[97]

Szold's tenure on the National Council as the head of the Department of Social Service reinforced the expanding focus of the women's movement on social welfare rather than political and legal equality. As the head of the Department of Social Service, Szold envisioned the organizations of the women's movement providing the voluntary staff of the new system. From its beginnings half of the members of the Advisory Council of the Department of Social Service were women affiliated to women's organizations of the pre-state women's movement.[98] For the women's movement, Szold's appointment to the National Council did not signify that the

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[96]Jacobs, "Looking Ahead," 7; "Von der WIZO," 3 May 1946, *Israelitisches Wochenblatt*.

[97]Ibid.; *Hadassah News Letter*, November 1935, Hadassah Archives, 7.

[98]These were: Mrs. A. Idelson, Rose Ginsberg, Dr. Helena Kagan, Rachel Kagan, May Mereminsky, M. Skibbin, Helen Kliger, Rachel Rubashoff, Helena Hanna Thon and, of course, Henrietta Szold.

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women's organizations had transferred responsibility for social welfare to the official

representatives of the Jewish community in Palestine, but that the women's organizations

expected to be incorporated into the machinery which implemented social services. This position

is clarified in a statement entitled "the Future of Women's Work in Palestine," in which Szold

outlined the position Hadassah and WIZO expected vis-à-vis the new government. The

memorandum was submitted in response to a request of the Administrative Committee that the

responsibility for education and health be transferred to the self-government with the suggestion

that Hadassah assume responsibility for education. In response Szold suggested the ways in

which organized women could complement and assist the Administrative Committee in its work.

First, the memorandum stated that both Hadassah and WIZO recommended that they be

given an

> official position to the Palestinian activities they are responsible for, and also with
> reference to the interests affecting women and children, the existing undertakings
> and those to be organized in the future, for all of which they should have the
> possibility of influencing the budget and plan-making at least through an Advisory
> Council in Palestine, attached to the Jewish Agency Executive.[99]

Second, as a way of justifying the claim of women's organizations over the areas of

education and health, the memorandum reaffirmed the existing classification of what were

perceived at the time as "economic" and "non-economic" issues. This division made "non-

economic" appear less important than the "economic" issues, and in consequence, suitable for the

involvement of organized women. According to this argument, the involvement of women's

organizations in "non-economic" areas would alleviate the burdens on the self-governing bodies,

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[99]"The Future of Women's Work in Palestine," n.d., file RG7/HS/Box 12/Folder 127,
Hadassah Archives.

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thereby freeing them to apply their budget toward more essential needs. Third, the memorandum claimed that women's organizations could play a vital role in cultivating Diaspora-Palestine relations through fund-raising, maintaining projects, and "attaching themselves through the Agency Executive to the Knesset Israel [Elected Assembly], another way of fostering permanent relations."[100]

4.3 Conclusion

The third stage of the critical juncture model, the crisis or cleavage, provides the context that explains the occurrence of the critical juncture. Chapter 3 argued that the cleavage which preceded the critical juncture of 1949-1951 can be understood within the frame of institutional dynamism. The introduction of two political actors, Henrietta Szold and WIZO, to the Jewish women's movement in Palestine, substantially changed the latter's focus. In addition to seeking legal and political rights for women, the Jewish women's movement reoriented to reflect Szold's and WIZO's concentration on the creation of a social welfare network. At the same time, Szold's insistence that Zionist women in the Diaspora defer to the Jewish women's movement in Palestine before initiating new projects was clearly rejected by WIZO. Szold's efforts to recruit WIZO into the publication of a Jewish women's journal in Palestine, and to participate in a council of Jewish women's organizations both failed, as WIZO insisted upon retaining its organizational dominance. This in turn led to WIZO's absorption of a smaller women's organization founded by Szold, the HNI. The introduction of new political actors thus meant both a shift in political focus, as well as changing power relations which left WIZO as the largest women's organization in the Jewish

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[100]Ibid.

women's movement in Palestine.

A second source of institutional dynamism which created a cleavage within the Jewish women's movement was external political change through the election of Henrietta Szold to the third Elected Assembly in 1931, and her appointment to the National Council to establish the Department of Social Service. Szold relied on the Jewish women's movement to provide the volunteer labour for social welfare bureaus and services, and publicly stated that women's involvement in social welfare was apolitical. Szold's replacement by Kagan on the National Council after the former retired was expected by the WIZO leadership to lead to Kagan's appointment in the first Knesset to the Ministry of Social Welfare. But the cleavage which had already been created between electoral politics and the social welfare agenda meant that the events of the first Knesset created a critical juncture which led to the rejection by the Israeli women's movement of electoral politics.

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CHAPTER 5

CRITICAL JUNCTURE:
THE WOMEN'S LIST IN THE FIRST KNESSET (1949-1951)

Collier and Collier define critical junctures as "transitions [which] establish certain directions of change and foreclose others in a way that shapes politics for years to come."[1] They emphasize that the duration of critical junctures varies widely, ranging from brief periods to an "extended period of reorientation."[2] Chapter 5 argues that the first Knesset (1949-1951) was a critical juncture for the women's movement. A number of components caused organized women to rethink their involvement in electoral politics: the refusal by the first government of the independent state to give a representative of the women's movement the portfolio of the Ministry of Welfare; the refusal by women affiliated with the Mapai Party to vote against the government's legislative proposals; and the passage by the government of the inaccurately named Law of Women's Equality, 1951. These developments took place within a context of heightened nationalism, in which Ben-Gurion's emphasis on statism, the promulgation of the Declaration of Independence, the failure to draw up a constitution and the threat of *kulturkampf* between the secular and religious sectors discouraged women from expressing collective interests. Cumulatively these factors resulted in a critical juncture after which organized women resolved to re-orient their political strategy.

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[1]Collier and Collier, 27.

[2]Ibid.

5.1 The Social and Political Context
of the first Knesset 1948-1951

Elections to the first Knesset, initially called the Constituent Assembly until its name was

changed to the Knesset (meaning "Assembly" in Hebrew), took place within the context of

military mobilization and national uncertainty. On 29 November 1947 the United Nations (UN)

announced Partition Plan, in which it was proposed that Palestine be carved into two geographic

territories over which Jews and Arabs would exercise separate autonomy. Although the Jewish

community accepted it, the Partition Plan was not accepted by the Arabs of Palestine. After the

announcement of the UN's Partition Plan a civil war broke out between Jews and Arabs. With

the withdrawal of the British and the declaration of Israeli independence in May 1948, the new

state was immediately attacked by six Arab armies. In 1949, the cease-fire lines of Israel's first

war became the borders of the new state.

The Partition Plan called for the establishment by 1 April 1948 of one entity in each

autonomous entity which would exercise both "administrative and legislative authority until a

Constitutent Assembly, democratically elected...choose a Provisional Government."[3] By 1948, a

new body, the People's Council (Moetzet Ha'am) had been composed of the Jewish Agency

Executive (also called the Palestine Zionist Executive), and the Executive of the National Council.

The People's Council included an executive body, called the People's Administration (Minhelet

Ha'am). With the Declaration of Independence on 14 May 1948, the People's Council became

the Provisional State Council, and was to act as "the provisional legislature for the first nine

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[3]Samuel Sager, *The Parliamentary System of Israel* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1985), 23.

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months of independence," while the People's Administration became the Provisional Government[4]

Israel's population stood at 650,000 in 1948. During the first six months of statehood, 100,000 immigrants arrived in Israel. The passage by the Knesset in July 1950 of the Law of Return gave Jews from every country the right to settle in Israel, which, in the context of the mass displacement of European Jews, further escalated immigration to Israel. Between 1948 and 1964 "the Jewish population rose 211 per cent from 649,777 to 2,115,600" 68 percent of this was from immigration.[5]

After the cessation of hostilities in the 1948 War of Independence, there was a period of austerity ("Tsena") during which food, foreign exchange and other commodities were strictly controlled with the object of safeguarding "minimum standards of consumption, especially for unemployed new immigrants and demobilized soldiers."[6] Government expenditure gave priority to the rapid construction of housing (designated to absorb new immigrants) and to agricultural settlements.[7] Lack of available housing meant that immigrants were often forced to reside for at least a year in transit camps which had been vacated by the British army after the Second World War. The transit camps offered little more than the most basic shelter, so that living conditions, especially for families, were extremely harsh.[8] By 1950-1951 the majority of immigrants were

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[4]Ibid., 22.

[5]Cohen, 228.

[6]Sanbar, 10.

[7]Ibid., 10.

[8]Raphael Rooter and Nira Shamai, "Housing Policy," in Ibid., 172.

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living in new transit camps ("ma'abarot") set up near developed areas so that immigrants could seek employment. In 1950-1951 approximately 18 percent of the state's population and almost 40 percent of all immigrants who arrived during 1948-1951 resided in transit camps.[9]

Rachel Kagan's Knesset speeches reflected her dual commitment to the principles of women's rights and equality and to the development of social justice in Israel. The first full-scale war waged by Israel and the on-going military hostility of its neighbors all but eclipsed the severe social problems brought on by massive immigration into a country which had not yet developed an adequate housing, employment or social service infrastructure. Kagan's Knesset activity was also formed in the context of Ben-Gurion's guiding policy of statism, the failure to enact a Constitution, and the written commitment to women's equality set out in the Declaration of Independence.

5.1.1 Ben-Gurion's Policy of Statism (Mamlakhtiut)

At the declaration of statehood, at least two deep fault lines within the Jewish community were apparent.[10] Statehood did not resolve political tension between the secular and religious sectors.[11] The threat that the entire religious sector would boycott the central institutions of the Jewish community, and thereby undermine the campaign for an independent Jewish state had been mitigated somewhat by the split in the fourth Elected Assembly (1944) between the moderate

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[9]Ibid., 172.

[10]This is not to argue that other divisions did not exist, but they were not yet perceptible to the Israeli leadership.

[11]In fact, political tension between these two sectors remains a constant and salient aspect of Israeli politics.

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Orthodox parties, which remained in the pre-state legislature even after their former allies, the

ultra-Orthodox parties, refused to participate. Nevertheless, the question whether religious law or

modern democratic norms would determine the character and legislation of the new state became

a pivotal focus point of the first Knesset.

A second dividing line perceptible at independence was between the strongest political

movement, Labour Zionism under the leadership of Ben-Gurion and its main political opponents,

the Revisionist Party, led by Vladimir (Ze'ev) Jabotinsky. The latter rejected socialist Zionism,

and denounced Mapai's willingness to respect the involvement of international powers as well as

negotiate and make concessions to the Arab states regarding the future national boundaries of the

new state. In addition, the Revisionist Party sported its own military wing, the Irgun Tsvai Leumi

(National Army Organization), known as the Irgun, which had engaged, with another more

militant Jewish extra-military group, known as the Stern gang, in attacking representatives of the

British Mandate during the pre-state period.[12] In the first month of independence, (June 1948),

the Irgun ignored Ben-Gurion's directive that paramilitary units surrender arms to the I.D.F.

When the Irgun attempted to land weapons carried aboard the ship "Altelena," Ben-Gurion

ordered his troops to fire, sinking the boat. The incident became symbolic for both political

movements. For the Revisionists, it demonstrated Ben-Gurion's ruthlessness toward political

opponents; for Ben-Gurion and the Labour Zionist movement, the incident signaled the threat of

civil war if disparate factions did not recognize central authority.[13] In addition to these major

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[12]The organization called itself Lehi (Lohamei Herut Yisrael, the Freedom Fighters of Israel). Pertz Merhav, *The Israeli Left: History, Problems, Documents* (A.S. Barnes and Company, Inc.: San Diego, 1980), 92.

[13]Cohen, 232.

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divisions there were others. For example, despite the incorporation of different organs and institutions of the Labour Zionist movement into the General Trade Union, Histadrut, in 1920, relations between parties of the labour movement were still punctuated by rivalry, power struggle and competition. Parties published their own newspapers, and offered separate employment, health services and schools.

Ben-Gurion's guiding policy was driven by one overriding interest: to counter the influence of disparate political parties and consolidate state power with the intention of delegitimizing and marginalizing rival and parallel political and social institutions. This policy, called "mamlakhtituit" (Hebrew for statism), viewed the state as "a binding, all-inclusive and sovereign framework."[14] Medding argues that statism rested on three principles. The first, was the expectation that "all members of the society participate as citizens" and that citizens were dedicated to "the good of the whole" or to "the service of the state."[15] Second, statism demanded exclusive state sovereignty, over "certain tasks and functions" such as "defense, immigration, development, education, and health services."[16] Third, statism perceived the state "as an instrument for the achievement of collective tasks."[17] Implementing statism required consolidating various institutions under the central command of the state. This included forcing three different extra-military organizations, the Palmach, affiliated with the Labour movement, and the Irgun and Stern Gang, tied to the Revisionist Party, to relinquish arms, and subject

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[14]Medding, 135.

[15]Ibid.

[16]Ibid.

[17]Ibid., 135-136.

themselves to the newly formed Israel Defense Force.

5.1.2 The Failure to Adopt a Constitution

The second important issue which affected women after statehood was the debate which emerged about the adoption of a constitution. The Declaration of Independence stipulated that a constitution was to be drafted by the Constituent Assembly by 1 October 1948; however, the outbreak of the War of Independence interrupted this task. In June 1950, a Knesset resolution stated that instead of drafting a constitution, it would pass a series of laws to be entitled "Basic Laws," which would have constitutional status.[18]

While Giora Goldberg and Ilan Peleg both point to Ben-Gurion as the main obstacle to drafting a constitution, Medding distributes responsibility equally between the religious parties, and the government.[19] The issue at the centre of the debate is the complicity of the secular socialist Zionist camp in missing the opportunity to draft a constitution affirming individual rights. The verdict on the failure to adopt a constitution is pertinent to understanding the views of women's status in the new state.

Goldberg argues that the important point of departure is July 1948, when the Provisional Council of State charged one of the leaders of the Mizrahi Workers Party, Zerach Varhaftig, with overseeing the drawing of a draf of a potential constitution. Consultation with rabbis and "other religious public figures" had achieved "agreement on sixty percent of the content, although not

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[18]Badi, 116.

[19]Giora Goldberg, "Religious Zionism and the Framing of a Constitution for Israel," *Israel Studies* 3 (1998): 215; Ilan Peleg, "Israel's Constitutional Order and *Kulturkampf*:: The Role of Ben Gurion," *Israel Studies* 3 (1998): 242.

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on the religious issues." But according to Goldberg, by December 1948 Ben-Gurion was unwilling to adopt a constitution because of a variety of other pressing problems, such as the threat of war and the need to absorb new immigrants.[20] Goldberg attributes religious opposition to the framing of the constitution to their belief that Ben-Gurion would not pursue the issue. He claims that "Ben-Gurion admitted in front of Mapai's top leaders- but not publicly- that Mapai was the one and only political force that would determine whether or not a constitution were framed."[21] Peleg, moreover, suggests that a constitution was at odds with Ben-Gurion's goals for the new democracy which for him and "most Israelis... meant periodic elections and majoritarian rule, a rather limited notion of democracy that marginalised minority protection and individual rights."[22] By April 1949, the Law and Constitution Committee took over the question of the constitution. As Medding writes:

> The expectation that Israel would have a rigid, formal, written constitution was for the first time open to serious question. Doubts were expressed as to its advisability and desirability, but they did not gain enough support from a parliamentary majority for abandonment of the idea of a constitution. To avoid an impasse, an alternative, piecemeal approach was proposed. A series of basic laws would be introduced over time, each dealing with a separate constitutional document.[23]

The religious establishment's opposition to a constitution became evident in the Harari Debate of 1950. The parliamentary opposition, the Mapam Party as well as the Herut Party, supported the adoption of a constitution as a means, among other things, of limiting government powers. The

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[20]Goldberg, 215.

[21]Goldberg, 216.

[22]Peleg, 242.

[23]Medding, 38.

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ultra-Orthodox parties opposed drafting a constitution on the grounds that it would replace religious law as the authoritative law of the Jews of Israel. But unlike Goldberg and Peleg, who insist upon Ben-Gurion's outright opposition to a constitution, Medding suggests that Ben-Gurion was simply reacting to the threat the religious parties presented to the coalition government over this issue. He argues that:

> In principle, there was nothing at all in Ben-Gurion's arguments to preclude a written constitution that would entrench and give formal expression to the principles of majority rule and the rule of law. On the other hand, neither was there a principled commitment to a written constitution. Under these conditions, the choice was political. The thinking of the religious parties generated a pragmatic opposition on Mapai's part to a rigid, formal written constitution.[24]

Ultimately, the Mapai Party supported the Harari proposal, which was then passed by the Knesset. The first Basic Law, "the Knesset" was passed in 1958. Medding suggests that "with the passing of Harari's resolution, the formal legislative and constitutional process associated with the establishment of the state ceased."[25]

The consequences of not carrying out the Declaration's promise of drafting a constitution has been viewed in different ways by analysts. Medding, for example, argues that the question of the constitution has "direct bearing on the majoritarian and consensual character of the Israeli political structure." He points out that written constitutions are "a key element of the consensual model because they place significant formal limitations on the power of the parliamentary majority" by specifying "special minorities and other more elaborate procedures" for "minority veto" over amendments. Written constitutions also redirect certain powers away from legislatures

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[24]Ibid., 40.

[25]Ibid., 41.

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and place them in the hands of the courts through the process of judicial review. In Israel's case "the absence of a formal written constitution goes hand in hand with parliamentary sovereignty as key elements of the majoritarian model, with the British example being the most prominent."[26] While Medding thus views the impact of not having a constitution as primarily affecting the process of Israeli politics, others contend that the failure to draft a constitution had profound repercussions, not only on individual rights, but on the character of the Israeli polity. Peleg argues that "the system created by Israel's founding fathers was not a liberal democracy committed to the equality of all citizens, it was not the protector of inalienable rights of the individual, and it was not even bound to automatically carry out the will of the majority per se."[27] For women this has meant that, apart from the Declaration of Independence, there is no protection of their status except through legislation (such as the 1951 Equal Rights for Women Bill) that tilted in favour of religious law.

5.2 The WIZO Women's List and its Platform

Before 1949, WIZO was explicitly committed to a rights-based agenda for its Women's List. In 1937, Rachel Kagan assumed the seat of Henrietta Szold on the National Council, following the latter's resignation due to old age.[28] Kagan had extensive political experience both in and outside of electoral politics. In addition to representing the Women's Lists in the second and third Elected Assemblies (1926 and 1931) and her close work with Szold in setting up the

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[26]Ibid., 41.

[27]Peleg, "Israel's Constitutional Order," 242.

[28]"WIZO Who's Who -1949" file F49 1957, CZA.

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social service system, Kagan was the head of the Office of Social Work in Haifa in 1931.[29] In 1933, she was elected to the Haifa Community Council.[30] As a councillor, Kagan founded the Social Welfare Bureau for Jews of which she became Chair.[31] Throughout her public work, Kagan maintained her connection to WIZO. In 1939, Kagan replaced Esther Smoira as the Chairwoman of the Palestine Federation of WIZO, and in the same year was elected to the WIZO World Executive.[32] In 1946, Kagan became the administrator of the Department of Social Service and therefore joined the Executive of the National Council. Following independence, the National Council became the Provisional Government of the new state.[33] This meant that Kagan was the only other woman member of the Provisional Government Council beside the future prime minister, Golda Meyerson (Meir) to sign the Declaration of Independence.[34] During her term in the Provisional Government Kagan began her campaign for the issues that she would later advocate as a member of Knesset: the establishment of a public network of social assistance, free compulsory education, and tax relief for married women.[35]

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[29]"Rachel Kagan's 70th Birthday Greetings," n.d., file F49 1957, CZA.

[30]"WIZO Who's Who -1949" n.d., file F49 1957, CZA.

[31]"Rachel Kagan - A Woman Leader in Israel" n.d., file F49 1957, CZA.

[32]She later became the Vice-Chair of the WIZO World Executive. "Rachel Kagan - A Woman Leader in Israel" n.d., file F49 1957, CZA.

[33]"Curriculum Vitae," file F49 1958, CZA; "Rachel Kagan's 70th Birthday Greetings" file F49 1957, CZA; "Rachel Kagan - a Woman Leader in Israel," Palestine WIZO Article Service, June, 1948, file F49 1958, CZA.

[34]"Rachel Kagan - A Woman Leader in Israel," n.d., file F49 1957, CZA; "Curriculum Vitae," n.d., file F49 1958, CZA.

[35]"Supplement to Biography of Rachel Kagan" December 1948, file F49 1957, CZA.

Initially, Kagan's appointment to the Provisional Council elicited mixed reactions from the WIZO leadership in London. While the leadership appreciated the importance of the governmental recognition bestowed on Kagan, it complained about the lack of consultation on who would be their representative.[36] Nevertheless, for WIZO, Kagan's inclusion in the council was a "definite recognition of WIZO's importance and position within the movement."[37] It is also clear that WIZO expected that Kagan would retain responsibility for the Department of Social Service in the regularly constituted government. The leadership stated:

> It can only be hoped that the social welfare work which, in this country was centralised by a woman and has been organised and carried out in all its ramifications by women, will not be taken away from a woman whose experience, wisdom and lofty conception of social work make her a most eligible candidate for this Government office.[38]

But WIZO's expectations were not realized. Prior to the elections, the portfolio for social welfare was transferred from Kagan to a representative of the (Orthodox) United Religious Front, a decision which women's organizations deeply regretted.[39] The WIZO leadership protested that the new representative "knew little of the practical work" in which Kagan had been immersed since her settlement in Palestine, and further that she was "still consulted, and actually did all the practical work."[40] But Ben-Gurion wanted the women's organizations such as WIZO and the

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[36]Letter from Head Office, 17 April 1948, file F49 1957, CZA.

[37]WIZO Letter, April 7, 1948, F49 1955, CZA

[38]"Rachel Kagan - A Woman Leader in Israel," n.d., file F49 1957, CZA.

[39] June 1948 UER Letter to Ben-Gurion, CZA.

[40]"Private and Confidential Minutes of the LWE Meeting Held on September 23, 1948 in the Conference Room," file F49 2555, CZA.

WWC to direct their attention in direction other than representative politics. Instead, he argued, that they should devote on raising the Jewish birth rate. Women's task was thus:

> (a) to bring home to the Jewish woman and the Jewish family that the future of their nation depends on their producing a sufficient number of healthy children; (b) to provide large Jewish families with more economic, social, and educational assistance, including better housing, sufficient income, and the possibility of providing elementary, secondary, and higher education.[41]

Kagan's failure to be appointed to the newly-named Ministry of Social Welfare caused debate in WIZO regarding whether to run a Women's List for the First Knesset. After deciding to run an independent Women's List, the Palestine Federation of WIZO requested and received financial support and endorsement from World WIZO to do so. Candidates of the Women's List were chosen in a meeting by 101 WIZO members, and Rachel Kagan took her place as the leading candidate on the list.[42] The election campaign was carefully organized. Organizers argued that the dissemination of propaganda and an effective division of labour by the organization would ensure that women went to the polls and voted for the Women's List. As part of its election strategy the Women's List listed the country into fifteen electoral districts (there are no ridings or constituencies in Israeli elections) and placed a representative on the local elections committee, which was charged with determining and supervising the details of the election.[43]

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[41]David Ben-Gurion, *Israel: A Personal History* (New York: Funk and Wagnalls, 1971), 839. Ben-Gurion also argued that "Any Jewish woman who, as far as depends on her, does not bring into the world at least four healthy children is shirking her duty to the nation, like a soldier who evades military service." Ben-Gurion, 839.

[42]The other candidates were all WIZO activists: Leah Wilansky, Tzilah Shoham, Gina Blumenfeld, Rosa Ginsburg, Pesiah Tibur, Tikva Ledizansky, Regina Zimmerman, Shoshana Gissin, and Sarah Ashbel. "Preparations for the Election" file F49 2011, CZA. (In Hebrew).

[43]Ibid.

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In addition to campaigning for social welfare issues, the representatives of the WIZO

Women's List explained to Israeli women why they were entering party politics. One brochure

stated that:

> The women of Israel, irrespective of their differences in background, social and financial standing, have sufficient common interests to warrant their going to the polls on a ticket of their own. It is felt that this is necessary to ensure women the influence in the Government bodies of the State which is due to them in view of their achievement as equal partners in the up-building of the country and as pioneers in the field of social welfare and education. It is inherent in the party system as it exists today that every member, whether man or woman, must vote according to the party lines, even if his or her natural feelings would dictate a vote against the opinion of the party. Here lies the basic difference between WIZO's list and those of the political parties. The WIZO delegate is not bound by any strictly defined programme. She is expected to vote in each case in accordance with the dictates of her conscience and feeling, her only guiding lines a complete lack of political bias and her goal the maximum benefit to the community.[44]

In contrast to its later insistence that WIZO was concerned with national, and not

sectarian issues, the Women's List affirmed its commitment to women's issues, and pointed out

the shortcomings of the Zionist movement in this area. In particular, the List emphasized the

specific interests which women shared: problems arising from pregnancy, discrimination in

religious law, the issues surrounding civil law, support for families, lack of provision of food,

education, and the danger of the religious parties forcing religious legislation on the secular

population. One election pamphlet berated the Zionist movement for falling short of its promises

to establish equal rights for women and to include women in its administration. It also noted that

other parties, in particular the General Zionist Party, begrudged women their aspiration to

increase their electoral representation. Perhaps in reaction to the government's failure to give

Kagan the Ministry of Social Welfare, the pamphlet also deplored the fact that no official

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[44]"Top Candidate of WIZO List" December, 1948, file F49 1957, CZA.

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recognition had ever been accorded to women for their efforts in the Zionist movement, and that women had thus "worked anonymously without expecting representation."[45] It stated that women, like workers and other sectors of society, needed to protect their interests. The campaign material also affirmed that a Women's List was thus necessary to assure women their rights, and since women had the ability to elect their own representative, they should not give up their chance to achieve equality in the "one-time phenomenon" in the life of a nation --a founding assembly. [46]

The Women's List was advertised as a lever which would force contending parties to increase their number of women representatives. The Women's List assured WIZO members that it was not contributing to the "poisonous factionalism" of party politics but instead uniting and acting as "a bridge between parties." The pamphlet reiterated Szold's support for a separate Women's List as necessary for the creation of "stability, peace and mutual understanding."[47]

The party platform of the Women's List included a number of demands which ranged from concerns with women's rights, to concerns typical of mainstream Zionist nationalism. To achieve women's rights, the List called for a "progressive constitution" to be adopted, "giving full equal rights to every male and female citizen," and for women and men to be treated equally under the law, in the family, and "in all other spheres of life." In particular, the Women's List called for "adequate representation of women, without discrimination, in all Government and other public bodies" and the "adoption of a law which determines that all property acquired after marriage by

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[45]"The Voters and Us," file F49 2011, n.d., CZA. (In Hebrew).

[46]Ibid.

[47]Ibid.

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husband or wife, belongs to both jointly and equally." Indeed, several of its proposals specifically referred to the position of married women: that laws "impairing" their "rights and position" be repealed and replaced by the adoption of new laws which "will guarantee the women equal rights in family matters." The Women's List called for the establishment of "compulsory arbitration under the auspices of the local authorities in family matters"; for the "establishment of a code of life in the State of Israel, whereby the lack of responsibility of the husband towards his wife and children will be controlled"; and that married women's citizenship be secure regardless of changes made to her husband's citizenship. Lastly, the platform of the Women's List called for the recognition of housewives as workers, for separate tax filing by housewives, and the "guaranteeing of equal payment for men and women for equal work."[48]

The identification by the Women's List with mainstream Zionist goals is evident in its platform sections referring to social demands. These included the "fight" against factionalism which threatened to undermine the state, and support for increasing the population through immigration and a higher birthrate. Although the platform called for "emphasis on the benefit of the people rather than the benefit of the individual," it did not identify with the socialist vision of Mapai. It supported a blend of "public and private enterprise" and "equal rights for private and collective initiative." At the same time, the party stated its support for " a sound economic structure rooted in agriculture and industry," "economic measures to bring down the cost of living," and "progressive direct taxation."

The Women's List's also called on the state to provide housing, social services and education. It viewed housing as especially important for women as caregivers: it called for the

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[48]I bid.

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"participation of women in the formulation of town and settlement plans" which would include "planned housing on modern lines with a view to facilitating a woman's duties as a housewife." It argued that social services should encompass health care and "general social insurance for old age, sickness, and unemployment." The Women's List asked that the state establish "a legal obligation for adult sons and daughters to care for their parents in time of old age or emergency" and that the state provide help for women abandoned by their families. Finally, it demanded free and compulsory education for children from kindergarten and up, in a single educational system. WIZO's identification with nationalist Zionism was expressed in its calls for the "strengthening of a national spirit and traditional basis for family and public life, and the creation of proper forms for the celebration of national holidays, mass meetings, and public ceremonies." These were intended to raise "the cultural level of the population through the establishment of proper institutions: cultural centres, people's universities, libraries, museums, exhibitions, etc., which will mould a new type of Jew in Israel."[49]

5.3 The Parties of the First Knesset

For the first nine months of independence, from May 1948 to February 1949, the Provisional State Council acted as the legislature of the new state. It then handed over its powers to the new representative body, the Knesset (assembly), which had 120 seats.[50] The first Knesset ended sooner than expected due to a governmental crisis over educational policy which had been

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[49]"Zionist Women's Organization and Women's Union for Equal Rights Platform for the Elections to the Constituent Assembly" January 1949, file F49 1957, CZA..

[50]Sager, 29.

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brewing already during the pre-state period.[51] During the pre-state period there was no unified

system of education, as each communal sector provided its own educational institutions.

Religious schools were based on a religious curriculum taught in Yiddish and, sometimes in

Arabic or Ladino (the language of Turkish Jewry).[52] The first school based on a modern, secular

curriculum was the Hebrew School for Girls at Jaffa, established in 1893 by the Zionist Lovers of

Zion group. This school became the "model" for the development in 1907 of the curriculum for

modern schools.[53] By the first World War a little over 2,000 pupils were registered in sixty

secular educational institutions including "kindergartens, elementary, secondary, and teachers'

training schools" in which the language of instruction was Hebrew.[54] Parallel to these schools

was a number of institutions established by Jewish philanthropies of the Diaspora, such as the

Alliance Israelite Universelle and the Anglo-Jewish Association which operated schools

instructing in French and English, respectively.

The language of instruction used by schools was a central issue in the early 1900s in

Palestine. Modern Hebrew was not the vernacular of any Jewish community anywhere in the

world, and turning it into the vernacular of the Jews of Palestine required concerted effort,

including compiling the first modern Hebrew dictionary. The question of whether Jewish schools

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[51]Cohen, 229.

[52]Isaac B. Berkson, "Jewish Education in Palestine," *The Annals of the American Academy of Political Science*, 164 (1932):140.

[53]The women's movement activist Sarah Azaryahu taught in the Jaffa School for Girls and both she and her husband were instrumental in developing the curriculum. See Sarah Azaryahu, *Chapters of My Life*, (Tel Aviv: M. Newman, 1955) (In Hebrew).

[54]Berkson, 140.

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in Palestine would adopt Hebrew as their language of instruction was encapsulated in the debate over the cultural future of the Jewish settlement. This question came to a head in 1913 when plans were announced to open a technical university in Haifa (Technion) in which German would form the language of instruction. The organization of the Society for the Development of Hebrew Education, and a walkout by the teachers of the German-speaking schools settled the issue in favour of Hebrew. In 1919, the Zionist Organization set up the Department of Education, directed by Henrietta Szold, in which "the existing nucleus of modern Hebrew schools served as the basis for the development of a unified Hebrew school system."[55] By 1929, the pre-state Jewish government had assumed the administration of the Zionist Organization's Department of Education.[56]

Writing about the pre-state system of education in 1932 the former Director of Education for the Jewish Agency, Isaac B. Berkson, argued that

> A number of main principles had been established: the unity of the Jewish school system on a national basis; instruction of all subjects in Hebrew; a course of study uniting the European curriculum with Hebrew subjects into an organic program; recognition of education as an integral part of the upbuilding of Palestine for which the central Zionist agency must be concerned. Another point is noteworthy, the admission of girls to schools on an equal footing with boys.[57]

However, the secular educational system, called the general stream, supported by the Department of Education was not universally accepted by the Jewish community. The Orthodox Jewish community, supported by the Mizrahi movement (the religious wing of the Zionist

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[55]Berkson, 141.

[56]Ibid., 145.

[57]Ibid., 141.

movement), established its own educational system which taught a "synthesis of nationalism and religion."[58] The Labour movement also set up its own school system which emphasized "work and especially agricultural training."[59] The three types of schools General, Mizrahi and Labour although not equal in size, received equal funding from the Zionist administration, although each school level (kindergarten, elementary schools and secondary schools) received a different level of funding.[60] General, Mizrahi and Labour schools were thus publicly funded private schools, and by 1932 taught approximately 22,500 students.[61]

The existence of three educational streams operated under the Department of Education was a cause of concern for external observers, and a source of political infighting among those with a vested interest in the split system. Those interested in the educational system as a source of national socialization, such as Rachel Kagan, focused on two issues. One was the high drop-out rate among elementary school children. Berkson noted that: "Apparently all Jewish children receive an elementary education, but about two thirds of those entering the first grade drop out before they reach the sixth grade, while a full third of the children receive only three years' schooling."[62] In addition, the existence of three educational streams operating under the auspices of the Department of Education was viewed as contravening the goal of developing a unified

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[58]Ibid., 142.

[59]Ibid..

[60]Ibid., 145.

[61]Private schools included schools funded by Jewish diaspora philanthropies and ultra-Orthodox schools. Private schools did not necessarily teach in Hebrew and were not always pro-Zionist. Berkson, 147.

[62]Berkson, 150.

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Hebrew national culture:

> The Hebrew public school system may appear well unified, but as a matter of fact, it has been developed by affiliation of schools founded by other organizations, and the variety of origins has left distinct marks. Furthermore, the diverse social and religious viewpoints constitute a strong strain on unity of organization, and the Department of Education has nothing like the degree of authority which its name might imply.[63]

During the first Knesset these problems were exacerbated, causing political jockeying among those affiliated with a particular stream and eventually leading to the fall of the government and the calling of new elections. Between 1948 and 1952, "the student population tripled, and the educational system found itself in the most taxing of circumstances, taking in almost a thousand new students a week."[64] A law of compulsory education which stipulated that by 1951-3 all children aged 5-13 would receive free education in one of the educational streams was approved in September 1949.

In February 1950, a public scandal broke out over a newspaper report that political parties were recruiting immigrant children in transit camps into specific educational streams in order to increase their membership base. The controversy was not the fact that parties engaged in recruitment, but the accusation by the religious parties that religious children, in this case, traditional Yemenite children, were being targeted by labour parties to attend secular schools.[65] The crisis was resolved in the short term when "a compromise amendment to the education law was passed ending the divided educational system in the camps, and ensuring religious education

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[63]Ibid.

[64]Cohen, 238.

[65]13 February 1951, *Divrai Ha Knesset*, 1063-1101.

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for the Yemenites and both secular and religious options in the other camps."[66] The introduction of a bill on immigrant education proposed by Mapai in February 1951 was the last straw for the religious parties, which, believing to be under attack by the government, turned against it, defeating the bill and thus causing the government to fall.[67]

5. 4 Election to the First Knesset

In total, twenty-one lists ran for election to the first Knesset (which was called the Constitutent Assembly until a formal name change was approved).[68] Badi points out that there were over ten candidates for every seat available.[69] Although the parties of the first Knesset can be arranged in four categories, membership in a particular group did not necessarily mean ideological agreement, or in the case of Mapai, willingness to share political power. The parties of the left included Mapai, Mapam (the Hebrew acronym for the United Workers' party), and Maki (the Hebrew acronym for the Israeli Communist party). Mapai won the most seats in the election to the first Knesset: 46 seats.[70] In 1949 Mapai resembled "parties of Western Europe, except that, together with other Israeli Labor parties other than the Communist" it supported "co-operative ownership of industrial, agricultural, and service enterprises, rather than their

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[66]Cohen, 240.

[67]Ibid.

[68]Badi, 97.

[69]Ibid.

[70]Zohar, 20.

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nationalization, as a desirable practical solution"[71] Mapam (United Labor Party) came in second

with 19 seats. Although Mapam belonged to the labour Zionist movement, it was Mapai's major

rival on the left, and for a variety of ideological and political reasons, it was not included in the

governing coalition.[72] So despite broad ideological agreement the left parties were divided; Mapai

formed the government, while Mapam and Maki joined the opposition.

The second category is the parties of the center. These include the

General Zionists, an "avowedly bourgeois party and champions of capitalism" which received

seven seats (representing 5 percent of the vote).[73] During the 1950s, a period of economic

rationing, the General Zionists presented an "alternative economic programme to Mapai's

stringent controls and rationing."[74] A splinter group of the General Zionists formed the

Progressive Party which was identified as a liberal party supportive of "civil liberties and social

legislation.[75]

Third were right-wing parties. This category also includes two parties of the Revisionist

movement. The Herut Party (Freedom) won 14 seats (11.5 percent of the vote).[76] Herut was

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[71]Akzin, 38.

[72]Cohen attributes this to the fact that Mapam was comprised of three parties (Ahdut ha-Avodah, Ha-Shomer ha -Tsair and Poale Zion) which had "thwarted the Ben-Gurion-Jabotinsky agreement, opposed Ben-Gurion on the Biltmore Programme and the partition of Palestine" as well as opposed "Ben-Gurion's disbandment of the left-dominated Palmach during 1948." Mapam was also pro-Soviet while Mapai was "hostile to Soviet communism." Cohen, 210.

[73]Ibid., 229.

[74]Cohen, 229.

[75]Ibid.; Akzin, 39.

[76]Cohen, 229.

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known for its connection to the pre-state underground military organization, the Irgun. Its platform was based on "the inclusion of Palestine in the Jewish state" and supporting private enterprise.[77] Ha-Lochamim (the Fighters) was associated with another underground military pre-state group, Lehi.[78]

Fourth were religious parties united in a bloc of four parties in the United Religious Front (URF). These were the Mizrahi and HaPoel HaMizrhi (the Mizrahi Worker) which were Zionist parties, and the anti- or non-Zionist Agudat Israel and Poalei Agudat Israel parties.[79] While Mizrahi and Agudat Israel represented "middle-class groups" and favoured private enterprise, HaPoel HaMizrahi (Mizrahi Worker) and Poalei Agudat Israel (Agudah Worker) claimed to represent "poorer classes" and supported "cooperative enterprise."[80] The URF was included in the government's coalition. Fifth, there were parties representing particular national communities among the Jewish population. These included the Sephardim and the Yemenites. Finally, there were a number of parties representing Arabs living in Israel, such as the the Arab Democrats.

The coalition of the first Knesset included Mapai, (whose representative, David Ben-Gurion became prime minister), the United Religious Front, the Progressives, and several Arab parties. According to Gregory S. Mahler, it is unusual for governmental coalitions to include more than the absolute minimum number of parties needed to govern. The coalition of the first Knesset did not, therefore, reflect ideological agreement but "the newness of the political state,

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[77]Akzin, 38.

[78]Ibid., 40.

[79]Cohen, 240.

[80]Akzin, 38.

and the need faced by Israel at the time (as in all new states) for establishing political legitimacy and political integration."[81] In any case, Kagan was not approached by Ben-Gurion to be included in the coalition.[82]

Although the WIZO Women's List received only one seat it was accorded all the privileges due to a party delegation of two or more members.[83] For the women's movement, the most important symbolic change which accompanied statehood was the proclamation of the Declaration of Independence, of which Kagan, as a member of the Provisional Council, was a signatory. The Declaration of Independence stated that "The State of Israel will maintain equal social and political rights for all citizens, irrespective of religion, race or sex."[84] The conventional view of the Declaration of Independence is that it is a "legal, interpretive tool crystallizing both the essence of Israeli law and adding worthy meaning to its rulings."[85] Yet scholars have argued that the Declaration of Independence was less a reflection of popular values than the language of the 1948 United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights.[86] As Joel Migdal argues, many of the goals laid out by the UN and adopted by new states ignored the existence of very profound

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[81]Gregory S. Mahler, *The Knesset: Parliament in the Israeli Political System*, (London: Associated University Presses, 1981), 61.

[82]Ben-Gurion, 331.

[83]Asher Zidon, *Knesset: the Parliament of Israel* (New York: Herzl Press, 1967), 97, 307.

[84]Israel Declaration of Independence, 1948.

[85]Elaykim Rubinstein, "The Declaration of Independence as a Basic Document of the State of Israel," *Israel Studies*, 3 (1998): 199.

[86]Joel Migdal, "The Crystallization of the State," in *The Israeli State and Society: Boundaries and Frontiers*, ed. Baruch Kimmerling (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1989), 5.

opposition and "resistance to state designs by unassimilating minorities or vulnerable peasants and workers clinging to security by tried and true folkways."[87] And Medding documents the profound resistance of the Orthodox sector toward some of the secular norms espoused in the Declaration of Independence:

> In view of its historical importance and significance for all Jews, not just those living in Palestine, the religious parties demanded explicit reference to the Jewish people's faith and trust in God, and their gratitude for the reestablishment of Jewish statehood. The nonreligious, secularist Zionist leaders, mainly on the left, opposed an explicit reference to God as offensive to their consciences. A compromise formula expressed trust in the "Rock of Israel.[88]

Because "Rock of Israel" was an accepted synonym for God in prayer and elsewhere, it met the needs of the religious parties. In not making explicit reference to the deity, the Declaration satisfied the nonreligious.[89] Clearly, the fact that the Declaration of Independence claimed to uphold gender equality did not eliminate substantial religious opposition to some modern democratic norms, including that of gender equality.

Furthermore, in addition to not representing the values of the Orthodox, feminist scholars argue that the Declaration of Independence claimed to ensure women's equality, while actually masking fundamental gender inequality. Lahav points out that the Declaration of Independence has no legal standing and therefore cannot be used in "implementing" its own "solemn commitment."[90] Likewise, Francis Raday states that:

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[87]Ibid., 14.

[88]Medding, 27.

[89]Medding, 27.

[90]Lahav, "The Status of Women in Israel," 117.

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Although the Declaration of Independence enabled the Supreme Court to introduce an impressive range of fundamental rights into the Israeli legal system where the legislature remained silent, it did not enable the Court to override primary legislation even where it impinged on fundamental rights. The right to equality between the sexes was not recognized as a "fundamental principle" by the Supreme Court until 1987; it was then given a relativist interpretation, rather than being established as a fundamental right having constitutional priority over any other right not in the category of fundamental rights.[91]

In the context of the first Knesset however, the Declaration of Independence was of more than symbolic of importance; it provided Kagan with what she argued was a tangible evidence of the government's commitment to women's equality. The Declaration of Independence proved a vital tool for arguing that the government was not fulfilling its pre-election promises.

Medding argues that "ideological distance" and the "intensity with which issue positions are held" are decisive for political parties:

> Large and consistent differences between parties on all major issues result in maximum ideological distance. Conversely, the overall ideological distance or polarization will be attenuated if parties that are distant from one another on some issues are close on others, or if large parties are situated close to the centre of the political spectrum.

> There is a second element: the intensity with which issue positions are held. Although it is almost inevitable that maximum ideological distance will give rise to and reflect intense rivalry and political competition, it is also not uncommon for parties that are by and large on the same side of the continuum and relatively close to each other to differ intensely on a whole range of specific issues. In this instance, proximity and even shared values will create intense differences, as for example in the case of conflicts between socialist parties, in which the contest is over ideological truth and over the same segment of the electorate.[92]

In Medding's terms there was little "ideological distance" between WIZO and Mapai.

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[91]Francis Raday, "The Concept of Gender Equality in a Jewish State," in *Calling the Equality Bluff: Women in Israel*, ed. Marilyn Safir and Barbara Swirski, (New York: Pergamon Press, 1991), 18.

[92]Medding, 81.

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Kagan focussed on three main issues: supporting the consolidation of state power by ensuring national harmony; creating a social welfare system through extensive state and voluntary organizational involvement; and, finally, improving the status of women through legal and economic reforms. In pursuing these issues Kagan involved herself in four major legislative battles: the Budget Laws (1949/1950 and 1950/1951); the Defence Service Law, (1949); and the Equal Rights for Women Law (1951). In addition, Kagan spoke out on a number of occasions regarding issues of social justice for women, the poor, families, orphans, and state education. A brief review of these areas outlines the "ideological," as well as the pragmatic, distance between the WIZO Women's List and the governing coalition of the first Knesset.

5.4.1 Social Welfare

Kagan's social welfare advocacy reflected her extensive involvement in the field but was expressed in a period during which the government was not very amenable to constructive criticism. Although she had never received formal training (her university degree was in mathematics), Kagan was considered one of the country's first social workers. In 1920 (a year after her arrival in Palestine from Odessa), Kagan became the "General Treasurer and Chairman of the Committee for Children's Welfare" of the HNI.[93] In 1925, Kagan became the Haifa Chairwoman of the HNI, and in 1933, she was elected to the Haifa Community Council as the Head of the Social Service Department in 1933.[94] Kagan assumed the leadership on the Department of Social Services after Szold's resignation in 1937 and was its representative in the

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[93]"Rachel Kagan: Pioneer and Visionary," WIZO Review, 141, 1968, WIZO Archives.

[94]"Rachel Kagan," 1969, WIZO Archives.

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National Council and provisional government until independence in 1948.

Despite Kagan's extensive practical and administrative experience in social welfare and regardless of her integral work establishing the Department of Social Service, the coalition government did not award her the newly named Ministry of Social Welfare. Instead a representative of the Agudat Israel Party, now part of the United Religious Front bloc was appointed Minister. The new Minster of Social Welfare, Rabbi Y. M. Levin represented a wider electoral base than WIZO, since the United Religious Front had won sixteen seats. But Levin's unfamiliarity with the practical work of the Department of Social Service was galling to both Kagan and the WIZO leadership, which perceived the government's decision as an insult to women's voluntary organizations which had been the main providers of social services during the pre-state period, and which provided the volunteer labour of the Department of Social Service.

At the same time, it is important to point out that the principle that a modern welfare system should become part of Israel's state apparatus was not entirely accepted during the first Knesset. In June 1948, the Social Research Institute of the Histadrut had published a social insurance blueprint, but because of the leadership's preoccupation with war (which had broken out one month earlier) the report was relegated to an interministerial committee (headed by the author of the original report, Izhak Kanev). In 1950, the committee submitted the Kanev Report which was largely based on the British Beveridge Report.[95] The years of the first Knesset "were marked by economic upheavals, rampant inflation, severe austerity and rationing as part of the

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[95] Abraham Doron and Ralph M. Kramer, *The Welfare State in Israel: The Evolution of Social Security Policy and Practice*, (Boulder: Westview, 1991), 16.

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initial effort to absorb the newcomer population."[96] It was in this context that the debate over the

Kanev report and the implementation of a social security system took place. It was only during

the second Knesset, in 1953, that the first component of the Israeli welfare system was set into

place in the National Insurance Act.[97]

Overshadowing the debate over the Kanev report was a political dispute between the

parties of the labour movement, Mapai and Mapam, regarding the future of the Histadrut and its

"network of social insurance and health care services."[98] Some affiliates of the labour movement

opposed setting up a welfare system because of its implicit recognition that social inequality still

existed, even in a socialist state. But opposition to the Ministry of Social Welfare mainly derived

from political infighting between Mapai and Mapam over the dismantling of their respective

power bases within the Histadrut. One proposal of the labour movement was that the Ministry of

the Interior would create a subsection to deal with the problems of "marginal groups." Doron and

Kramer argue that the awarding of the Ministry of Welfare to the religious bloc, an arrangement

which endured for thirty years, reflected the "low status" and "little power" wielded by that

Ministry.[99] Doron and Kramer note that:

> Throughout the 1950s the local welfare offices functioned under continuous
> conditions of crisis because of the insufficient resources allocated for their
> overwhelming tasks. There were few national policy guidelines for the overworked
> local staff, which reflected in part the reluctance to give a higher priority to the
> social welfare function of the government. There was no legislative framework for

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[96]Ibid., 17.

[97]Doron and Kramer, 17.

[98]Ibid., 16.

[99]Ibid., 34.

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the administration of social assistance, nor was there any clear-cut division of authority between the national and the local government. Although the national government provided the bulk of the funds for financial assistance and the social care services provided by the local welfare bureaus, there was no formula, nor were there any recognized standards to guide the annual allocation; consequently, all aspects of this process were bargained for and negotiated.[100]

Kagan's constant attention to social welfare issues thus stemmed from her awareness that the government had not allocated the Ministry of Social Welfare adequate resources for dealing with profound and extensive social needs. Kagan consistently raised the issue of the social effects of the government's policies on the population, especially those with whom she had dealt as a social worker --those in difficult circumstances, young families, the poor, women, widows, and the elderly.[101] Kagan argued that the difficult social conditions of austerity prevented women from greater involvement in representative politics:

> The daily life of the Israeli mother or housewife is far from easy. The economy of the country has been severely burdened by the necessity of absorbing hundreds of immigrants daily. A regime of strict austerity and rationing prevails and hours are spent each day standing in queues for food and clothing. A woman must show great ingenuity and resourcefulness to minister to the needs of her household. In addition, more often than not she has to lend a helping hand to the male breadwinner to cover the monthly budget. As a result, many women find that they must give so much time and energy to the struggle for existence, that there is simply no time left for matters not directly concerned with everyday problems.[102]

Kagan's concerns regarding social conditions were particularly salient during the two budget debates in which she participated (1949/1950 and 1950/1951). In the first budget debate (1949/1950), Kagan raised the issue of the status of married women, and the fact that the budget

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[100]Ibid., 35.

[101]1 June 1949, *Divrai HaKnesset*, 620-621.

[102]Rachel Kagan, "Women's Position in the State of Israel," n.d. file F49 1951, WIZO Archives.

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legislation did not take their work into account (by not including working women on tax returns). While she acknowledged that the establishment of a social welfare system would be a lengthy process, Kagan argued that many problems called for immediate solutions and that the field of social work required full recognition by the government. Whereas previously social service was "based upon the love of one's fellow citizen," Kagan noted, in keeping with Szold's views, that now it was a "science and profession" and, as such, required involvement of foreign professionals. Kagan urged the Minister of Social Welfare to consult with women's organizations, and she proposed the establishment of a Public Social Council, to be staffed on the basis of professional skill, not party loyalty. Finally, Kagan discussed the high cost of living, and argued that as the primary individual responsible for the household budget, housewives were the "first sacrifice" of economic problems. Kagan also called for tax exemptions for families with more than three children, for those in which the wife worked in the husbands' business, as well as for those with grown children studying. Since there was no universal social insurance for the elderly, Kagan called for legislation that would encourage children to support their parents in old age. [103]

Finally, Kagan argued that families should be encouraged to insure themselves privately, since state insurance was not available, and that taxation should be progressive, especially for families with many children. Kagan also argued that the state should support the organizations and charities which supported people who lacked insurance, by making donations tax deductible. Lastly, Kagan argued that couples in their first year of marriage should be given deductions, to expenses incurred in setting up a new household. [104]

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[103]21 March 1951, *Divrai HaKnesset*, 1374-1375.

[104]Ibid.

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For the most part, Kagan's views were consonant with Mapai's commitment to a social welfare system. During the first Knesset, Mapai engaged in a power struggle with the Histadrut which had not immediately agreed to surrender its provision of health and social services upon the establishment of the state. A report on the question of social security was published by the Histadrut in 1948. This became the basis for a commission conducted by an inter-ministerial committee of the Provisional Government in 1949. The "struggle for the implementation of the Kanev plan took place" between 1948 and 1951, and in 1953 the National Insurance Act, the first legislation dealing with social security, was passed.

5.4.2 Education

The debate over education was one of the areas in which Kagan was most involved. She sat on the Committee for Education and Culture during the first Knesset, and argued in favour of a unified, non-partisan educational system.

With the establishment of statehood, the educational system was simply transferred to a new Ministry of Education, directed by a Mapai representative, Zalman Shazar.[105] After Shazar resigned he was replaced by the former Minister of Transport, David Remez, who set up the Ministerial Committee on Education, in which Kagan participated.[106] The move to approve Knesset committees was in itself controversial since Ben-Gurion opposed the interference of committees in governmental decisions. Committees were to be little more than rubber stamps for

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[105]Cohen, 239.

[106]Cohen, 239; Minutes of the Committee for Education and Culture, first Knesset, 1949-1951, Knesset Archives, (in Hebrew).

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bills. Joseph Badi argues that, "rather than being the policy makers to whom the Ministries would be subservient, the committees were to be compelled to approve the Cabinet's Bills and suggestions."[107] Thus, Kagan's participation in the Education Committee had little influence on government policy.

While Kagan applauded the passage of compulsory education legislation in 1949, she deplored the fact that it only included children up to the age of thirteen. Moreover, it did not alter the division of the education system into separate ideological 'streams.' In her speeches Kagan emphasized the importance of homogeneity, as opposed to the "creation of artificial and ideological differences" which "posed a grave danger to the wholeness of a nation composed of different peoples."[108]

In Kagan's view different school streams endowed political parties with excessive influence in an area (education) in which their presence was harmful. Kagan argued that the new state should use the educational system as a tool to absorb the children of immigrants and forge an Israeli identity among them. In her view placing of children in streamed schools would brand children and deny them the ability to develop independent thought.[109] But Kagan also viewed education as the mechanism by which the state could not only socialize children, but improve their health by giving them school meals, care for disabled or mentally retarded children, and help to draw parents into the new culture by offering them the opportunity to volunteer and participate in

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[107]Badi, 113.

[108]9 March 1949, *Divrai HaKnesset*, 1374-1375.

[109]13 February 1951, 1063-1101; 1 March 1950, 882-883; 902-905; 29 March 1950, 1066-1067, *Divrai HaKnesset*.

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school decision-making bodies.[110]

Again, Kagan's views were ideologically consistent with Mapai, which, while sympathetic, did not introduce legislation for a unified educational system (with provisions for separate schools for the religious) until 1953.[111] Until then, Mapai, through its trade union wing, the Histadrut, ran its own schools. In the elections to the second Knesset, Ben-Gurion integrated Mapai's position on education with his policy of statism. Ben-Gurion's view was that:

> The aim of state education is to found primary education in the state upon the values of the culture of Israel and the achievements of science, upon the love of the homeland and loyalty to the state and the people of Israel, upon trust in agricultural labour and craftsmanship, upon *haluzic* [pioneering] training, and upon the aspiration to a society built upon freedom, equality, tolerance, mutual assistance and love of one's fellows.[112]

The point is not that Mapai enacted policies which Kagan had called for years earlier --the Mapai Party had been enmeshed in the education system as much as the other parties, and had to tread very carefully among the religious parties regarding their access to the educational system-- but to indicate that Kagan's and Mapai's position on education was similar.

5.4.3 Voluntarism

Kagan argued that the task of the governing coalition was to create national harmony, and that voluntarism was the tool by which they could achieve it. Inherent in this view was the conviction that since public voluntarism had served the pre-state settlement, it should do the same

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[110]Minutes of the Committee for Education and Culture, First Knesset, 1949.

[111]Cohen, 247.

[112]Medding, 50.

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for the new state. In her view, voluntarism removed pressure from the state so that it could assume the burden of setting up a social welfare system. As she put it, social solidarity in the pre-state period meant that certain problems could be solved without recourse to the state, so that the state could solve relevant problems more quickly.[113] Kagan argued that fostering public voluntarism meant retaining the organizations and bodies which had existed prior to the state's establishment, and recruited the public to work in a number of different areas.[114] In particular, she pointed to the work of women's organizations and she explicitly recognized that women's organizations were responsible for recent changes in the Laws of Personal Status, and that they did not intend to abdicate their responsibility with the establishment of statehood.[115]

During her term Kagan called for a number of different public committees to be established to allow the government to consult the public over a variety of issues: soldiers to determine the terms of their release from the army; housewives to set the guidelines for rationing; and ad hoc committees to discuss Knesset proposals.[116] Kagan also understood voluntarism in a more general sense, for example she argued that the government should encourage the population to organize itself to assist immigrants in transit camps.[117] In her criticism of the 1949/1950 Budget Law Kagan called for the establishment of permanent public councils which would

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[113]28 March 1949, *Divrai HaKnesset*, 242-243; 11 December 1950, *Divrai HaKnesset*, 418-421; 484-485.

[114]16 November 1949, *Divrai HaKnesset*, 206-207.

[115]No serious and concerted attack has been mounted since then on the Laws of Personal Status, although there is substantial opposition to the power of religious law in Israel.

[116]28 March 1949, 242; 27 April 1949, *Divrai HaKnesset*, 424-425.

[117]27 April 1949, *Divrai HaKnesset*, 424-425.

coordinate the work of the government.[118]

Kagan advanced these points a year later in the Budget Debate for 1950/1951. She argued that the success of the government in meeting the challenges of statehood was based on the self-sacrifice of the people of Israel, and in particular those who still were without shelter, employment or financial security. Kagan charged that a gap was growing between the government and the people, that the government was not fulfilling its task of encouraging national unity and coherence, and that the ordinary citizen was frustrated by a disorganized government.[119] While Mapai did not adopt these proposals into its legislation, Ben-Gurion explicitly supported the concept of voluntarism, especially the work of women's voluntary organizations in the transit camps. However, Ben-Gurion did not support Kagan's notion of state cooperation with voluntary operations, possibly as a result of the particular pressures of statehood and the new role that voluntary organizations were forced to accept.

5.4.4 Religion

Kagan did not call for a rupture between orthodox and secular Judaism. Instead she argued for "a synthesis between our past and renewed present, to cultivate our morals and the hidden roots of our people."[120] Moreover, rather than express hostility to the religion which was one of the sources of women's oppression in the pre-state settlement, Kagan requested that the Minister of Education "bring women closer to the Torah, to Jewish values, from which she has

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[118]9 March 1949, *Divrai HaKnesset*, 87-89.

[119]5 June 1950, *Divrai HaKnesset*, 1610-1611; 1615-1616.

[120]9 March 1949, *Divrai HaKnesset*, 87-89.

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been distanced for generations."[121] She urged the Minister of Education to remember the "tremendous role of women and mothers in society and in the family."[122] It is noteworthy that at the same time as Kagan tried to raise public outrage against religious oppression of women, she maintained their links to Judaism and the Jewish people.

5.4.5 The Status of Women

Kagan tried to convince the Knesset that the question of women's rights was a national and not a sectarian issue. In her opening speech to the Knesset in March 1949, she expressed optimism that the government would clarify its position regarding how much influence the religious parties would have in determining the laws of the new state, especially regarding women. For Kagan, the new state had the option of establishing itself along progressive and modern lines which were incompatible with religious conceptions of the role of women in society (as embodied by the Laws of Personal Status).[123] Kagan asked the Knesset rhetorically:

> Should the law limit women's rights within the family, as concerns her husband, her children and the entire society? Should the traditions of *agunot* and *chalitza* continue? Should the law invalidate women's testimony? These are questions that concern the entire society and not just women.[124]

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[121]Ibid.

[122]Ibid.

[123]The Laws of Personal Status govern marriage, divorce, inheritance and property. Each religious community in Israel to this day is governed by its own Laws of Personal Status. This had been unchanged since the Ottoman era.

[124]9 March 1949, *Divrai HaKnesset*, 87-89. *Agunot* are married women whose husbands will not grant them a divorce and are prohibited from marrying someone else. The injustice of the law lies in the fact that a man who refuses to grant his wife a divorce, is permitted to remarry, while his former wife cannot. In addition, women whose husbands had disappeared, through war,

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In Kagan's view, while the government still expected voluntary self-sacrifice from women it had not attempted to rectify women's partially second-class economic and legal status. She noted that some countries had a special department to ensure that laws upheld women's status, and suggested that Israel adopt the same measure.[125] She repeated her argument that voluntary organizations could take over the work that was burdensome and expensive for government in order to free up money that could be invested elsewhere.[126]

In 1951 Kagan repeated her demand that the tax laws be reformed so that working women would not be penalized. She called for separating tax accounts of husbands and wives and for raising the tax exemption for all women, particularly those who worked in their husband's business. In calling for tax reform Kagan tried to explain how women's work was linked to the economic well-being of the nation. She suggested that as housewives women were responsible for coping with the shortage of provisions, and due to the associated difficulties of doing so, many were forced to take outside employment. But in doing so, women worked in those areas of most assistance to the state, that is, in education, health, and welfare. It was in the state's interest therefore, that women continue to work outside the home, and for this reason the state needed to encourage women's outside employment.[127]

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or abandonment, were similarly unable to remarry.

[125]A government department to advance women's status was eventually created in the late 1970s. See Chapter V.

[126]5 June 1950, *Divrai HaKnesset*, 1610-1611; 1615-1616.

[127]Ibid.

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5.4. 6. The Military Service for Women Law (1950) and the Military Service Law Amendment, (1951).

That the Mapai government was sympathetic, on some level, to the principle of women's equality is evident in its legislation supporting women's military conscription. A more detailed examination of this legislation is necessary for three reasons. The first is that it illustrates the government's ideological commitment to women's equality, and how this was translated into policy. Second, a comparison of this legislation to the debate over the 1951 Equal Rights for Women Law illustrates how ideology and policy are easily separated when required by political demands. Third, the two bills provide, as both Berkovitch and Lahav argue, insight into the First Knesset's fundamental assumptions about women which, in part, helped torpedo Kagan's bill.

The first major controversy regarding the role of women in the new state was caused by the government's introduction of the Defence Service Law in 1949, and the religious parties' opposition to women's military service. The dispute over women's military service continued until the end of the first Knesset in 1951 and passed through three stages. The first stage of debate in August 1949 was triggered by the government's proposal that young women at age eighteen be drafted into the army for a period of twelve months. A second round of argument took place in January 1950 when the government proposed extending the period of service to twenty-four months. Finally, there was a third round of argument in March 1951, when the government announced that religious girls would have to perform some type of "national service" in lieu of serving in the army. The religious parties viewed this last amendment as a betrayal of the earlier agreement, and the bill was passed in the face of fierce opposition from the religious parties. While both the religious and secular-nationalist camps viewed the issue of women's

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service itself as vitally important, they were also aware of the symbolic issue at hand, that is, that the role accorded to women by the Knesset was indicative of the future character of the state, whether it was to follow the tenets of religious law as interpreted by the leading rabbis, or whether it was to be a modern, democratic and egalitarian state along the lines of Western democracies.

While Kagan participated in most issues involving women in the first Knesset, she did not play a pivotal role in the debate over the Defence Service Law of 1949. She participated frequently in the debates, but she did not introduce the bill, nor was hers the most radical voice. However, an examination of this debate is central in understanding the degree to which the government permitted itself to incur the wrath of the religious parties over military service for women, while in the case of equal rights for women, the government withdrew from excessive controversy by pleading that it did not want to cause "kulturkampf" - cultural war between the religious and secular sectors. The Defence Service Law, 1949 thus raises a number of questions.

To what degree was the government committed to equal rights for women when it passed the Defence Service Law and why did this commitment not carry over into the 1951 Equal Rights for Women Law? Why was the government favouring women's military service that it knew the religious would vehemently oppose, yet refuse to pass legislation removing religious control over women's status in the areas of marriage and divorce? Why was Kagan unable to rally the same voices which had supported the Defence Service Law for her proposed legislation for an improvement of women's status?

The debate began in August 1949 with Ben-Gurion's announcement of a Defence Service Law. In addition to setting out the parameters of the draft for men the bill stipulated that young

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women be drafted into the army at age eighteen. Their service would be composed of three months of basic military training and the remaining nine months in agricultural work, but in an army framework. Four categories of women were exempt from the legislation: married women, pregnant women, mothers and those who declared that they could not serve due to religious reasons or conscientious objection. This latter group could include Jewish, Christian and Muslim women, although Ben-Gurion expressed the hope that not all religious women would take advantage of the option.[128] This draft was amended in January 1950 so that women would spend twenty-four months in the army: three months in basic training, six months in agricultural work and the remainder in a particular unit of the army deemed appropriate for young women by the Committee for Foreign Affairs and Defence.

Berkovitch argues that the "only conflict in the parliamentary debate was over whether women should be drafted at all."[129] It is true that the announcement of the bill split the Knesset into two opposing camps. The side supporting the women's draft included, in addition to the governing party, Mapai, the General Zionists, Mapam, Maki, the Progressive Party, the Sephardim, the Fighters, and WIZO. Opponents of the legislation included the United Religious Front (URF), the Nazareth Democratic List, and the Yemenite Party. The Herut Party took an ambiguous stand. Although it supported the women's draft, it voted against the legislation in order to combat the government. But it is important to note, though, that within the camp which supported the legislation there were voices calling for a less circumscribed role for women within

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[128] 15 August 1950, *Divrai HaKnesset*, 1338-1339.

[129] Nitza Berkovitch, "Motherhood as a National Mission: The Construction of Womanhood in the Legal Discourse in Israel." *Women's Studies International Forum* 20 (1997): 609.

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the army than in Ben-Gurion's draft of the legislation. Thus, contrary to Berkovitch's assertion that there was only one conflict in the debate, there were at least two, and the second conflict -- that is, between those who supported Ben-Gurion's legislation as it stood, and those who supported a more egalitarian role for women within the army-- is central not only for understanding why this legislation passed in the Knesset, but also for understanding the views held by the secular nationalist camp regarding women and their rightful role.

Numerous justifications were cited by supporters of the legislation. Berkovitch's contention is that "none of the participants in those debates supported the draft for reasons such as 'equal rights'" but rather because of "military necessity" and for the right of equal responsibilities for women. This view distorts the actual debate.[130] While it may be the case that there were no unequivocal demands for equal rights for women in the army, Mapai representative, and leader of the Working Women's Council (WWC) Ada Maimon, stated in a Knesset speech that "women do not recognize the right of anyone to endow or remove rights from them."[131] Hanna Lamdan of Mapai also attacked Ben-Gurion as Defence Minister for not explicitly supporting equal duties for each woman in the state. The positions taken by the camp supporting women's draft must be understood in the historical context of constant calls for nationalism and national unity in the face of external threat which were the primary motifs of the founding period.

No single figure exemplified these views in his speeches more than Ben-Gurion. His central position as Prime Minister and his force of personality meant that he often set the boundaries of debate. Ben-Gurion's argument in favour of the women's draft relied on two

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[130]Ibid.

[131]5 September 1949, *Divrai HaKnesset*, 1528-1531.

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components, both of which negated the importance of women's equality. The first was to equate the rights of women with the rights of a group of individuals. If any value was denigrated in the public discourse of the pre-state period and the first Knesset, it was that of individual rights - the individual was expected to subordinate his or her needs to those of the collective or the nation. Ben-Gurion stated:

> I consider discussion about equal rights of men and women in these matters to be absurd, empty radicalism, which masks the reality of life.... It seems to me that there is too much discussion of the rights of man, as if we were living in the eighteenth century, when entire peoples were breaking for the first time the shackles of tyranny and declared the Rights of Man. In our days we must first of all declare the Responsibilities of Man.... There is an area in which there is no individual, there are no individual rights, or individual interest, there is only the collective, and the needs of the collective, and that is defence. The requirements of defence pre-empt every individual need and every individual right, and we must do what is right for defence, not for the individual. [132]

The second argument which Ben-Gurion raised in favour of the bill was that it did not compromise the biological destiny of women as mothers. Only two points were relevant to the subject of women's draft, according to Ben-Gurion: that "the special duty of women is that of motherhood" and that "women must receive all the rights and responsibilities that men receive except those relating to mothers" in which case "there must be a law for men and a law for women."[133] For Ben-Gurion, all women were potential mothers, and the government's legislation should not impede them from fulfilling their destiny.

One of Ben-Gurion's motives for minimizing women's equality as a factor for the women's draft was to deflect the criticism from the most vocal critic of the bill and Mapai's

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[132]5 September 1949, *Divrai HaKnesset*, 1568-1571.

[133]Ibid.

coalition partner, the United Religious Front (URF). Ben-Gurion claimed that the legislation catered neither to the "progressives" who were concerned with women's rights (which Ben-Gurion equated with individual rights), nor to the religious, who were entirely concerned with tradition, and not national security. At the same time Ben-Gurion relied on the same arguments as the other proponents of the bill.

First, there was the argument that the women's draft was necessary for defence reasons alone; that women in the army would free men to serve in battle units, and that women needed to know how to handle weapons so that they would be capable of defending their settlement in the case of an enemy attack. This camp also claimed that historically, Jewish women had always served in a military capacity. A reference was made to the fighting women heroines of the Bible to the women who had served in the women's unit of the British Army during the Second World War, and those who had volunteered for the pre-state self-defence unit, the Haganah. The names of women who had died during the Second World War, in defence of the pre-state settlements and in the War of Independence were held up as examples of the fact that women were capable and willing to sacrifice themselves for the state, and that their presence encouraged a higher standard of morality among male soldiers.[134] An additional argument in this category was that women's military service raised the moral standard of male soldiers.

A second line of argument was that women demanded to take on their share of work in defending the nation, and that the draft would allow women to learn skills which would raise their social status in other employment sectors.[135] This related to Ben-Gurion's negation of individual

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[134]Ibid.

[135]30 August 1949, *Divrai HaKnesset*, 1448-1451.

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rights, and the devaluation of individual rights in general. As Yehudit Simhonit of Mapai stated:

> We must see things as they are, that for us this is not an isolated war, that the participation of women in the Defence Forces is not an issue of superstition, nor one that should be judged on the basis of equality alone. The issue of the draft of women must be based on practical and social needs together.... We must put women in the army so that we can withstand wars like the last one we experienced, so that we can place the entire people under the flag in the hour of danger.[136]

A third line of argument was less a series of reasons in favour of the women's draft than a thinly veiled attack on the religious parties for opposing the advancement of women in public life. The fact that the religious sector had opposed women's suffrage during the Representative Assemblies, their refusal to allow religious women to be represented within their own party, and the system of religious law were all raised as evidence that the religious parties, despite their claims to the contrary, discriminated against women.[137] Some members of Knesset attempted to prove that Judaism itself supported the women's draft. Ben-Gurion made frequent references to Jewish biblical history while Ada Maimon challenged her opponents to find any biblical prohibition against women's military service. Allusions were also made to the fact that the draft of women was an issue in which one of two paths could be followed, that of Old World traditional Judaism or that of the modern democratic state. This was a theme which had been played since the pre-state settlement when the Orthodox sector first announced its opposition to women's suffrage.[138]

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[136]Ibid.

[137]5 September 1949, *Divrai HaKnesset*, 1528-1531; 30 August 1949, *Divrai HaKnesset*, 1450-1451.

[138]Ibid.

In addition to the support expressed for the bill, there were demands that the period of military service for women be extended, that it include reserve duty for women (a clause Ben-Gurion claimed was omitted by accident), that the period of basic training be lengthened, and that women be allowed, if they chose, to serve in battle units. In addition, some members criticized the exemption allowed to religious girls.[139]

Kagan's position was consistent with that of the secular-nationalist camp on this issue. She qualified her endorsement of the proposal by requesting that older immigrant girls be allowed to delay their service if they had plans to study medicine, education, agriculture or social work, since she believed their parents would not support their education if they had already spent two years in the army. Kagan also requested that neither women nor men be forced to serve in battle units against their will, but that women be offered the option of serving in battle. At the same time as she affirmed women's right to fight in war Kagan also asked that if a woman married during her army service she be released in order to perform "the duties of a wife."[140]

The basis of the opposition of the URF and their allies was clear: the Bible prohibited women's military service. A number of additional reasons were raised in support of this argument: that women's military service was morally corrupting for young women; that it would destroy the family by quashing women's maternal feelings; that it would facilitate extra-marital affairs by mixing the sexes; and, that no other army in the world drafted women. It was also argued that the population as a whole objected to the women's draft, and that if the legislation

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[139]1 September 1949, *Divrai HaKnesset*, 1528-1531; 16 January 1950, *Divrai HaKnesset*, 512-513.

[140]16 January 1950, *Divrai HaKnesset*, 512-513.

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were passed it would cause a national crisis. In speaking for the URF Rabbi K. Kahane refuted Ben-Gurion's claims about defence requirements; he argued that the legislation was simply a smokescreen for its underlying purpose: the complete equality of men and women. At the same time, the United Religious Front objected to the exemption of religious women from the draft. They argued that the exemption would doubtless be interpreted by the secular sector as giving special privileges to the religious sector and would cause internal division. The URF held the position that military service for women should be voluntary, not compulsory.[141]

The second amendment to the bill, presented in March 1951, caused an even greater uproar among the Orthodox MKs since it involved reversing the original agreement guaranteeing Orthodox girls exemption from army service. Now Mapai proposed that Orthodox girls perform "national service" by working in agriculture, education, health or immigrant absorption in lieu of army service.

In addition to the same arguments raised during the first two rounds of debate Ben-Gurion presented additional justifications for the second amendment to the bill. His primary argument was the charge that many girls lied about their religious observance in order to evade army duty, and that this was of course intolerable. (In response, Orthodox MKs asked why, if secular girls were lying to evade duty, religious girls were to be penalized.) Ben-Gurion also expanded his original definition of defence to include the building of agricultural settlements, and their defence. Defence and agriculture were thus equated in importance in order to justify bringing large numbers of religious girls into national service.

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[141]29 August 1949, *Divrai HaKnesset*, 1437-1525; 5 September 1949, *Divrai HaKnesset*, 1552-1570.

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To Ben-Gurion national and army service was required for an additional and important task: the absorption of immigrants. He stated that immigrants from "degenerate" North Africa and Turkey were not capable of self-defence and therefore endangered themselves as well as the state. It was incumbent upon women immigrants in particular to act appropriately during wartime and defend settlements, as women defended the settlements of Hadera, Metula, and Petah-Tikva during the pre-state period.

Finally Ben-Gurion brought up the principle of equality, which had been conspicuously absent from this set of debates. He did not however, refer to the principle of equality as it related to women and men, but as it related to the secular and religious sectors. Ben-Gurion discussed the concept of equality upon which he argued the army had been established, and the question of morale, both which were undermined by exemption. In doing so, he referred to the transformation the country had undergone from the period of voluntarism to statism. Whereas during the pre-state period voluntary participation in self-defence worked well, statehood required some type of compulsion. In Ben-Gurion's words, the state could not afford the selectivity inherent in voluntarism, if the state burdened its citizens, the burden had to fall equally on all citizens. The citizens referred to in this instance, however, were the secular and the religious.[142]

Ben-Gurion was supported by the same parties as in the previous debates. Mapam, however, introduced a new argument into the discussion, one that was ignored by other members of the Knesset. Mapam pressed for a written constitution which would prevent the Orthodox from imposing their "medieval" values on the rest of the population. It argued, as well, that the debate was the result of the unholy alliance between Mapai and the Orthodox, which Mapai had entered

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[142]5 March 1951, *Divrai HaKnesset*, 1281-1282.

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in order to form a government. Maki, too, offered a different analysis from most of the parties in the secular-nationalist camp: MK Shmuel Mikunis argued that the debate allowed the religious to appear to be persecuted by Ben-Gurion and the anti-religious parties, while also allowing Ben-Gurion to consolidate his anti-religious coalition with the General Zionists and their American "masters."[143] In his view the debate was irrelevant to women's equal rights, since they were discriminated against in work and in their family lives.

Kagan's argument differed little from Mapai's, but she certainly did not express the same hostility as Mapam to the Orthodox. In her view, the Orthodox had forfeited their moral high ground by agreeing to an exemption in the first place, when logically, they should have protested the drafting of all young women. Kagan argued that drafting young women was necessary for their own self-defence and for the absorption of immigrants.

For its part, the Orthodox questioned not only the amendment itself, but the motives behind it. Their main query regarded the timing of the amendment; it retracted an earlier agreement and therefore in their view was not democratic. The Minister of Welfare, Y.M. Levin, reiterated the same arguments which the URF had raised in opposition to the original bill to draft women. In addition, Levin suggested that religious girls would be thoroughly corrupted by army life, and he presented as evidence a number of incidents which religious girls had claimed had degraded them on army bases. Finally, the URF claimed that Mapai was simply trying to take revenge on the URF for its political positions before the upcoming elections. The Herut party also voted against the law, not because it opposed military service for women, but because it argued that the government was using the army for political ends, and that by permitting

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[143]5 March 1951, *Divrai HaKnesset*, 1242-1252.

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exemption for their own young women, the Orthodox had lost their claim to be fighting for a moral issue. However, opposition to the proposed bill was insufficient to prevent it from being referred to the Foreign Affairs and Defence Committee, and later from being approved by the Knesset as law. [144]

5.4.7 The Women's Equal Rights Law, 1951

The debate over the Women's Equal Rights Law, 1951, began in the spring at the end of the term of the first Knesset. On 27 March 1951, Kagan introduced her proposal by pointing out that even though the government had promised on two occasions that it would pass such legislation --in the Declaration of Independence, and in the enactment of the Basic Laws-- it had failed to do so. Kagan argued that the women of Israel had waited since 1949 for legislation which was not forthcoming, and that the difficulties women and their families faced needed immediate attention. She acknowledged the central role that the courts played in adjudicating family disputes and their potential to improve or exacerbate the disadvantageous legal status of women. But in her view, the court system was tilted in favour of men, and therefore legislation was required. [145]

Speaking on behalf of the government, the Minister of Justice, Pinchas Rosen responded to Kagan's speech by announcing that the government was in the process of preparing its own legislation on the rights of women, but that it was waiting for the Minister of Religion, to appear in the Knesset in order to place it on the agenda. Considering the absence of the Minister of

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[144]5 March 1951, *Divrai HaKnesset*, 1284.

[145]27 March 1951, *Divrai HaKnesset*, 1454-1459.

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Religion the government requested that the Knesset not place Kagan's proposal on the agenda until it had an opportunity to present its own legislation. At the same time, the Minister of Justice pointed out that Kagan's law was called "Family and Women's Equality Law" whereas the government's law was called "Equal Rights for Women," which supposedly indicated the government's stronger support for women's rights. Furthermore, Rosen criticized the law for only discussing women's equality in no more than two paragraphs, for being too broad in scope, and for trying to fundamentally rearrange family law. Rosen argued that Kagan's law should be considered, but in conjunction with the government's law. [146]

Most parties, except for the government's coalition partner, the URF reacted unsympathetically to the government's proposal to postpone considering Kagan's proposal until the government was ready to present its own. Rather than attack the substantive issue at hand, which it certainly did later during the debate, the URF's representative, Zerach Warhaftig, focused instead on procedural issues. He contended that parties had taken undemocratic advantage of the upcoming elections by introducing different types of legislation which they had not originally proposed to the electorate. Additionally, Warhaftig endorsed the government's request that it be allowed to present its bill before the debate took place; if it was not allowed to do so, Warhaftig argued, a precedent would be set for individual MKs to pre-empt government initiatives.

Opposition parties were not swayed by either line of argument. Mapam, the Progressive Party and the General Zionists all supported Kagan's initiative on the issue of women's rights, and Mapam and the Progressive Party viewed the effort of the government to block Kagan's proposal from the agenda as a blatant attempt by the government to prevent individual MKs from

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[146]Ibid.

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proposing legislation. Ultimately Kagan endorsed a compromise proposal by Meir Argov of Mapai to set a deadline for discussion of Kagan's proposal regardless of whether the government's bill was ready for discussion.[147]

5.4.8 The Government's Proposal of the Women's Equal Rights Law

The government's proposed bill tread a fine line between trying to answer Kagan's accusation that the government had no intention of legislating women's equality and avoiding opposition from the religious parties which fundamentally opposed the very concept of women's equality. Accordingly, the government's bill proposed the most superficial changes which, as Kagan pointed out in her discussion of the bill, failed to address the serious issues faced by women in the new state.

The Minister of Justice, Pinhas Rosen, began the first reading of the Mapai Bill of Equal Rights for Women on 18 June 1951. In his introduction Rosen tried to convince the Knesset that, contrary to Kagan's charges, the government appreciated and valued the women of Israel who "helped to build the state" and who had fought in its military battles. Rosen also engaged in his own reading of history, stating that while the Zionist movement had given women full voting rights in its own organizations, the Mandatory Powers withheld this right, and that suffrage was once again reaffirmed with the establishment of the state. Rosen thus excluded the fact that women themselves had organized, fought for and ultimately won the right to vote in the pre-state Elective Assembly in the face of opposition not from the Mandatory Powers, but from the Orthodox sector some of which formed the current government's coalition partner. Finally,

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[147]Ibid.

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Rosen acknowledged that while women had not yet achieved full equality, the proposed bill was the first step in an ongoing process in which the government was fully committed to fulfilling its promises to women. Rosen pointed out that his bill had been approved by the coalition partners, a warning sign to Kagan and her allies that in actuality, the government had no intention of incurring the displeasure of its Orthodox coalition partner for the sake of women's rights.[148]

The government's bill covered women's legal status, their status in the family, women's property rights and, finally, women's employment rights. Rosen acknowledged that the bill stopped short of rooting out legal discrimination against women. The threat which Mapai had not raised during the debate over women's military service was raised, a variant of the *kulturkampf* argument. Rosen brought up the supposed difficulties of absorbing different "ethnic groups" with different religious practices who constituted an "indivisible part" of the state. Rosen thus justified legalised discrimination against women in civil law by arguing that the state could not afford to stir up discontent among the religious population. At the same time Rosen argued that the government's law would mitigate discriminatory practices of the religious courts.[149]

In reality, the sections of the bill dealing with women's legal status were perhaps the most disingenuous. In one section, it stated that women would receive the same treatment as men in every legal action. This meant, for example, that the bill would prevent Jewish religious courts from barring women's testimony and block Muslim religious courts from giving women's testimony less weight than men's. In addition, it would cancel women's inability to assume custody of children. The bill guaranteed the legal standing of women regarding the purchase of

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[148]Ibid.

[149]Ibid.

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property, and guaranteed that women's status could not be damaged by marriage. It also reversed the criminal law permitting bigamy which had been permitted for Muslims and for Oriental Jews. This clause now outlawed it for all religions. The bill stipulated a punishment of five years for anyone who divorced his wife against her will, or without the authority of a court. Yet the same clause stipulated that the status of women regarding laws of marriage and divorce would not be affected. This was one of the most serious problems faced by women in pre-state Israel and the new state, and which had been publicly discussed by the women's movement since the 1920s and 1930s.[150]

The second area discussed in the bill ostensibly concerned women's status in the family, but again the bill did not address the major concerns of women's organizations. It stipulated that fathers and mothers were the sole custodians of children, and that if one parent died, the other would take charge of the children. This clause was not intended to damage the court's authority over the custodianship or property of the children but to consider their best interests. However, the bill also stipulated that wives shared equal responsibilities with husbands to provide for each other and their children in case the husband was unable to do so. The point of this clause was supposedly to remove from men their assumed superior status as the result of their being the prime provider for their families. Rosen claimed that the bill would not "diminish" men's responsibilities as husbands and fathers, but that it aimed to distribute family responsibilities evenly between husbands and wives.[151]

Third, the bill tried to rationalize the area of property rights which were governed under

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[150]Ibid.

[151]Ibid.

the Ottoman Law. As Pnina Lahav has pointed out, it is an indication of the founding

government's lack of commitment to women's equality that, rather than revise family law within a

new Israeli legal system, the Women's Equal Rights Law endorsed the existing Ottoman Law.[152]

Rosen claimed that the section covering the family was the most important part of the proposed

bill. Indeed, it was the clause that proposed the most change in women's status, although its

scope was still limited since it had been obtained through a negotiated compromise with the

government's religious coalition partner.[153] Rosen listed four levels of discrimination faced by

women in rabbinical courts: that men could inherit the estates of their late wife, but not vice versa;

that a father could inherit the estate of a late son, but not a mother; that male relatives took

precedence over female relatives in inheritance; and finally, that in the case of property left in

wills, a woman would not receive an equal share to male inheritors. By accepting the

government's proposal Rosen argued that this kind of discrimination in property disputes would

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[152]Pnina Lahav, "The Status of Women in Israel - Myth and Reality," *American Journal of Comparative Law* 22 (1974): 117.

[153]The section dealt with inheritance law under Ottoman law, which distinguished between two broad groups of property detailed in Turkish: *Miri* constituted the first, and *Molech* and *Mitaltalim*, the second. Rabbinical and Christian courts had authority to rule over the divisions of estates that were not governed by a will, but only if the parties involved agreed to the court's decision. In the case that no agreement could be reached the state court would intervene. This was not true of Islamic courts, which had exclusive and final authority over the division of such estates. *Miri* property could not be included in a will, so in such cases the religious court was responsible for its division, but in accordance with the Ottoman general law of inheritance, which did not distinguish between men and women. In the case of *Miri* property therefore, the government's bill left the existing provisions intact, since the Ottoman law did not discriminate against women. In the case of the other types of property, that is *Molech* and *Mitaltalim* which, unlike *Miri* property in a will, the government simply extended the Ottoman law over them, so that here too the law could not discriminate against women in the inheritance of property left without a will. 27 March 1951, *Divrai HaKnesset*, 1454-1459.

be eliminated.[154]   The last area dealt with by the bill concerned women's employment rights.

Here the bill stipulated that a woman be ensured maternity leave, but that a women not be hired

for work injurious to her health or which interfered with the "fulfilment of her family role, " thus

prohibiting night shifts to women.[155]   In closing, Rosen noted that two significant areas of

discrimination were still left in the area of marriage and divorce. Rosen rationalized that the

government had not attempted to deal with them out of respect for the large sector of the

population which would be offended by changes, and he appealed to the rabbinate to enact

reforms.[156]

The government's bill therefore represented a halfhearted attempt to redress the

discrimination which women faced in the court. If anything the bill was a compromise with the

government's Orthodox coalition partner. Its provisions regarding women's testimony and

custody of property allowed the extension of Ottoman law over an area which had previously

been under the sole authority of the courts, but not over marriage and divorce. In other words the

government may have extended its authority over the religious courts, but it did not replace

religious authority altogether, so that in the most egregious areas of discrimination, marriage and

divorce, the bill simply had no teeth. Nor could the provisions for property inheritance

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[154]Ibid.

[155]This clause became major item of grievance for a later generation of feminists. See Chapter V.

[156]Rosen pointed to *Heter shel me'ah rabanim* and *Yavom ve'Halizah*. *"Heter shel Me'ah Rabanim"* is the Halachic law which stipulates that a man whose wife has refused him a divorce can seek the permission of one hundred rabbis in order to expedite the divorce regardless of her consent. The same recourse is not available to married women whose husbands will not grant them divorce.

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fundamentally alter, as the government seemed to claim, women's economic status. The third paragraph, which stipulated that women, like men, would share equal responsibility with their husbands for providing for their families was nothing more than window dressing: by suggesting that parity existed between men and women economically the bill gave the illusion that women had hitherto evaded their economic responsibility as members of the family household.

5.4.9 Kagan's Criticism of the Government's Bill and Her Proposal

Kagan dismissed the government's bill as entirely inadequate. She compared it to the Right to Return Law; both strove to give rights to Jews and women respectively, but the former did so unequivocally, whereas the latter modified each progressive clause with a regressive qualification. Kagan articulated a number of criticisms of the government's bill. She argued that the second stipulation of the law negated the first, so that while women and men were supposedly equal, they were not so in matters of marriage and divorce, obviously a central area of their lives. She deplored that the bill ensured that women did not lose the property they received prior to marriage, but it did not ensure that property acquired during marriage become joint property. After all, asked Kagan rhetorically, was not the work of the Hebrew woman keeping house and raising children just as important as the work of her husband? And if so, should not property acquired together be owned by both partners in the marriage?[157]

Regarding the government's clause that women should be responsible for providing for their husbands and families, Kagan argued that joint ownership of property would have a far greater impact on women's economic status. Moreover, she argued, as long as men had an

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[157]26 June 1951, *Divrai HaKnesset*, 2086-2093.

advantage in their property, it would be unfair to cancel women's advantage in alimony. A similar example of the government's unwillingness to act against discrimination against women was apparent in the section on inheritance. Here men and women were declared equal in inheritance, except when a will was left, in which case it was legal to exclude women from a will. While Kagan endorsed the prohibition of bigamy, she questioned why the government did not take the opportunity to pass legislation against the laws of marriage and divorce. But Kagan did not entirely condemn the government's bill which she viewed as an attempt to begin to address the concerns of women's inequality.

Kagan's proposal was wider in scope than the government's, although she too stopped short of attacking the religious court authority over marriage and divorce. She admitted that her proposal was meant to be an interim measure, since women's equality could not be achieved by revolutionary measures in the context of the new state. By dealing with the specific area of the family, Kagan argued, it was possible to revoke some of the laws most damaging to women's status.

In her address, Kagan pointed to several of the more important clauses. Section Six, for example, attempted to give standing to the work of housewives, a proposal which the government's bill had not suggested. Two sections discussed the abandonment of children or spouses. Whereas the law at the time called for the accused to be imprisoned if he failed to pay the fine the court assigned him, Kagan called for imprisonment prior to payment until the fine had been paid, a procedure she claimed would expedite the payment process.

Section Fourteen dealt with property, but did not stipulate governmental interference in the area of wills. Kagan proposed that it be illegal to leave entire estates in wills or gifts. While

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the government could debate the amount that had to be left out of a will or gift, at the very least it should establish support for women who would otherwise be entirely excluded from inheriting. Paragraph Twenty stated that children were responsible for providing for the needs of parents and grandparents if the latter were unable to support themselves. Rather than being a measure of punishment, Kagan argued, this clause should serve as an educational measure.

Finally, Kagan spoke out against the authority of Rabbinical Courts over women's lives. It was unthinkable that women should agree to rabbinical authority when women themselves were not entitled to sit as judges in such courts. Moreover, she argued, judges trained in a tradition which over centuries had discriminated against women, would be unable to rule contrary to their world view. If, for example, such courts had jurisdiction over custody of children, and it was the belief of judges that a religious education was in the best interest of children, a religious court judge would be unlikely to award custody to anyone other than the father, who in their view was the only one capable of providing for such an upbringing. For this reason Kagan recommended the establishment of a special public court to deal with family matters, similar to courts dealing with delinquent children. Such courts would require judges skilled in dealing with family matters. While religious judges would view such courts as encroaching on their authority Kagan pointed out that under the British Mandate, religious courts agreed to the authority of British judges, and so should agree to the authority of Jewish secular judges. Kagan concluded by calling for the rabbinate to deal with the issues of marriage and divorce in a satisfactory way so that the prestige of the Jewish religion and Bible would not be irrevocably damaged.[158]

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[158]Ibid.

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5.4.10 Attacks Against Kagan's and the Government's Proposals

The attack against the bill was led by the URF which, despite the government's assurance that the coalition had approved the proposed legislation, strongly opposed what it perceived as an attack on the rights of the religious. It argued that because the Knesset was shortly to dissolve, time was insufficient to discuss the issue and that therefore the legislation had not been presented for debate in good faith, but as a pre-election campaign tactic. The Minister of Welfare, Y.M. Levin, claimed that the bill provided an opportunity for parties to compete over which of them appeared more radical and "modern."[159]

The URF also argued on the basis of religious faith: the laws which governed the lives of the rest of the world were not relevant to the Jewish state, which should adhere to Jewish religious law. Moreover, if some religious laws were beyond comprehension (that is, laws that the advocates of women's rights claimed oppressed women), they should still be followed because they were the command of God.[160] A variant of this argument was that the Bible had already endowed women with rights.[161] The URF spokesmen did not shy away from stating what they believed: that women simply were incapable of certain responsibilities that the legislation proposed to give them. One MK stated that as housewives women simply did not possess the experience required to look after property.[162]

Finally, the URF complained about the damage that the passage of the bill would cause to

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[159]Ibid.

[160]Ibid.

[161]27 June 1951, *Divrai HaKnesset*, 2098-2108.

[162]Ibid.

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the religious family (which they claimed was a source of envy to the secular) and to the religious community in general. The Minister of Welfare pointed out that when Ben-Gurion first stated his intention to pass a bill for women's rights, the Minister of Welfare had expressed his reservations, and argued that if the bill offended religious sensibilities, he would vote against it. For the URF, the bill represented an attack on the autonomy and authority of the rabbinate since it asked rabbis to act against their consciences in deciding specific cases. For these reasons Minister of Welfare Levin urged members of Knesset to oppose the bill.[163] It counted among its allies the Herut party which agreed with the URF that the legislation was proposed too close to the elections to be adequately debated, although it also argued that women deserved full equal rights since they were drafted and had the same responsibilities as men.[164]

Kagan's main weakness in opposing the government's bill was that while several MKs were sympathetic to her arguments, she could not rely on them as allies. Many of them belonged to Mapai and, while critical of the government's deliberate avoidance of certain issues, actually became apologists for the bill. This group was mainly comprised of the elected women members of Mapai: Ada Maimon, Gina Tabarski, Hasia Drori, and Beba Idelson. They strongly deplored the government's avoidance of the issues of marriage and divorce, regretted certain sections of the government's bill, but ultimately endorsed it with the qualification that it be sent to the committee with Kagan's bill so that the necessary changes could be made. They criticized the rabbinate for failing to reform the laws of marriage and divorce, and put forth their request for it

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[163]26 June 1951 *Divrai HaKnesset*, 2086-2093.

[164]27 June 1951, *Divrai HaKnesset*, 2098-2108. Lahav points out that the "big guns of Herut, Menachem Begin and Yochanan Badar, did not raise their voice during the entire debate." Lahav, "When the Palliative," 153.

to modernize the relevant laws. But the women of Mapai did not take issue with the rabbinate's authority over these issues, nor did they see a fundamental contradiction between the religious laws and contemporary society. Thus while Kagan avoided the problems of marriage and divorce on the grounds that such issues were too contentious to be dealt with in this specific bill, her so-called supporters ignored her actual criticisms and recommendations. As a result, their opposition did little, if anything, to support Kagan.[165]

Indeed most MKs who were in favour of Kagan's proposal found themselves in the difficult position of having to endorse both her bill and the government's bill, so that the committee could make the relevant changes to ensure that at least something would be passed by the end of the first Knesset.[166] Perhaps the most insightful remarks regarding the debate came from Yizhar Harari of the Progressive Party. Rather than make distinctions between *halacha* and practice, Harari asked bluntly why the religious party monopolized the interpretation of the religion, and more to the point, whether religious law or secular norms were to be sovereign in the Knesset. Harari pointed out that if religious laws were indeed stronger than those of the Knesset, then there was no need for the Knesset to endorse them. Harari argued that the religious debased themselves by involving their Chief Rabbi (Toledano) in Knesset decisions. The basic problem, Harari argued, was the lack of a constitution, and the attempt by the government to compensate by passing so-called "basic laws", which, while important in themselves, should not be confused with actual "basic laws" which were lengthier and more detailed. Harari thus

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[165]Hannah Lamdan is an exception; she demanded the government retract its bill and rename it to suit its content. July 2, 1951, *Divrai HaKnesset*, 2116-2134; 26 June 1951 *Divrai HaKnesset*, 2086-2093; 27 June 1951, *Divrai HaKnesset*, 2098-2108.

[166]2 July 1951, *Divrai HaKnesset*, 2116-2134.

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endorsed Kagan's proposal to be used as a basis for the improvement of both bills at the committee stage. Similarly MK Eri Jabotinsky argued that the Knesset should seek the separation of religion and state.[167]

The last issue to be settled concerned the name of the law. For Kagan and those who agreed with her, this was an issue of great importance. The name of the law symbolized the government's view of the status of women, that is, whether it saw it as settled, despite the glaring omissions regarding marriage and divorce. In the end, it was Warhaftig's proposed name, the Law of Equal Rights for Women, which carried the day. Consequently Kagan opposed the bill. Thus in seven short debates lasting only two months rabbinical authority was confirmed over central aspects of women's lives, and given "constitutional character," considered to form part of the "evolving constitution."[168]

The Equal Rights for Women Law is often cited with two other laws passed during the first Knesset, as evidence of the founding government's commitment to women's equality. The others are the Compulsory Education Law, which stipulated that parents must send both sons and daughters to school at least until age 15, and the Age of Marriage Law, which was set at 17 for girls, unless there were exceptional circumstances. The most striking aspects of the debate over the Equal Rights for Women Law are its brevity, the shallow level of the discussion regarding the issues raised by it, and the widespread recognition that Mapai was not committed to women's equality. Kagan acknowledged this fact explicitly in the presentation of her proposed legislation .

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[167]27 June 1951, *Divrai HaKnesset*, 2098-2108.

[168]Four other laws passed during the first Knesset are considered to have "constitutional character." These include the Law of Return, the Nationality Law, the State Property Law, and the State Seal Law. Badi, 116.

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In her view a partial effort to redress discrimination against women was superior to no effort at all. In contrast to the debate over the women's draft, the debate over the Women's Equal Rights Law failed to engage the full attention of the Knesset --perhaps because it was clear that the government's bill would to change so little.

5.5 Conclusion

The first Knesset was a critical juncture for organized women. The defeat of Kagan's proposed legislation was a major setback for organized women. It is important to note that the failure of Kagan's proposal is consistent with the fact that it is always difficult for private members in the Knesset to have their legislative proposals passed, as is also the case in most parliamentary systems. Usually "only those bills which are not the subject of interparty conflicts (i.e., non-partisan bills jointly proposed by coalition and opposition party members together) and those not provoking government objections have any chance of being carried in the Knesset."[169] While there was little chance that an independent MK's proposal would win the day over the government's proposal, neither Kagan's nor her sympathizers' criticisms had any effect upon the government's proposed legislation. Clearly, her defeat raised the question of whether having a women's representative in the Knesset to raise issues and propose legislation, none of which were likely to be taken seriously, was worth the money and effort invested by the sponsoring women's organization, in this case WIZO.

In addition, the passage of the government's legislation clearly illustrated that the

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[169]Shevach Weiss and Avraham Brichta, "Private Members' Bills in Israel's Parliament - the Knesset," *Parliamentary Affairs* 32 (1969/1970): 21-33.

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women's movement had splintered. The women of the WWC, now allied with the government, could not be expected to split ranks. Their support for the Equal Rights for Women Law demonstrated that they might articulate support of feminist causes, but ultimately they would not vote against the government. Without a broad common front the women's movement had no hope of wielding political influence. Kagan's defeat also demonstrated to women's organizations, in particular WIZO, that if they were not allied with a political party, (in the way that the WWC was allied with the Labour Party,) then, a new political strategy was needed. Governmental support for women's voluntarism offered an attractive alternative to partisan politics. In combination, these factors threw doubt on the political efficacy of separate Women's Lists, and prompted organized women to re-evaluate their political strategy following the first Knesset. The critical juncture of the First Knesset led to a legacy in which organized women lobbied for political change, but refrained from engaging in electoral politics.

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CHAPTER 6

THE LEGACY AND THE END OF THE LEGACY:
NON-PARTISANSHIP AND THE EMERGENCE OF THE NEW
FEMINIST MOVEMENT IN ISRAEL

Collier and Collier argue that "the importance or lack of importance of a critical juncture cannot be established in general, but only with reference to a specific historical legacy."[1] The legacy is comprised of three parts. First, the "mechanics of production" are elements which create the legacy; second, the "mechanics of reproduction" are the "institutional and political processes" which perpetuate the legacy. Third, the "stability of the core attributes of the legacy" are "the basic attributes produced as an outcome of the critical juncture."[2] Finally, the "end of the legacy" must be indicated by "explicit criteria" in order to demonstrate a "dramatic" rupture between the two.[3]

The decision by organized women to abstain from electoral politics was the legacy of the critical juncture which took place during the first Knesset. The mechanics of production of this legacy were created through organized women's almost exclusive focus upon social welfare issues, at the expense of the political and legal rights agenda. Organized women's ongoing volunteer labour were the mechanics of reproduction which perpetuated the legacy. The core

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[1]Collier and Collier, 33.

[2]Ibid., 31.

[3]Kathleen Thelen argues that with few exceptions most critical juncture analyses fail to substantiate how the "legacy" of the critical juncture is perpetuated. She insists that without "complementary arguments that identify the mechanisms of reproduction at work," critical juncture arguments cannot substantiate their claims. Thelen argues that if arguments of critical junctures are to be effective "we need to know exactly who is invested in particular institutional arrangements, exactly how that investment is sustained over time, and perhaps how those who are not invested in the institutions are kept out." Thelen, 391.

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attributes of the legacy were the de-legitimization of separate political organizing by women. The

end of the legacy can be dated to the mid-1970s when the emerging new Israeli feminist

movement set up a Women's Party which ran for election to the Ninth Knesset. Nevertheless,

since separate political representation has not re-established itself as a stable feature of Israeli

electoral politics, many of the core attributes of the legacy are still in effect, that is, unwillingness

of organized women to run on separate lists for Knesset.

6.1 Mechanics of Production:
The Decision to Withdraw from Electoral Politics

WIZO members expressed two main views on politics during the deliberations over

whether to run a Women's List for election to the second Knesset in 1951.[4] Opponents of

running a separate women's list argued that non-partisanship was necessary if WIZO was to

inculcate Zionist values in women and youth. WIZO members holding this perspective expressed

a distrust of what they viewed as the dangerous factionalism caused by the multiplicity of political

parties. They called for WIZO to remain above the political fray, but for individual WIZO

members to be encouraged to join the lists of the political party of their choice. This group

argued that running a WIZO Women's List suggested to the public that there was a division

between World WIZO and its federation in Palestine. This group argued that such an impression

would undermine WIZO's claim of being an internally united organization. Supporters of running

a Women's List tended to emphasize the necessity of fighting for women's equality and rights and

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[4]The debate over WIZO's involvement in partisan politics took place during its Annual
Conference in 1951 in Jerusalem. The *Jerusalem Post* reported that approximately 50 delegates
were involved in the debate. Henrietta Boas, "Champion of Women's Rights," *Jerusalem Post*,
29 June 1951.

pointed out that once women left electoral politics, it would be difficult for them to return. Kagan

argued that while WIZO backing was not necessary, it was important for women to campaign on

a "general Women's List" even if it meant cutting back on WIZO's social welfare work.[5]

Although the decision was made to refrain from presenting a Women's List for election,

WIZO did not direct its members as individuals to refrain from participation in party politics.

WIZO approved involvement in local politics which it claimed to be more suitable for women's

involvement, since local politics, in WIZO's view, did not entail the level of factionalism as did

national politics.[6] In conjunction with a number of other women's organizations, it established a

National Committee for Organizing Women at the Municipal Level. WIZO's fear that the public

and its membership would think it was affiliated to a political party was highlighted when, in

1961, Rachel Kagan, ran for Knesset on the Liberal Party slate. WIZO took great care to confirm

in its communications to its members that Kagan's support for the Liberal Party was her personal

decision, and did not reflect the political sympathy of the organization. In order to stave off any

misunderstanding regarding WIZO's political position, Kagan resigned her position as the

Chairwoman of the Israel Federation of WIZO during the term of the fifth Knesset (1961-1965).[7]

Referring to WIZO's "non-party status" one WIZO publication stated:

> This policy should not be construed to mean that a Wizo member, including
> executives, must be prevented from taking active part in the political life of her

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[5]Kagan stated that the tax reforms she initiated as an MK were more important than "opening another well-baby clinic." "Xth WIZO Conference Minutes", WIZO

[6]The perception that local politics and not national politics, is an appropriate level of electoral and political involvement is still current in Israel and is explored by Hanna Herzog, *Gendering Politics*, 13-31.

[7]"WIZO Leader Rachel Kagan Elected to Knesset," F49 1874, CZA.

country if she so wishes. On the contrary, a Wizo member can only be commended for doing this as she may thus be able to wield considerable influence on vital legislation and parliamentary decisions directly affecting women and their status. Mrs. Kagan did just that when she was member of Israel's first Knesset and the effects of her good work continue to be felt by Israeli women and by Wizo. But as regards Wizo as an organization the executive committee and Mrs. Kagan agree fully that it was, is and will always remain a world-wide organization dedicated to the upbuilding of Israel, the welfare of its women, the education of its children and the integration of its newcomers, unaffiliated and uncommitted to any political party whatsoever.[8]

According to the WIZO leadership, the achievement of statehood meant that partisanship was not appropriate for WIZO:

> We can no longer, as formerly, survey the conditions in the country, recognize a particular need, make plans to provide for it, raise the required money and go ahead with our work. Zionism has achieved its goal; the State has been established and our function is to serve the State and the people, and to do so we must subordinate ourselves to the overall social and economic policies laid down by the Government.[9]

Clearly, WIZO held statehood as a significant turning point for women's organizations. In its view statehood required that women's organizations support the consolidation of the state which meant that its independent pioneering of social welfare services of the pre-state period was no longer acceptable. Consequently, WIZO affirmed it deference to government in the provision of social welfare services.[10]

In an interview given during the 1970s, Kagan was asked by a reporter whether, in retrospect she supported WIZO's decision to pull out of electoral politics, and whether she

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[8]"WIZO Reaffirms Non-Party Status," F49 1874, CZA.

[9]Rosa Ginossar, "Looking at WIZO's Problems," n.d., file F49 3140, CZA.

[10]Tonie Hauser-Zeisler, "WIZO's Cooperation with the Government," n.d., file F49 3140, CZA.

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thought that WIZO should re-enter political campaigns as a political list. In response, Kagan made it clear that she had not agreed with WIZO's official position in 1951. Kagan tried to distinguish between a party, which in her argument adhered to a specific political ideology, and an electoral list, which she claimed was united on particular issues and not ideology. Kagan suggested that a WIZO-sponsored Women's List still remained a valid option:

> A party must have a political ideology. WIZO unites women of different political views but with a common concern for everything relating to the rights and status of women and to the health, education and well-being of children. In all other subjects they will vote according to their conscience. But in these matters, of specific interest to them as women, they will not merely vote according to the interests of women and children; they will take the initiative in tabling laws that protect women and children and advance their cause.[11]

In the interview Kagan claimed that in 1951 she had accepted, but disagreed with, WIZO's assertion that running a Women's List in the election to the second Knesset would alienate members. In her view WIZO's voluntary work was not a reflection of its members, but of the political context of statehood. She argued:

> If we can convince our members in Israel and abroad that it would serve the purpose of WIZO by bringing greater benefit to women and children, I think they will understand that it will be good for WIZO to be represented in the Knesset because it will enable us to help shape policy. So long as we were a State-in-the-making, we had no alternative but to function strictly as a welfare organization. But now we have the opportunity to exert our influence and to initiate new social experiments. It is a question of political maturity. Is WIZO and its membership mature enough to make a bid for this opportunity? I hope and believe it is.[12]

Kagan also argued that WIZO's claim that an election campaign was too costly was not based on the consideration of the effectiveness of having a representative in Knesset. She suggested that a

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[11]"Should WIZO Enter the Elections to Knesset and the Municipalities," *WIZO Review* No. 171, n.d., WIZO Archives, 4.

[12]Ibid., 4.

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WIZO list was and continued to be necessary for a number of reasons. She claimed that women affiliated with political parties put "their party interests first." Furthermore, the number of women in the political parties was inadequate. Third, the political parties were not sympathetic to the issues which WIZO advocated. Kagan noted that "whenever we used to bring up a matter connected with women's and children's interests, the men mocked at us. They called it 'diaper politics.'"[13] Kagan also argued that sponsoring a WIZO Women's List would facilitate greater involvement of WIZO members in electoral politics, by providing them a framework within which they could become active. Kagan also pointed to potential systemic change which electoral politics can accomplish. She argued that a Women's List

> would help us to solve our problems. To take an example, when we [the HNI] started our 'Tipat Halav' ["Drop of Milk" Infant Welfare Stations] project, we had to go from house to house to explain its value. Eventually we succeeded in incorporating into the National Insurance Law the provision that in order to receive a maternity grant, a pregnant woman must be connected with Tipat Halav and must give birth in a hospital. The law made it unnecessary for us to go from house to house. And the consequence is the benefit of the mother, the benefit of the children, and the benefit of the nation.[14]

Finally, Kagan argued that failing to put forward a separate list had cumulative negative effects for women. She stated that "as a result of our neglect there has been a regression: fewer women members in the Knesset and municipalities, and more ignorance and indifference among women themselves."[15]

WIZO's announcement in 1951 that it would no longer sponsor a separate list of

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[13]Ibid., 2.

[14]Ibid., 3.

[15]Ibid., 4.

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representatives for future electoral campaigns sealed consensus among organized women for the next two decades in Israel. For the women of the Labour movement, in other parties, and most importantly, the large-scale women's organizations, WIZO and the WWC, this decision signalled that Israeli women no longer required, as they had in the pre-state period, independent political representation. The WIZO leadership's opposition to running a separate Women's List was based on several reasons. They claimed a separate list would drive away WIZO members affiliated with other political parties; that partisan political activity contravened WIZO's essence as an apolitical organization dedicated to Zionist goals; and that it would damage WIZO's standing with the government, which at the time publicly acknowledged WIZO's contribution to state-building. Nor would the minority of WIZO members who had supported running a Women's List contravene the leadership's directive on the issue.

Second, there is no indication that Mapai women were sufficiently dissatisfied with their party's treatment of women's status to risk losing their Knesset seats and party status by running for, or supporting an independent Women's List. In the second Knesset, the number of women MKs declined by one, leaving a total of ten women MKs. Five of these were Mapai representatives; two represented Mapam; the General Zionists and Herut each had one woman representative; and the communist Maki brought a new woman MK into the Knesset.[16] Because it had included the greatest number of women representatives, and because it claimed to support gender equality, Mapai became the de facto champion of women's equality in the Knesset. Yet Mapai's support for women's equality never exceeded the limits that Ben-Gurion's political compromise with religious coalition partners allowed.

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[16]Government of Israel, Lists of Knesset Members, (In Hebrew).

6.2 The Mechanics of Reproduction:
Social Welfare Work, Political Lobbying, and Citizen Education,
1951-1970

In 1951, the year that WIZO announced its intention to stay out of electoral politics, the organization was the largest non-partisan women's organization operating in Israel. By the end of the 1960s, WIZO boasted a membership in Israel of 90,000, with 180 branches across the country.[17] If the "legacy" of the critical juncture was WIZO's commitment to non-partisanship, the "mechanics of production" which perpetuated this legacy were composed of three broad areas of activity. These, in turn, were reflections of WIZO's institutional composition.

The first area stemmed from the engagement of WIZO and the HNI (later the HNZ) in social welfare work. WIZO's provision of childcare facilities, vocational and agricultural training for women and youth, WIZO stores for home crafts, and courses in home economics were intended to enable three sectors of the population - women, youth and new immigrants- to assume economic independence, and in so doing not burden the state with demands for social support.[18] WIZO was committed to assisting the absorption of new immigrants in Israel by integrating them into the dominant cultural framework. For WIZO this work was particularly significant because of the prestige and recognition which accrued through its co-operation with the Ministry of Absorption and the Jewish Agency.[19] As one of its publications asserted, "The fact that WIZO in Israel sits on various public and governmental bodies proves the great importance of the great

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[17]Fay Grove-Pollak, *The Saga of a Movement: WIZO 1920-1970*, (Tel Aviv: WIZO, 1993), 18.

[18]*Bamat Haisha*, 46, 1968

[19]Esther Levitan, *The Saga of a Movement: WIZO 1970-1990*. (Tel Aviv: WIZO, n.d.), 19.

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work done by the Israel Federation of WIZO all over Israel, which is recognized and appreciated by official and unofficial bodies in the country."[20]

WIZO also developed a network of social and cultural activities such as lectures, publications, fund raising events, social clubs, and libraries. All these signified the organization's recognition of the necessity of cultivating a public profile in order to increase and maintain its volunteer base. Like the activities in which WIZO engaged during the pre-state period, these aimed at assisting the task of state-building by freeing the state from social responsibilities so that it could concentrate its attention on the "more important" matters central to Zionist ideology such as defence, foreign relations, and increasing immigration to Israel.

The third type of activity in which WIZO was involved was political lobbying aimed at "gradual reforms as well as bills" supporting the "equality of women."[21] Most, if not all of WIZO's legislative lobbying was conducted through several offices established during the 1950s. These included the Legal Advisory Bureaus on Family Matters, the Commission on the Status of Women and the Israel Association of Equal Rights for Women. In 1950, the UER and WIZO entered into an agreement to cooperate in the Legal Advisory Bureau on Family Matters. The UER originally set up legal aid bureaus in its branches during the 1920s for women to receive free legal advice regarding their marital status under religious law. According to Azaryahu, the bureaus were staffed by volunteers who acted as lawyers in Religious Courts.[22] But whereas the UER campaigned against the legal authority of the rabbinate, under WIZO's auspices the bureaus

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[20]Ibid., 29.

[21]Gerda Luft, "In the Lobby of the Knesset," n.d., file F49 3140, CZA.

[22]Azaryahu, 42-43.

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were publicized as helping to "prevent the break-up of the family."[23]

A fourth area of activity was referred to by WIZO as "citizen education," that is, politically educating women in order to increase their political activity and visibility.[24] WIZO perpetuated the traditional notion that women viewed the world through a different lens from men which resulted in a different political sensibility from men. Rachel Kagan summed up WIZO's position regarding women and politics:

> The question as I see it is not one of obtaining representation which merely reflects our numerical strength. It is one of achieving a greater measure of influence on the course of development in the State. Women are, after all, different than men, and their approach to matters of public concern is coloured by these differences in emotional make-up and human understanding. If we take seriously the concept of democracy, it is incumbent upon us to do everything within our power to assure that the women's point of view is more fully expressed both in law and in the creation of public opinion.[25]

Although one of WIZO's justifications for jettisoning the Women's List was that partisanship alienated members who were already allied with political parties, after 1951 it repeatedly argued that women required "political knowledge" in order to participate in electoral politics.[26] Despite the organizations' own involvement in the Women's Lists of the pre-state period and its own list in the first Knesset, WIZO publications and events continually asserted that Israeli women were "apathetic" and "indifferent" to the "political and economic problems" of

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[23]Robert Gary, "From the Desk of Tania Levenfish," *WIZO Review*, 140, 1968, 5.

[24]Gerda Luft, "Elections to the Knesset," n.d., file F49 3140, CZA.

[25]Rachel Kagan, "Israel WIZO Calls Israel's Women to Greater Public Activity Through A Woman's Forum," F49 1873, CZA.

[26]Sally Horowitz, "The Decisive Years...and WIZO was There," *WIZO Menorah*, 1988, 24; "Keywomen's Kit No. III," Publicity and Information Section, 1969; "Keywomen's Kit No. VI," Publicity and Information Section, 1969, no file number, WIZO Archives.

Israel, as evidenced by the low number of women representatives in the Knesset.[27] In order to raise women's political awareness WIZO established the Commission on the Status of Women in 1956. WIZO announced that the purpose of the Commission on the Status of Women was to "further the advance of the woman in Israel, to teach her her legal rights, and at the same time to encourage her to take an active part in the political life of the country and perhaps even offer her candidacy for the Knesset and Local Authorities at election time."[28] The WIZO Commission on the Status of Women listed its activities as sending information to various government departments and Members of Knesset, appearing before the Constitution, Law and Justice Committee, "convening public assemblies of women" and passing resolutions which were then forwarded to the Knesset, and organizing press conferences.[29] In response to the "explanation" by party leaders that "Israeli women do not have sufficient political knowledge to be potential candidates for election" WIZO hosted a public series of lectures for women entitled "Seminar on Political Awareness of Women."[30] These included lectures on housing policy, proportional representation, and central versus municipal government powers, delivered by Members of Knesset and academics.[31] According to the Chairwoman of the Commission on the Status of

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[27]"Women and the Knesset Elections"; "Guilty as Charged!" F49 1873, CZA.

[28]"Israel Federation Activities," *WIZO Review*, February 1968, No. 140.

[29]"WIZO's Commission for the Status of Women," n.d.; "Seminar for the 'Development of Political Consciousness Among Women," 1968, no file number, WIZO Archives.

[30]"Israel Federation Activities," *WIZO Review*, February 1968, 140, WIZO Archives.

[31]"Seminar for the Development of Political Consciousness Among Women," April 1966; "Seminar for the Development of Political Consciousness Among Women" Stage III, 1968, no file number, WIZO Archives.

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Women during the 1960s, political education was the path to further greater integration of women into government:

> If we accomplish this [the political education of women] many of our other aims will automatically be accomplished. With the proper political acumen and awareness, more women will occupy key government posts, become acceptable party candidates for political office at every level, and as a result, favourable legislation will be adopted.[32]

The second task of the Commission on the Status of Women was to influence legislation.[33] Its major focus was the Marriage and Divorce Law (1953) which granted the rabbinate authority over marriage and divorce regardless of the principles supporting women's equality laid down by the Declaration of Independence and the Women's Equal Rights Law, 1951. Laws of personal status are a feature of both Jewish and Muslim religious legal codes and are integrated into many North African and Middle Eastern legal systems. Feminist scholars point out that personal status laws are a stable feature of states which have undergone nationalist modernizing revolutions. For example, Mervat Hatem argues that in Egypt personal status laws and nationalism fuse to preserve patriarchal social relations, while simultaneously ushering women into the public sphere. She argues that the pressure of "political and cultural nationalism" on Egyptian leaders Nasser and Sadat resulted in women's acceptance of the Personal Status Laws in order to augment their "public integration."[34]

The conventional explanation for the adoption of personal status laws in Israel is that it

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[32]Robert Gary, "From the Desk of Mrs. Tania Levenfish," *WIZO Review*, 140, 1968, 5.

[33]Ilse Lindenstraus, "The Women of Israel Before the Elections," n.d., no file number, WIZO Archives.

[34]Hatem, "The Enduring Alliance of Nationalism and Patriarchy in Muslim Personal Status Laws: The Case of Egypt," *Feminist Issues* 6 (1986): 40.

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was a necessary compromise in order to keep the religious orthodox from refusing to recognize the new state. But Pnina Lahav argues that the passage of both the Women's Equal Rights Law (1951) and the Marriage and Divorce Law (1953) demonstrates that legal discrimination against women in Israel was not only a legacy of the Ottoman Empire but also an accepted component of Israeli political culture. Indeed, by recognizing the rabbinate's jurisdiction over what is called "personal status" - "all issues relating to prohibition and permission to marry and divorce" - the Marriage and Divorce Law (1953) confirmed the legal basis of discriminatory practices against which the pre-state women's movement had struggled.

A few examples illustrate the degree to which the rabbinate discriminates against women. Religious tribunals exclude women from participation, only men may serves as judges and women may not serve as witnesses. The rabbinate's rulings are based on Jewish religious law which upholds rigid divisions between men and women and assigns them strict gender roles. Several conditions prohibit married women living apart from their husbands from re-marrying; these do not apply to men in similar circumstances. The same is true for obtaining divorce; it is more difficult, and in some cases impossible, for women to obtain divorce: the same stipulations do not apply to men. Women who flout religious tradition risk stigmatizing their children, and consigning them to second-class status under Jewish law. For religious and traditional women, the authority of the rabbinate over such matters has had tragic results.[35] Moreover, the authority of the rabbinate over personal status remains the most intransigent issue for contemporary Israeli women.

The Commission on the Status of Women lobbied for legislation to mitigate the

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[35]"Special Issue: Women and Judaism," *Israel Digest*, August 24, 1979, WIZO Archives.

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discriminatory effects of the Marriage and Divorce Law.[36] The Inheritance Law (1965) stipulated that where there was no will, a widow was entitled to inherit 50 percent (raised from 25 percent) of the estate.[37] The Amendment to the National Insurance Law (1965) entitled housewives to the "same invalidity insurance rights as all [other] workers."[38] It also lobbied for the Alimony Law (1971), under which the government agreed to act as the advocate for women undergoing divorce. During the legislative reading of the bill WIZO was cited as the catalyst for the passage of the bill.[39] The Commission on the Status of Women claimed involvement in the passage of the Common Property Law (1974) which attempted to stipulate a degree of equality in the division of property upon the dissolution of marriage, and the Amendment to National Insurance Law: Insurance of Housewife against Accidents, 1974, which provided that disabled housewives could receive twenty percent of the average wage from the National Insurance Institute.[40]

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[36]World Wizo Publicity and Information Department, "WIZO-Israel Works for the Rights and Status of Women," n.d., no file number, WIZO Archives.

[37]This law also recognized common law spouses which meant they were subject to marriage and divorce laws.

[38]"Commission for the Status of Women" and the Legal Advisory Bureaux on Family Matters, "Laws and Regulations on Women's Status Enacted between 1948 and 1978," n.d., no file number, WIZO Archive.

[39]Israel Federation of WIZO, Commission on the Status of Women and Legal Advisory Bureaux on Family Matters, "Assurance of Alimony Payments Act, 1972," no file number, WIZO Archives.

[40]"WIZO's Commission for the Status of Women," n.d., no file number, WIZO Archives.

6.3 Core Attributes of the Legacy:
The Delegitimization of Separate Organizing by Women

Collier and Collier argue that the legacy of a critical juncture is sustained by certain core

attributes. The core attributes of the legacy reflect the institutional change within WIZO as it

transformed during the 1930s and 1940s from a political and social welfare organization to a

social welfare organization engaged in political advocacy for women. The main core attribute

of WIZO's withdrawal from partisan politics was that it was subjected to the devaluation specific

to voluntary organizations. Herzog argues that:

> Most of the large Israeli women's organizations had, and in large measure still
> have, a service welfare orientation. Their declared purpose is to help people
> and/or women in particular, and political power considerations are viewed as
> foreign and even detrimental to their goals. Voluntarism acts as a mechanism that
> enables the power politics dimension of women's organizations largely to be
> ignored. Neither the community nor, above all, the organizations' members
> themselves see anything political about its work and do not think of its large
> membership as possessing a strength of a kind that might be converted into
> political capital.[41]

Scholars have pointed out that one of the historical causes for the emergence of women's

voluntary organizations in Europe and North America was that upper class women were blocked

from public life.[42] Kathleen McCarthy argues that historically voluntary organizations offered

women "parallel power structures" through which they could effect public change.[43] Studies have

shown the profound effect women's clubs and associations had upon the drafting and

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[41]Herzog, *Gendering Politics*, 126.

[42]Anne Firor Scott, *Natural Allies: Women's Associations in Women's History* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1991), 177.

[43]Kathleen McCarthy, *Lady Bountiful Revisited: Philanthropy and Power*. (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1990), 23.

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implementation of social welfare legislation throughout the United States, and their involvement in domestic and international politics between the end of the nineteenth century and the First World War.[44]

At the same time it is not apparent that volunteer organizations offer women a route to political integration, and in fact there is evidence that women associated with voluntary organizations are stigmatized when they try to enter party politics. Herzog argues that "membership in women's organizations has not been perceived as a convertible resource in local politics."[45] Nor is there evidence that experience in women's voluntary organization has facilitated the large-scale entry of women into national politics either.

6. 4 The End of the Legacy:
the Emergence of the Second-Wave Women's Movement
and the 1977 Women's Party

The critical juncture of 1951 which led to the legacy of the 1950s and 1960s in which organized women renounced political partisanship and electoral involvement drew to a close in the 1970s. The international emergence of "second wave feminism" spurred the growth of a new feminist movement in Israel which denounced sexual inequality and discrimination. In doing so the new feminist movement sharply departed from two decades of organized women's consensus on

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[44]Karen Blair, *The Club Woman as Feminist: True Womanhood Redefined: 1868-1914* (New York: Holmes and Meier Publishers, 1980); Priscilla Murolo, *The Common Ground of Womanhood: Class, Gender and Working Girls' Clubs 1884-1928* (Urbana: The University of Illinois Press, 1997); Sandra Haarsager, *Organized Womanhood and the Pacific Northwest, 1840-1920* (Norman: The University of Oklahoma Press, 1997); Faith Rogow, *Gone to Another Meeting: the National Council of Jewish Women, 1893-1993* (Tuscaloosa: the University of Alabama Press, 1993).

[45]Herzog, *Gendering*,135.

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abstaining from partisan politics. The development of a new women's movement in Israel and its particular claims to feminism signifies the end of the legacy of the critical juncture.

The development of a women's movement in Israel during the 1970s was another example of profound political change in Israel. Over the course of the decade new social movements emerged in Jerusalem and other urban areas. These movements were made up of a socially, economically, and politically marginalized population which increasingly expressed their frustration and alienation from the political establishment through riots and demonstrations. These culminated in 1977 with the election of Menahem Begin's nationalist Likud party, Labour's long-standing rival and opponent in the mainstream Zionist movement.[46]

The Israel women's movement is also an example of the new Israeli social movements of the 1970s. It was new in several regards. It claimed to represent women who rejected the established women's organizations like WIZO and the WWC; it addressed issues of sexual politics which derived from the ideas and activity of the European and North American women's liberation movements. It also publicly criticized social consensus, by claiming that the Declaration of Independence, the Women's Equal Rights Law, compulsory military service for women, and the kibbutz, did not give Israeli women the full equality that had been propounded by Ben-Gurion and in Zionist propaganda.

Two mutually reinforcing trends supported the development of a women's movement, and indicate the end of the legacy of the critical juncture. The first was that Israeli women academics began to subject the claim of the equality of Israeli women to empirical study. Investigation of

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[46]Shlomo Hasson, *Urban Social Movements in Jerusalem: The Protest of the Second Generation* (Albany: State University of New York, 1993).

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women's labour force participation during the 1970s demonstrated that in comparison to other

industrialized nations, Israeli women had not, in fact, achieved equality in the labour market. This

meant that their rate of participation in the labour force was lower than that of men, that they

were concentrated in "traditional" occupations, and that, as a result, their rate of pay lagged

behind that of men.[47] Moreover, scholars began to question the conceptual underpinnings of the

legislation which WIZO had touted as proof of Israel's commitment to women's equality.[48]

Whereas WIZO publications and addresses suggested that social inequality was due to the arrival

of "socially primitive refugees," feminist scholars of the 1970s argued that Israeli legislation fell

short of ensuring legal equality.[49] In particular they argued that labour laws did not protect

women as WIZO had long claimed, but actually were discriminatory. The National Insurance

Law (1953) stipulated differential ages of retirement for men and women, thus supposedly giving

women the benefits of early retirement. The Night Work for Women Law (1954)

ensured women the right to maternity leave and sick leave related to pregnancy complications,

and guaranteed women the right to take one hour a day to breast-feed. At the same time, the

Night Work for Women Law authorized the Minister of Labour to bar women from employment

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[47]Padan-Eisenstark, "Image and Reality," 491-505.

[48]Sadie Freedman, "The Legal Status of Women in Israel, " 1955, Education Folder, WIZO Archives; Haia Rubinstein, "The Legal Status of Women in Israel", n.d, no file number, WIZO Archives; Rosa Ginossar, "Women's Rights in Israel," 1955, no file number, WIZO Archives; Publicity Department, "The Woman in Israel," 1957, no file number, WIZO Archives; "The Political, Economic and Social Status of Women in Israel and other Countries," 1961, no file number, WIZO Archives, ; Tamar Avidar, "On Being Attaché for Women's Affairs," n.d., no file number, WIZO Archives.

[49]"Report Presented to the Mouvement Mondial des Mères" by the WIZO Committee of the Council of Women's Organizations, March 1958, no file number, WIZO Archives.

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deemed damaging to their health which, with a few exceptions, included all night shifts.

Subsequent legislation also stipulated measures supposed to protect women from the harshness of

the labour market. The Severance Pay Law (1963) ensured severance pay to women who

resigned from work after giving birth or adopting a child. This was followed by the 1964 the

Equal Wages for Men and Women Law which stipulated that "an employer shall pay a woman the

same wage as is paid to a man at the same place of employment for the same work."[50]

Additional legislation included the Inheritance Law (1965), which raised the amount

widows could inherit from their late husbands and the Amendment to the National Insurance Law

(1965) which gave mothers increased financial support for their families. The Names Law (1956)

affirmed the right of women to keep their own name after marriage. The Capacity and

Guardianship Law (1962) made both parents legally responsible for their children. Berkovitch

argues that it was "world-level characteristics and linkages to the world polity (to the political-

cultural context) which affect the rate of adoption of equal-pay laws, rather than factors on the

national level."[51] Israel was among the "international regions and continents" which gave women

equal economic rights during the decade of 1960 to 1970.[52] It does seem that domestic pressure,

for example lobbying by WIZO, was at least partly responsible for the legal reform which led to

the spate of protective legislation of the 1970s.

In their effort to understand the gap between popular perceptions and the social reality of

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[50]"Commission on the Status of Women" and Legal Advisory Bureaux on Family Matters, "Laws and Regulations on Women's Status Enacted between 1948 and 1978," 1978, file number, WIZO Archives.

[51]Berkovitch, *From Motherhood to Citizenship*, 122.

[52]Ibid., 4.

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Israeli women, Israeli and Diaspora Jewish feminists sought to debunk the myth of equality, the

idea that sexual equality was entrenched in the socialist Zionist egalitarian roots of Israeli

society.[53] The "myth of equality" was reiterated by state publications, as well as by WIZO and the

WWC.[54] WIZO claimed that:

> The Women's Organisations in Israel have already played a vital part in every
> constructive sphere of life in the country. Their work was of particular importance
> in determining the basic principles upon which modern Israel is based. It was
> fortunate that the Jewish pioneer movements whose members laid the foundations
> for settlement in the country, gloried in the principle of equality between the sexes.
> Women pioneered the waste lands equally with the men. And to take an equal
> share with the men in defending their settlements from attack. These pioneers laid
> the basic foundations of equality. The women's organisations carried the idea into
> the towns and villages, maintaining a constant vigilance to safeguard women's
> rights. The results...have been remarkably successful, for equality of rights is not
> simply a theoretical, formalistic and legal fact. The economic, social and political
> design of Israeli life enables the woman to enjoy her legal rights.[55]

Likewise, the WWC emphasized the role of the working woman in establishing equality in

the pre-state period:

> young women understood that in order to build in the land a new, revolutionary
> and egalitarian society, special attention would have to be given to the status of the
> woman in society and at work. Despite the background from which they came -
> most of them were daughters of middle class families in small east European towns
> - they wished to divest themselves of traditions espoused by their homes and

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[53]Shulamit Aloni, "Equal Rights Gains of Israeli Women," *Jerusalem Post*, October 1967;
Doris Lankin, "Israel's Women Urged to Unite," *Jerusalem Post*, April 1969.

[54]Zena Harman, "Women in Israel," n.d., no file number, WIZO Archives; Tamar
Kaufman, "How Equal is the Israeli Woman?" Press Service, Jerusalem, April 1978, no file
number, WIZO Archives,; Working Women's Council, "Women in Kibbutzim and Moshavim,"
Women of Israel, n.d.; Working Women's Council, "The Arab Women of Israel," *Women of
Israel*, n.d., no file number, WIZO Archives.

[55]Mrs. Nerida J. Goodman, LL.B., WIZO Seminar, "The Status of Women in Israel,"
July/August, 1957, no file number, WIZO Archives.

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upbringing and to strive for equality for women, in everything.[56]

In contrast to such rhetoric, empirical studies demonstrated that Israeli women did not enjoy social or legal equality, were economically disadvantaged, politically under-represented and suffered discrimination under Orthodox Jewish marriage and divorce laws.[57] Of particular concern were three Hebrew University sociological surveys in the mid-1970s of the different social expectations of women and men. The study found that "the majority of the participants expressed adherence to traditional sex roles and images" and that among students "the ideal wife was the homemaker, possessing the traditional feminine characteristics and satisfying herself within the framework of home and family." Married women suggested that women "defer" to their husbands and that women's domestic duties take precedence over outside employment. In addition, respondents disapproved of "participation by women in public life and in 'non-feminine' professions."[58]

In 1973 there was tangible evidence of Israeli feminists' claims of labour market discrimination. The government airline was brought to court on the charge that its collective agreement stipulated the dismissal of female employees in certain instances if they married or

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[56]Women Workers' Council, "History of the Working Woman in Israel," Features of Israel, Israel Information Centre, 1975, no file number, WIZO Archives.

[57]Gillian Peele, *The Position of Women in Israeli Public Life*, (London: Anglo-Israel Association, 1974); Carol Clapsaddle, "Flight from Feminism: the Case of the Israeli Woman, " in *The Jewish Woman: New Perspectives*, ed. Elizabeth Koltun, (New York: Schocken Books, 1976), 202-213. Non-academic accounts were also published, for examples, Lesley Hazleton's *Israeli Women: The Reality behind the Myths* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1977); Natalie Rein, *Daughters of Rachel: Women in Israel* (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1979); Rayeh Nevo, "Women in Senior Posts in Israel," March, 1973, The World Zionist Organization, Press Service, no file number, WIZO Archives.

[58]Lahav, "Status of Women in Israel," 110, 111.

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became pregnant. But the court's decision partially upheld the discriminatory practices, consequently reinforcing feminist suspicions about the pervasiveness of sexual discrimination in the workplace, and now in the justice system.[59] In addition, the 1973 Yom Kippur War, which had a profound effect on Israeli society as a whole, became a specific grievance for feminists. Rivka Weiss Bar-Yosef and Dorit Padan-Eisenstark argued in 1977 that during the Yom Kippur War men filled "essential occupations" while volunteer organizations were unable and unwilling to absorb potential women volunteers and that sexist imagery of gender roles grew even more pronounced in the media during this time.[60] Other Israeli feminists claimed that Israeli women were prevented from contributing to the war effort, and that such exclusion was unfounded given the active role women had played during the War of Independence and during their compulsory military service thereafter. These examples proved to feminists that Israeli society was not egalitarian and that the large women's organizations had failed to bring about fundamental changes in gender relations. The announcement by the UN of the International Year of the Woman and the Decade of Women, 1975 - 1985, gave feminist claims added impetus with the appointment in Israel of the Commission on the Status of Women (1975) and the Namir Report (1978). The Israeli Commission on the Status of Women discussed discrimination against women, which, when articulated in the early 1970s by the women's movement, had been criticized by the popular press as Western concepts thrust on Israeli society by North American immigrants. The Commission on the Status of Women thus acknowledged issues which had outraged the

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[59]Raday, "Equality of Women," 98-100.

[60]Rivka Weiss Bar-Yosef and Dorit Padan-Eisenstark, "Sex Roles in War," *Social Problems* 25 (1977):135-145.

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Israeli public when first raised by the women's movement.

The Commission on the Status of Women was charged with investigating specific areas of discrimination against women, and recommending proposals to improve women's status. Many of the women appointed to the Commission on the Status of Women were academics, including some who had pioneered research on women's status (Dr. Rivka Bar-Yosef, Dr. Nitza Shapira-Libai); some were politicians who supported feminism or women's rights as civil rights (Shulamith Aloni); and some were active in women's organizations such as the WWC (Masha Lubelski), WIZO (Tanya Levenfish) or the feminist movement (Marcia Freedman). There were also several representatives who were openly hostile to the very concept of women's rights (lawyer Plia Albeck, and activist and politician Geula Cohen). Ora Namir, a Labor MK and member of the WWC, was appointed to lead the Commission. Its task was to make sure that the socioeconomic and political reality of Israeli women closely reflected what were assumed to be the egalitarian principles informing Zionism. The Commission on the Status of Women focussed on six main areas: women in the work force, in education, in the family, in the army and Security Services, "women in distress" (as victims of rape and other forms of violence), and "women in positions of influence" (politics, trade unions, and the civil service). In each one of these areas the Commission provided statistical findings and presented a variety of recommendations for raising women's status. For WIZO, the Commission on the Status of Women presented an opportunity to set up departments linked to the UN's Year of the Woman initiative, and to re-emphasize its role as a non-partisan NGO providing social welfare to women and children.[61] Addresses to the

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[61]Dr. Ann Yanman, "Human Rights Year and WIZO's Role," *WIZO Review*, No. 140, n.d.; "Women's Members Serve Their Fellow Citizens Throughout the World: A Survey on the Occasion of 'International Women's Year Day," n.d., no file number, WIZO Archives.

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membership reiterated the benefits of staying out of electoral politics.

> Some of these laws [pertaining to women's status] were actually initiated by
> WIZO and pushed through the Knesset through intensive lobbying, mass meetings,
> press conferences, and direct appearances and appeals before the Legislation
> Committee of the Knesset. Thanks to the fact that WIZO is a non-government,
> non-partisan organisation, the public has confidence in our sincerity and in the
> fairness and impartiality of our aim. This gives us the power to influence public
> opinion and to exert pressure on the Government to pass laws beneficial to
> women.[62]

A second departure of the new feminist movement from the traditional political behaviour

of organized women signifying the end of the legacy was that feminists organized themselves not

only outside the mainstream parties, but outside traditional women's organizations, such as the

WWC and WIZO. On the campus of Haifa University, two academics, both American

immigrants, Marcia Freedman and Marilyn Safir, organized consciousness-raising sessions for

women which gradually developed into the nucleus of a self-identified women's movement with

Marcia Freedman at its helm. This early women's movement coalesced around issues of sexual

discrimination. Calling itself Nilahem (the Hebrew acronym for Women for a Renewed Society,

which also means 'we will fight') branches of the movement had started in Jerusalem and Tel

Aviv. In 1972, Freedman announced to the Israeli press that an Israeli women's movement had

been established. Estimates of the number of activists involved ranged from 200 to 1000

women.[63] By 1973 the movement began publishing a newsletter. In the same year a women's

organization called "The Israeli Feminist Movement" was set up in Tel Aviv, while in Jerusalem a

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[62]"The Role of World WIZO in Improving the Status of Women in Israel," Address by
Mrs. Raya Jaglom, President World WIZO, London, June 10, 1975, no file number, WIZO
Archives, 7.

[63]Leah Simmons Levin, "Setting the Agenda: The Impact of the 1977 Israel Women's
Party," *Israel Studies* 4 (1999): 33.

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women's group was established whose "ideological emphasis was on general rather than specifically women's oppression."[64]

In 1973 MK Shulamit Aloni, a civil rights advocate and former Labour Party MK approached the women's movement to provide her with a requisite number of signatures to enable Aloni's new party, the Citizen's Rights Party (Ratz) to register for the election campaign. In exchange Aloni offered third place on the party list to a representative of the women's movement and Freedman was selected, on condition that she represent the feminist movement.[65] As an MK, Freedman raised the issues of abortion and wife abuse to the great consternation of the Knesset. Her frustration at the hostility which greeted her speeches, her isolation as the only feminist member of the Knesset, in addition to the relatively generous financial support provided to MK's for a subsequent electoral campaign prompted her to seek the formation of a Women's Party.[66] In part Freedman was inspired by reading Sarah Azaryahu's 1949 discussion of the Israeli women's suffrage movement, and discovering that separate women's parties had been a stable feature of Israeli political life until the end of the First Knesset.[67] In addition, Freedman had met and

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[64]Swirski also notes that a Palestinian women's student group also began meeting in 1973, but that it did not communicate with the Jewish women's groups. Swirski, "Israeli Feminism Old and New," 295.

[65]Freedman was actually second choice; the first delegate, political activist, Ruth Resnick was unable to take her place on the list due to health reasons. This caused some degree of resentment against Freedman in the women's movement.

[66]Marcia Freedman, *Exile in the Promised Land: A Memoir* (Ithaca: Firebrand Books, 1990).

[67]It is important to note that neither the history of women's struggle for suffrage in the Yishuv, nor women's involvement in the Yishuv electoral politics has been discussed in histories of the Yishuv. Freedman describes her surprise at discovering information about Jewish women's campaigns for suffrage and their election to the Representative Assemblies by reading Azaryahu's

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interviewed Rachel Kagan, (by the late 1970s elderly, but still highly involved in WIZO). The women commiserated about their frustrations and alienation as the lone feminist MK during their respective Knesset terms. Although the popular press had consistently attacked the 1970s Israel women's movement as an American implant, Kagan sought to legitimate the new feminist movement by drawing a connection between contemporary feminists and those of the pre-state period.[68] By contrast, throughout the 1970s, WIZO continued to assert that political education was the most effective route for women to enter politics[69]:

> Perhaps the answer [to the low representation of women in the legislature] lies in education. Perhaps more seminars, similar to the Political Consciousness Seminars conducted by WIZO and other organisations, should be held in every centre and women's club in the country. Perhaps when the women will understand the political system and will realise their potential power, then they will make a greater effort to use this force for the good of the entire nation.[70]

Freedman's proposal to run a separate women's party was not immediately embraced by the feminist movement. Fears were expressed regarding the likelihood of a women's party winning a seat based on its discussion of taboo issues in its party platform, and the fact that it would not take a position on defence and security, the two most salient issues in Israeli politics.

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pamphlet, which she had received from an activist in the women's movement. Marcia Freedman, "Afterward" in *The Union of Hebrew Women for Equal Rights*, Sarah Azaryahu, 73-82, (Jerusalem: Union of Hebrew Women for Equal Rights in Israel, 1949. Reprint Haifa: Women's Aid Fund, 1980).

[68]Marcia Freedman, "Past Friction: Marcia Freedman Interviews Rachel Kagan," *Noga*, 3 (1981): 18-19. (In Hebrew); Rachel Kagan, interview by Marcia Freedman, May 1981, courtesy of Marcia Freedman.

[69]"Equal Rights for Women," *WIZO Review*, No. 214, n.d., WIZO Archives.

[70]"The Status of the Woman Twenty Five Years Later," *Menorah* 5, 1973, WIZO Archives.

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Some feminists argued that the predominantly middle-class and Ashkenazi leadership of the movement could not represent the interests of working-class Mizrahi women. Ultimately thirty women decided to support the party's campaign. Their self-proclaimed goal was to inform the public about women's issues; winning votes would be a welcome by-product of the campaign. Although the 1977 Women's Party failed to win even one seat, its campaign had the effect of pushing women's issues into the mainstream of public debate, forcing other parties to defend their record regarding female candidates and women's issues and creating a constituency which previously had been ignored: women. It also became a reference point for the women's movement in terms of political strategy and created an environment which allowed public admission that women's status in Israel was not as equal as had been claimed for so long. It is not clear, however, that the mere discussion of women's status necessarily brought about significant public redress.[71]

The emergence of the new women's movement, and the campaign of the 1977 Women's Party had profound effects upon women and feminism in Israel by facilitating a degree of public acceptance of issues which previously had been taboo. This was reflected in the attempt during the 1980s by the large-scale women's organizations, WIZO and Na'amat (the name adopted by the WWC in 1976), to embrace some of the issues which the women's movement had raised and the passage of new legislation by the Knesset to address these concerns. Since the 1980s WIZO and Na'amat have tried to regain their position as major leaders of the women's movement. This has been a difficult task since neither has publicly embraced feminism as their guiding principle and there was an expansion of the number of women's organizations during the 1980s and 1990s.

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[71]Simmons Levin, 107-109.

WIZO and Na'amat tend to gravitate toward causes on which there is widespread social consensus rather than those mired in controversy. For example, after it had been shunned as a topic of public debate during the 1960s and 1970s, violence against women had become an acceptable public issue in Israel in the 1990s. Yishai notes that domestic violence was first raised in the Knesset in 1962 when Beba Idelson (at the time secretary-general of the WWC and Labor Party MK) raised the issue of wife-beating. After assurances that the government was aware of and concerned about the problem, the issue was not raised again until Marcia Freedman raised it during her 1973 Knesset term, only to be greeted with derision by her colleagues.[72] While the 1970s feminist movement had pioneered services for women victims of violence, by the 1980s, when the initial shock of the issue had worn off, WIZO had assumed the role of providing assistance to women victims of violence and with government backing.[73]

There are other instances of attempts by WIZO to assume a more publicly active feminist position. It expanded its Legal Advice Bureaus and four Information Centres on Women's Rights. Moreover, it adopted a more aggressive posture by encouraging greater numbers of women to enter national and municipal politics.[74] In 1998 WIZO opened the Committee for the Advancement of Women with the mandate of increasing women's representation in municipal and national politics and creating a broad coalition of women's organizations to further this goal.[75]

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[72]Freedman, *Exile in the Promised Land*.

[73]Esther Levitan, ed. *The Saga of a Movement: WIZO 1970-1990*. (Tel Aviv: Women's International Zionist Organization, n.d.) 2-3.

[74]"Department for the Status of Women," 1985, no file number, WIZO Archives.

[75]Information handouts, Committee for the Advancement of Women in Politics in Israel, WIZO.

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The Committee for the Advancement of Women is therefore explicitly modelled on the Israel Women's Network (IWN), a women's lobby group created in 1984. Clearly WIZO has not moved into uncharted territory but is capitalizing on a political issue which has raised the profile of another women's organization both in Israel and abroad.

Na'amat, (the Organization of Working Mothers, formerly the WWC), also underwent transformation in the late 1970's. It revamped one of its departments to reflect a more feminist orientation. Its Department for Legislation, Legal Counselling and Social Service, originally established at the request of the Labor government following the Six Day War with the purpose assisting war widows, was renamed the Department for the Status of Women and directed to provide "legal advice on job discrimination and violence in the family." It opened a counselling centre for battered women (and their batterers too, in accordance with their family orientation).[76] It declared a Status of Women month in 1986, launching a discussion of women's rights under the personal status laws. A 1988 petition circulated by Na'amat on "the Rights of Women" was presented to the Prime Minister. Na'amat also extended its support into other areas. It funded the first courses in Women's Studies at Haifa University in 1983. According to Swirski, "local chapters of WIZO and Na'amat began to engage in discussions that resembled consciousness-raising."[77] In 1992, another piece of legislation which Na'amat had championed was passed: the Single-Parent Families Law, designed to support single-parent families by giving them priority in education, housing and childcare.[78]

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[76]Swirski, "Israeli Feminism," 294; 298.

[77]Ibid.

[78]Yishai, *Between the Flag and the Banner*, 197.

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While WIZO and Na'amat attempted to "catch up" to the development of a new Israeli feminist movement, they have not always taken a firm position on the more contentious issues such as abortion or women's rights under divorce law. For example, most legislative proposals to eliminate religious control over marriage and divorce and to liberalize access to abortion have been initiated by the left-wing of the Israeli political spectrum.[79] Na'amat supported a government bill on abortion which was more restrictive than that tabled by Marcia Freedman in the mid-1970s. Yishai's explanation for this is that the ties of Na'amat's membership to the Labour government prevented it from supporting the bill which was more favourable to women.[80] Israeli feminists have voiced skepticism regarding the feminist commitment of WIZO and Na'amat. Feminists have accused both organizations of 'establishment feminism,' that is, feminism that does not seek to bring about fundamental change in gender relations.[81] Yishai charges that the large-scale women's organizations have never entirely cast off their allegiance to the Jewish religion and that this keeps them anchored to cooperation and compromise with the religious authorities.[82] Bernstein asserts that Na'amat continues to be an establishment feminist organization due to the fact that it upholds the public/private divide, and refuses to recognize that

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[79]Ratz and Mapam have presented proposals to liberalize the marriage and divorce laws, Uri Avneri proposed liberalization of abortion. In the pre-state era abortion was "regulated by the Criminal Code Ordinance of 1936" which in turn was "based on a British anti-abortion law of 1861." The issue of women's access to abortion became a topic of public debate after an incident during the early 1970s in which a woman died following an abortion, and the doctor who performed it was jailed. Yishai, *Between the Flag and the Banner*, 208.

[80]Yishai, *Between the Flag and the Banner*, 217.

[81]Bernstein, *Struggle for Urban Equality*, 171-175.

[82]Yishai, *Between the Flag and the Banner*, 189.

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public inequality is based in the private sphere.[83] Pope argues that Na'amat is constrained by its

loyalty to the Labour Party and is therefore incapable of constituting an independent feminist

movement.[84] But Herzog argues that Na'amat is an important training ground for women

politicians on the local and national levels, although its link to the (male-dominated) Labour Party

has also been viewed as a limitation on the degree to which Na'amat activists can advance

politically.[85]

The emergence of a new feminist movement in Israel during the 1970s and the campaign

of the 1977 Women's Party have had an additional effect besides prompting the large women's

organizations to revise their activism. Partially as a result of the 1977 Women's Party's

campaign, political women, both feminist and non-feminist alike, have drawn one of two

conclusions and fashioned their political activity accordingly.

The first conclusion is to view the experience of the 1977 Women's Party as evidence that

organizing separate women's parties will not win women significant political power, and that it is

therefore necessary to develop new political strategies designed to increase not only the number

of women elected to the Knesset, but to augment governmental and public awareness of feminist

issues. In this case, one strategy has been to use quotas in party primaries in order to ensure that

at least a bare minimum of women would be elected to the party list. According to Brichta and

Brichta, since the early 1950s Labor, Herut, the Liberals, and later, Likud, had "an informal tacit

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[83]Bernstein, *Struggle for Equality*, 173.

[84]Pope, "Conflict of Interests: A Case Study of *Na'amat*" in *Calling the Equality Bluff: Women in Israel*, ed. Barbara Swirski and Marilyn Safir (New York: Pergamon Press), 233.

[85]Herzog, *Gendering Politics*, 136.

agreement" with women political leaders "to safeguard a minimum quota of safe seats for women."[86] They note that candidate selection in Israeli parties has followed "three distinct patterns." From 1949 until 1965, "the nomination of candidates in all parties was predominantly in the hands of small selection committees with very few women members." After 1969, most parties transferred control of candidate selection to the party centre, which "ranged from a few hundred in the small parties to several thousand" in the Likud and Labour. Nevertheless the small number of women in the party centres meant that "women had very little bargaining power to mobilize the support of other groups in order to safeguard safe seats for women candidates on their respective party lists."[87] In 1977, the Democratic Movement for Change (DMC), a new short-lived party which had been established to run for that year's election was the first Israeli political party to use the primary system. The Labour Party adopted this system in the elections to the (1992) Thirteenth Knesset. Scholars note that primaries have had a negligible impact on the selection of women for party lists and have not resulted in a greater number of women elected to the Knesset.[88]

A second strategy was the establishment in 1984 of the Israel Women's Network (IWN), which operates as a lobby group. Ironically, the IWN somewhat replicates the philosophy of WIZO; it maintains that while women may support various political ideologies, they are united on

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[86]Avraham Brichta and Yael Brichta, "Extent of the Impact of the Electoral System upon the Representation of Women in the Knesset," in *Electoral Systems in Comparative Perspective*, ed. Wilma Rule and Joseph Zimmerman (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1994), 123.

[87]Ibid.

[88]Giora Goldberg, "The Performance of Women in Legislative Politics: the Israeli Example," *Crossroads: A Socio-Political Journal* 9 (1992): 27-49.

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issues of particular issues of importance to women as a sex. The IWN has worked actively on several fronts, including legal advocacy for women, policy making, supporting women MKs regardless of their political affiliation, and creating a non-partisan women's coalition in order to push through vital legislation. The IWN is also a vocal supporter of affirmative action and the quota system. A third strategy has been to forgo electoral politics altogether and to seek support for women through extra-parliamentary means. The 1980s and 1990s witnessed a rapid expansion in the number of Israeli women's groups dedicated to a complete range of feminist causes.[89] On the other hand, given Israel's PR electoral system, the option of running a separate women's party has remained open for women, feminist and non-feminist, on condition that it is sufficiently funded. In the 1997 election a women's party pulled out of the election campaign due to a lack of funds. A Women's List headed by a popular female businesswoman remained in the race, although it failed to win a seat.

6.5 State Feminism: a New Direction for Israeli Feminism?

"State feminism" refers to government initiatives committed to improving women's status. In 1987 Hernes defined state feminism as an "alliance between women and the state" which combined with "political alliances among women" can "perhaps create a power base for women that will pave the way for future alliances between women and men in a more woman-friendly

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[89]Israel Women's Network, *Services for Women*. Jerusalem: Israel Women's Network, 1994. (Brochure in Hebrew).

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state."[90] Many feminist scholars have suggested that government offices to advance women's status are already common components of western democratic states.[91] Malloy refers to such units as "advocacy structures" and defines them as "any state institution that has a nominal formal mandate to ensure the interests and advancement of one or more social groups, either as individuals or a collective."[92] There are wide variations in the composition and effectiveness of such offices; for example, while Stetson and Mazur suggest that government offices to advance feminism have the potential, under certain conditions, to foster state feminism, others, such as Threlfall, suggest that the longevity of such offices is decisive in determining their effectiveness.[93]

In her discussion of women and the state in Egypt, Hatem defines state feminism as "ambitious state programs that introduce important changes in the reproductive and productive roles of women".[94] She links state feminism to economic expansion and the welfare state:

State feminism has general applicability as a historical strategy that has been used

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[90]Helga Maria Hernes, *Welfare State and Woman Power: Essays in State Feminism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987), 16.

[91]Deborah Steinstra, *Women's Movements and International Organizations* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1994), 133. See also Dorothy McBride Stetson and Amy G. Mazur, *Comparative State Feminism* (Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications, 1995), 1; Nitza Berkovitch, *From Motherhood to Citizenship: Women's Rights and International Organizations* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1999), 163.

[92]Jonathan Malloy, "What Makes a State Advocacy Structure Effective? Conflicts between Bureaucratic and Social Movement Criteria," *Governance: An International Journal of Policy and Administration* 12 (1999): 285.

[93]Amy G. Mazur and Dorothy McBride Stetson. *Comparative State Feminism* (Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications, 1995); Monica Threlfall, "State Feminism or Party Feminism? Feminist Politics and the Spanish Institute of Women," *European Journal of Women's Studies* 5 (1998).

[94]Mervat Hatem, "Economic and Political Liberation in Egypt and the Demise of State Feminism," *International Journal of Middle East Studies* (1992): 232.

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and implemented in different parts of the world under specific conditions. It is associated with the growth of both the state sector and the welfare states, which utilize the labour and the skills of middle- and working-class women. They constituted a section of the productive labour force that the state could draw upon without undermining the operation of the private sector of the economy, which continues to rely on male workers, who are deemed cheaper and more reliable. The provision of employment, education, health, and other social benefits to sizable sections of the female population also contributes to the progressive image of the state.[95]

Hatem argues that, while the goals of Egypt's state policies toward women were "impressive by the standards of the 1950s and 1960s," the contraction of the public sector in Egypt has had a deleterious effect upon women and the goals of state feminism. She argues that the granting of women's suffrage in 1956, the commitment of the Egyptian constitution (in 1956 and revised in 1963) to "equality of opportunity" regardless of "gender, racial origin, language, religion, or belief," and a number of labour laws which protected women's labour rights and stipulated maternity benefits, are examples of the state's dedication to raising women's status. Most importantly state feminism turns women's biological reproduction into "a public concern for state and private employers, not just the personal concern of the family." Under Egyptian state feminism therefore, "social attitudes towards women's education and employment changed, and their presence in those areas multiplied .... All of these achievements gave a new generation of women novel definitions of their productive and reproductive roles.[96] Hatem argues that under President Nasser, Egyptian women became economically dependent on the state, which in turn authorized their subjugation under personal status laws, and dismantled independent feminist

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[95]Ibid.

[96]Ibid., 252.

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political activity. She claims that although Egyptian state feminism had beneficial effects on women's status, the state itself extracted a heavy price from women through the loss of independence of the Egyptian feminist movement.[97]

More recently, feminist scholars have linked state feminism to broad, international pressures, particularly those exerted by the UN to bring about rapid economic development. Berkovitch pinpoints the "fusion of women's issues with the discourse on development" as the crucial element which "facilitated the institutionalization of the discourse on women and has turned it into an integral part of the global agenda through its embodiment in a massive organizational infrastructure." Mazur and Stetson discuss the role of the UN's Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) in encouraging states to implement "national policy machinery for the advancement of women." They focus upon "institutional arrangements" which have "the potential of turning the state into an activist on behalf of feminist goals, embedding gender issues in national policy agendas and giving advocates for the advancement of women permanent access to arenas of power."[98]

Mazur and Stetson distinguish state feminism from the welfare or liberal states, neither of which, they assert, has allowed feminism to permeate their policy agendas. Furthermore, they argue that, whereas under laissez-faire capitalism women are economically dependent on individual men, in the welfare state women become reliant on the state's provision of social services. This argument claims that the welfare state does not challenge patriarchy and therefore does not advance women's status in the long-term. In their view, a specific number of conditions

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[97]Ibid.

[98]Mazur and Stetson, *Comparative State Feminism*, 1.

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are required in order for state feminism to be effective:

> Women's policy machinery will reach high levels of state feminism, on the one hand, when the state is defined as a site of social justice and has the structural capacity to institutionalize demands for equality and, on the other, when society sustains widely supported feminist organizations that challenge sex hierarchies through both radical politics from outside and reform politics in unions and parties. If these conditions exist, politicians and policymakers at the supranational, national, or subnational levels of government are likely to set up structures that introduce gender equality principles to many policy sectors and bring representatives of women's interests into the state to participate in that policy. If these conditions do not exist, then although politicians may establish women's policy offices, these units will have a hard time either influencing women's equality policy or empowering women's interests in society or both.[99]

Following the submission of the Namir Report in 1978, the Government of Israel took a step, albeit limited, toward establishing "women's policy machinery." Its Office of the Advisor to the Prime Minister was far more circumscribed than that recommended by the Commission on the Status of Women.[100] Yishai charges that the loyalty of the Advisors on the Status of Women was to their patrons in government, not women's organizations. Indeed, there are instances in which Advisors found themselves at odds with the women's movement. One such case occurred in 1990 when in the face of a governmental threat to legislate restrictions on women's access to abortion women's organizations made a concerted effort to prevent such legislation. In the midst of the controversy the Prime Minister's Advisor on the Status of Women offered a compromise

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[99]Ibid., 290.

[100]The Commission on the Status of Women proposed that an Agency for the Status of Women be established with an appointed council to plan its policy, a Bureau to implement the council's decisions, and an Ombudsperson to act as an intermediary between the Agency, the government and the public. Miriam Benson and Dorit Harved, eds., *The Status of Women in Israel: The Implementation of the Recommendations of the Israel Government Commission on the Status of Women of Investigation* (Jerusalem: Israel Women's Network, 1988), 1-4.

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position which was endorsed by the religious Orthodox Agudat Israel. A coalition of women's organizations rejected the compromise position, indicating the distance between the women's movement and the Advisor.[101]

In 1997, after the Prime Minister's Advisor for the Status of Women resigned her post, the position was not filled. Legislation then replaced this office with the Authority on the Status of Women in 1998. The Israeli government defined this office as being:

> comprised of representatives of the Government ministries, NGO's and academic experts. The policy determined by the Authority, as approved by the Government, is binding on all Government offices. The Authority supervises governmental adherence to policy aimed at the advancement of women's status, receipt of complaints, addressing the subject of equal salaries for women, assisting business and career women as well as encouraging the appointment of women to higher positions.[102]

Its mandate is to implement what the head of the authority referred to as programs to advance the status of women in a number of areas, but not to draft or propose legislative initiatives to the Knesset.[103] In an interview the Manager for the Authority on the Status of

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[101]Yishai, *Between the Flag and the Banner*, 228.

[102] Statement by Ms. Amira Arnon, Representative to Israel to the Third Committee on Advancement of Women, Agenda Item 109, 54th Session of the UN General Assembly, 13 October, 1999, Government of Israel.

[103]The structure of the Authority is that it has a small staff (four people), a Manager (its head), and a Board of Directors, and Advisory Council. The Advisory Council consists of a number of government ministry representatives from departments such as Finance, Labor, and Education. It also includes a number of NGO's like women's organizations. Advisors are recommended by the Manager of the Authority, and nominated by the prime minister. Leeran pointed out that forty percent of the Advisory Council are men. Leeran states that the agenda of the Authority is drawn from the "daily life of Israeli women." Its projects include: equality between the sexes in the educational system, in the army, combatting domestic violence, programs for governmental employees on the national and municipal levels, programs for Arab women, support for women on boards of directors, and databases. Interview with Leeran, 27 July 2000.

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Women, Naomi Leeran, emphasized that, unlike the previous position of the Advisor on the Status of Women, her position is politically independent since [104] In 1992 the Knesset established a Subcommittee on Women's Affairs with an alternating chair between the Likud and Labor.[105] The Ministry of Labor and Social Welfare has two offices to advance women's status within its purview.[106] But the degree to which women's policy units advance feminist claims is not clear. Leeran argues that feminist civil servants must rely on their personal persuasiveness for bureaucratic effectiveness, especially since they do not have legislative backing.[107] According to Mazur and Stetson state feminist agencies provide a powerful tool for "nongovernmental feminist and women's advocacy organizations fight for their own policy agendas."[108] Staffing such agencies are "femocrats" (feminist bureaucrats) who may be "closely linked" to women's organizations. Mazur and Stetson note that women's policy agencies may not always act unequivocally in concert with the women's movement:

> Like the liberal state, however, some state feminist agencies have tried to control such groups and shape their definitions of what is feminist. In many countries, the femocrats face tensions between the demands of their political and bureaucratic roles and their ties with nongovernmental feminist activities.[109]

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[104]Interview with Leeran, 27 July, 2000.

[105]Yishai, *Between the Flag*, 33.

[106]These include the Women's Employment and Status Division and Services for Women and Girls. Israel Women's Network, *Services for Women* (Jerusalem: Israel Women's Network, 1994), 29. (In Hebrew).

[107]Interview with Leeran, 27 July 2000.

[108]Mazur and Stetson, 273.

[109]Ibid.

Whereas Stetson and Mazur offer a complex typology to measure the effectiveness of women's advocacy units, Malloy argues that measuring effectiveness is highly dependent on the vantage point from which the unit is being evaluated. He points to the different values held by the bureaucracy in which the department is located, and the values of the social movement which the department ostensibly serves. Malloy argues that whereas bureaucracies measure effectiveness by "influence- the power to develop policy, compel coordination, and ensure implementation," social movements are more concerned with "representation - accurate reflection of the goals and diversity of the movement."[110] According to this perspective, therefore, the two criteria by which policy units are judged are irreconcilable.

While assessing the effectiveness of the Israeli women's advocacy unit is beyond the scope of this study, a cursory review suggests that the term "state feminism" may not necessarily provide Israeli feminists with significant political benefits. According to Naomi Leeran, lack of budget, staff and the absence of governmental support severely limits the effectiveness of the Authority for the Status of Women.[111]

Organizations such as the Israel Women's Networks charge that regardless of the establishment of the Authority on the Status of Women, successive governments are unwilling to meet its demands. In 1988 an IWN evaluation of the implementation of the Namir Report concluded that the Report had a negligible impact on government policy. In 1987 an Equal Retirement Law was passed, but contrary to the Namir report's recommendation, it preserved women's option of retiring earlier than men. The Equal Opportunity in Employment Law (1988)

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[110]Ibid., 269.

[111]Interview with Leeran, 27 July 2000.

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prevents employers from refusing to hire women based on "gender, marital status, parental status or other personal status" and "forbids discrimination against a woman in working conditions, promotion, training and firing."[112] The Prevention of Domestic Violence Law (1991) "prohibits violence (including rape) against family members."[113] The Single Parent Families Law (1992) gives single parents certain benefits and financial privileges. Legislation in the 1990s included a bill for affirmative action in the civil service; special family courts were established to deal with property, alimony and child custody disputes resulting from divorce; stricter sentences were imposed for domestic violence. A motion on Affirmative Action in state corporations was passed in 1993. Its expansion in 1995 to cover the whole civil service was due to the IWN's intervention.[114]

However, none of the bills on women's status which passed during the 1980s and 1990s represented an unequivocal achievement for the feminist movement. The Equal Opportunity in Employment Law (1981) was first introduced by Sarah Doron of the Likud in 1978 but did not receive universal support either from women's organizations or from female MKs. Yishai claims that women MKs were critical of the bill due to party rivalry; and that while Na'amat was not recruited to assist the formulation of the bill, it was reluctant to break ranks with the Histadrut and support legislation proposed by a non-Labour government. More seriously, the bill excluded the recommendations of the Namir Report and as a result, has been criticized for its

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[112]Israel Women's Network, *Services for Women* (Jerusalem: Israel Women's Network, 1994). (In Hebrew).

[113]Ibid.

[114]Naomi Chazan, "Women in Public Life," *Spotlight on Israel* (Jerusalem: Israel Information Centre, March, 1997).

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ineffectiveness.[115] The Equal Employment Opportunity Law (1988) enacted further protection of

women in the labour force. Yishai points out that in this instance women MKs attended the

hearings of the Knesset committees, and that women's "major contribution to policy- making was

in presenting amendments to the original draft that widened the purview of the Employment Law

and enforced its application." But Yishai notes that while the IWN and the Prime Minister's

Advisor on the Status of Women, Nitza Shapira-Libai cooperated closely in this process, Na'amat

and WIZO were absent from the deliberations.[116] She also points out that the law is ineffective

because it demands a high level of litigation from women and because since the IWN's request

that a public council "staffed by female experts to handle complaints" was denied, so that

women's organizations are not involved in its implementation. Yishai notes that "by establishing

the council in its present form, the legislators have tacitly recognized vested interests by handing

over implementation to an agency that has been severely handicapped."[117] Finally, although

extensive lobbying efforts by women's organizations facilitated the passage of the Equal

Employment Opportunities Law (1988) the law did "not give legal backing to a general principle

of sexual equality."[118] The IWN has also criticized it for its limitations.[119] The move by the

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[115]Miriam Benson and Dorit Harverd, *The Status of Women in Israel: The Implementations and Recommendations of the Israel Government Commission on the Status of Women of Investigation* (Jerusalem: Israel Women's Network, 1988).

[116]Yishai, *Between the Flag and the Banner*, 171,

[117]Ibid., 173.

[118]Ibid., 172.

[119]Israel Women's Network, *Services for Women* (Jerusalem: Israel Women's Network, 1994), 24. (In Hebrew).

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Israeli government toward state feminism thus does not indicate that feminism is making great inroads into Israeli society.

Monica Threlfall has raised a number of objections to the use of the term state feminism, and argues instead for examining policies within their political context, with specific attention to the composition of the government under which they are promoted. She suggests that the basis of theorizing state or government orientations to women's status and the feminist movement is understanding the role of political parties and in particular "the relationship between parties in power and feminism."[120] She argues that Joyce Gelb's term "feminism in government" accurately describes "finite periods during which the record of feminism can be assessed." Threlfall argues that state feminism cannot characterize short-term government initiatives:

> If a high degree of policy and institutional continuity can be found over a long period as a result of a cross-party consensus, then the policy may be perceived as a state equality policy or state women's policy. But even this type of continuity and longevity will be dependent on the parties' view of it, and in decentralized and federal political systems the resulting women's policy can be multilayered and diverse. In addition, the *feminist* content of women's policy can be seen to be dependent on the success of a compact between feminist advocates and the party or parties in power at each level, because parties - 'crucial gatekeepers to elected office' - open access to the resources of different levels of public administration for women's policy activists.[121]

For Threlfall it is "parties, or coalitions of parties and, more particularly, the established social democratic parties" which must be examined in order to fully understand "the striking new phenomenon of branches of public administration being devoted to policy on women."[122] Her

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[120]Threlfall, 81.

[121]Ibid., 90.

[122]Ibid.

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point is supported in Malloy's study of the Ontario Women's Directorate (OWD) in which he

argues that the influence of the OWD depended almost entirely on the support received from the

government in power.

Other feminists, however, entirely reject the state as a mechanism that can eradicate

gender inequality. Indeed, many feminist scholars claim that the state itself is responsible for

constructing a gender hierarchy, which is also manifested in state machinery.[123] These feminists

claim that the state is already implicated in creating the meaning of gender in a way detrimental to

women.[124] The wide gap between those who advocate state feminism and those holding a

skeptical perspective of state potential regarding women will probably remain regardless of the

extent to which women's policy bureaus are "improved" in order to achieve greater effectiveness.

6.6 Constant Causes of the Legacy

If the legacy of the critical juncture ended with organized women's return to electoral

politics, then why do women remain locked out of electoral representation? Collier and Collier

suggest that the legacy of the critical juncture may be perpetuated by factors unrelated to the

events of the critical juncture. That is, "a given set of causes shapes a particular outcome or

legacy at one point or period, and subsequently the pattern that is established reproduces itself

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[123]Sue Ellen Charlton, Jana Everett, and Kathleen Staudt, eds. *Women, the State and Development* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1989), 13.

[124]Nira Yuval-Davis and Floya Anthias eds., *Woman - Nation - State* (New York, St. Martin's Press, 1989); Valentine Moghadam *Gender and National Identity: Women and Politics in Muslim Societies* (Karachi: Oxford University Press, 1994); Shirin Rai and Geraldine Livesley eds., *Women and the State: International Perspectives*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996); Chandra Talpade Mohanty, Ann Russo and Lourdes Torres eds. *Third World Women and the Politics of Feminism* (Bloomington: Indianna University Press,1991).

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without the recurrence of the original cause."[125]

One explanation for the continuing marginalization of women from Israeli representative politics, discussed in Chapter 1, derives from the behaviourist perspective, and is predicated on the belief that women can thrive in a political system provided that they organize themselves effectively. As shown, in Israel this discussion has been dominated by the continuing debate over whether separate political organizing by women is advantageous or not.

Closely linked to the behaviourist argument is the suggestion that regardless of the type of political activism in which women engage, there are a number of structural and systemic factors which bear negatively on women's participation in electoral politics. The first is that the type of electoral system used has a strong bearing on how many women are elected to legislature.[126] Comparative studies of electoral systems have found that proportional representation systems tend to recruit more women into electoral politics than single-member majority or plurality systems.[127] Whereas plurality systems focus the electorate's attention on individual candidates, (always disadvantageous for women candidates) proportional representation emphasizes party lists which enable women candidates to be elected in spite of the electorate's unwillingness to support them. [128] Another argument in favour of the benefits for women of proportional

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[125]Collier and Collier, 35.

[126]Wilma Rule and Joseph Zimmerman, *Electoral Systems in Comparative Perspective: Their Impact on Women and Minorities* (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1994).

[127]Shugart, 31-41.

[128]Wilma Rule, "Electoral Systems: Contextual Factors and Women's Opportunity for Election to Parliament in Twenty-Three Democracies," *Western Political Quarterly* 40 (1987):182.

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representation systems is that the number of women elected to legislature increases in proportion

to the number of seats in a particular district, due to the fact that parties must "accommodate

more interests" and appeal to the widest cross-section of the electorate by including

representatives of those sectors on its party slate.[129]

These findings however, do not seem to have applied to Israel.[130] Israeli parties have been

found to recruit well-known and usually male public figures, and are reluctant to include women

candidates on their party slates, except in unrealistic positions.[131] By encouraging more parties to

run, the low threshold for election may also reduce the number of women included on party slates

as a result of excessive competition. Until the 1970s most of the parties made their leadership

responsible for selecting party candidates. This resulted in a low number of women being selected

to run for election. The widespread adoption by political parties in the 1970s of the primary

system in which the party membership elected candidates did increase the number of women

candidates. The transfer of the selection of candidates from the "oligarchical, closed and

centralized" nominating committees to the party membership was assumed to enable a variety of

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[129]Richard E. Matland and Michelle M. Taylor, "Electoral Systems Effects on Women's Representation: Theoretical Arguments and Evidence from Costa Rica," *Comparative Political Studies* 30 (1997).

[130]Avraham Brichta and Yael Brichta, "The Extent of the Impact of the Electoral System Upon the Representation of Women in the Knesset," *Electoral Systems in Comparative Perspective*, ed. Wilma Rule and Joseph Zimmerman (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1994), 115-126.

[131]Judith Buber Agassi, "How Much Political Power do Israeli Women Have?" in *Calling the Equality Bluff: Women in Israel*, ed. Marilyn Safir and Barbara Swirski, (New York: Pergamon Press, 1991), 210.

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previously under-represented social sectors to attain leadership positions.[132] Nevertheless, primaries do not appear to have significantly benefited, and may even have adversely affected women's representation on party slates.[133] It appears that when political parties reflect the electorate's hostility to women candidates, as is the case in Israel apparently, parties exclude women from party slates. Consequently the theoretical benefits of an electoral system have little effect.

Another structural argument focuses on cultural, social and economic factors. These consider the socialization of women into non-political roles. In Israel, as in other western industrial democracies, women's alienation from politics is thought to be compounded by their lack of economic resources. Yishai argues that "unrelenting vertical and horizontal job segregation and the persistent income differentials indicate that women have remained unequal to men in regard to one of the most important ventures of modern life: employment and career."[134] Yet Herzog's study of women in local Israeli politics found that, contrary to common assumptions, women who entered local politics did not lack political resources, but relative to the general population, actually had higher educational and socioeconomic status.[135] Another element

[132]Giora Goldberg, "The Performance of Women in Legislative Politics: the Israeli Example," *Crossroads- A Political Journal* 9 (1982): 27-49; Doron Gideon and Giora Goldberg, "No Big Deal: Democratization of the Nominating Process," in *Elections in Israel - 1988*, ed. Asher Arian and Michal Shamir, (Boulder: Westview Press, 1990), 57.

[133]Giora Goldberg, "Democracy and Representation in Israeli Political Parties," in *The Elections in Israel- 1977*, ed. Asher Arian, (Jerusalem: Jerusalem Academic Press, 1980):115; Eva Etzioni-Halevy and A. Illy, "Women in Legislatures: Israel in Comparative Perspective," in *Comparative Jewry*, ed. Arnold Dashevsky, (New Brunswick: Transaction Books, 1986), 75.

[134]Yishai, *Between the Flag and the Banner*, 174.

[135]Herzog, *Gendering Politics*, 126.

is the pervasive acceptance of religious conceptions of gender, which sanctions rabbinical authority over many of the most personal areas of Jewish women's lives.[136] The realization that behavioural and structural arguments rely on the assumption that political integration depends on better adjustment to the political and socioeconomic demands, has led feminist scholars to a new field of inquiry. Theories of nationalism, militarism, and citizenship point to discursive conceptions of women and gender as explanations for the political exclusion of women.

The most important critique feminist scholars have launched at theories of nationalism is that theorists have not recognized the impact of nationalist movements on gender, or the way in which gender orders are vital for nationalism.[137] Whereas conventional analyses of nationalism do not view gender as central, let alone pertinent, feminist theorists argue that nationalism constructs gender categories across national and geographic boundaries.[138] Feminist theorists emphasize the symbolic and physical importance ascribed to women by nationalist movements:

> Women frequently become the sign or marker of political goals and of cultural identity during processes of revolution and state-building and when power is being contested or reproduced. Representations of women assume political significance, and certain images of women define and demarcate political groups, cultural projects or ethnic communities. Women's behaviour and appearance - and their acceptable range of their activities - come to be defined by and are frequently subject to, the political or cultural objectives of political movements, states and

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[136]Susan Sered, *What Makes Women Sick? Maternity and Modernity in Israeli Society*. (Hanover: Brandeis University Press, 2000).

[137]Kumari Jayarwardena, *Feminism and Nationalism in the Third World*. London: Zed Books, 1986.

[138]Andrew Parker et al. *Nationalisms and Sexualities* (Routledge: New York, 1992). For two examples of what I refer to as "conventional.analyses" see Anthony Smith *Nations and Nationalism in a Global Era* (Cambridge: Polity, 1995); Elie Kedourie, *Nationalism* (Cambridge:Blackwell, 1960).

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leaderships.[139]

Nationalism can portray women either as conveyors of imperialism on one hand, or as embodiments of national independence and cultural authenticity on the other.[140] Women in nationalist movements are the "bearers of identity and difference as, for example, community members, boundary-markers and transmitters of culture, in ways that undermine their individual rights claims and that may endanger them as citizens."[141] Yet many analyses of gender and nationalism are ambivalent about the degree to which nationalism and feminism must be mutually exclusive.[142] Jan Jindy Pettman suggests that since nationalism and feminism may at times overlap, theorists should ask, "How have different feminisms engaged with or sought to distance themselves from different nationalist projects?"[143]

In the Israeli context, feminist scholars argue that the symbolic image of Israeli women was largely determined with the passage of the Women's Equal Rights Law (1951). They find

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[139]Valentine Moghadam, *Gender and National Identity: Women and Politics in Muslim Societies* (Karachi: Oxford University Press, 1994).

[140]A good example is shown in Minoo Moallem's discussion of the juxtaposition in Iran of the derogatory term for women identified with Western culture "gharbzadeh" and the Islamic ideal of women wearing the black chador. Minoo Moallem, "Transnationalism and Fundamentalism," in ed. Caren Kaplan, Norma Alarcon and Minoo Moallem, *Between Woman and Nation* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1999).

[141]Jan Jindy Pettman, *Worlding Women: A Feminist International Politics* (London: Routledge, 1996), 196.

[142]An excellent example is Lois A. West's *Feminist Nationalism* (New York: Routledge, 1997). While West suggests that feminism and nationalism can easily co-exist, the case studies she includes suggest otherwise.

[143]Jan Jindy Pettman, *Worlding Women: A Feminist International Politics* (London: Routledge, 1997), 62.

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that although the parties of the first Knesset were divided along secular Zionist and Jewish orthodox lines, the vast majority of the parties of the first Knesset adhered to the understanding of women stated in the Women's Equal Rights Law. This ideal held that the primary allegiance of the Jewish women in the modern Jewish state should be directed toward her family, to her "duties" as a wife and a mother, which in turn would lend support to the Jewish nation. This conceptualization of Israeli woman has endured because of its codification into legislation through the granting of legal authority to the religious establishment.[144] Berkovitch refers to the family and the military in Israel as "gendering forces" which cause women to experience "simultaneous inclusion and exclusion from the 'true' Israeli 'collective'...differential military regulations produce and reproduce women's status as marginal citizens, or at best, a different 'type' of citizen."[145]

In addition to their symbolic importance, women are also physically, and biologically central to nationalist movements. Yuval Davis argues that women are the "biological reproducers" and "bearers of the collective" inside national boundaries.[146] She argues that natal policies are important indicators of the position of women inside a collectivity.[147] While some scholars argue that the absence of family planning and information services for women are

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[144]Lahav, "When the Palliative Only Makes it Worse," 154; Berkowitch, "Motherhood as a National Mission," 606.

[145]Berkovitch, "Motherhood as a National Mission," 611.

[146]Nira Yuval Davis, *Gender and Nation* (London: Sage, 1997), 26.

[147]Nira Yuval Davis, "National Reproduction and the Demographic Race in Israel," in *Woman-Nation-State*, ed. Nira Yuval Davis and Floya Anthias, (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1989).

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evidence of the Israeli government's lack of interest and inability to establish fertility policies, feminist research finds consistent evidence of governmental pro-natalism.[148]

The symbolic and biological demands of nationalism on women are closely linked to militarism, which feminists argue also marginalizes women and feminism from political representation. Israeli militarism is defined as the hegemonic "viewpoint that organized violence or war is the optimal solution for political problems."[149]

In Israel military service affirms membership in the Jewish collectivity and reinforces gender hierarchy. One scholar dubs the high rate of participation in electoral politics by formerly high-ranking military figures "parachuting."[150] Because women are barred from the most prestigious military positions of combat and command, they have not relied on military service as a source of political capital. Some women have sought to redress exclusion from the military by turning to the Israeli court system to force the military to accept women in all positions, a tactic feminists argue is counter-productive, if not dangerous.[151] Although some feminist theorists argue

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[148]One of these policies was a prize awarded by the government to large (Jewish) families. Dov Friedlander, "Family Planning in Israel: Irrationality and Ignorance," *Journal of Marriage and the Family*, 35 (February 1973):117-124; Calvin Goldscheider, *Israel's Changing Society: Population, Ethnicity and Development* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1996); Jackie Portugese, *Fertility Policy in Israel: The Politics of Religion, Gender and Nation* (Westport: Praeger, 1998), Sered, 22-40.

[149]Uri Ben-Eliezer, "Rethinking the Civil-Military Relations Paradigm: The Inverse Relation between Militarism and Praetorianism Through the Example of Israel," *Comparative Political Studies* 30 (1997):224.

[150]Uri Ben-Eliezer, "The Meaning of Political Participation in a Non-Liberal Democracy: The Israeli Experience," *Comparative Politics* (1993): 397-412.

[151]Dafna Izraeli, "Gendering Military Service in the Israeli Defence Forces," *Israel Social Science Research* 12 (1997): 129-166; Kathleen Jones, "Dividing the Ranks: Women and the Draft," in ed. Jean Bethke Elshtain and Sheila Tobias, Women, Militarism and War, (Totowa:

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that women can have a subversive effect upon militaries, others argue that the integration of women into militaries will only change gender hierarchy, not eradicate it. Nira Yuval Davis argues, "empowering women to play global policeman on a footing equal to that of men is not what feminists...should be engaged in."[152]

Militarism bears negatively on women in Israel, as elsewhere. Militarism creates a political environment which sanctions explicit and covert violence against women.[153] Excessive spending on military budgets and the rationale used to support such spending detracts from state support of social welfare.[154] External military threat is often cited by nationalist movements to justify the repression of political freedom and to justify the repression of women. The desire to achieve national unity is "encoded within the politics of the state" and undermines efforts to articulate dissenting, and if they are allied with the peace movement, feminist political alternatives.[155]

Moreover, because citizenship in Israel is based on military service, militarism relegates women to a secondary level of citizenship.[156] Yuval Davis defines citizenship as "an overall

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Rowman and Littlemfield, 1990), Laurie Weinstein and Christie C. White, *Wives and Warriors: Women in the Military in the United States and Canada* (Westport: Bergin and Garvey, 1997).

[152]Nira Yuval Davis, *Gender and Nation*, 90

[153]Sered, 68-103.

[154]Elisabetta Addis, "The Effect of Military Spending on Women in Italy," and Tsehai Behane-Salassie, "The Impact of Industrial Development: Military Build-Up And Its Effect On Women," in ed. Eva Isaksson, *Women and the Military System* (New York: Harvester, 1988).

[155]Elshtain, 257. This was certainly the case when the 1977 Women's Party attempted to present itself as a party representing both Israeli and Arab women. Simmons Levin, 51.

[156]Of course, Israeli militarism entirely excludes both Palestinian women and men from full citizenship.

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concept which sums up the relationship between the individual and the state."[157] Other feminist scholars argue that citizenship determines women's membership in global politics too.[158] Theories of citizenship have become more important to feminist analyses as scholars realize that "women are, at best, second class citizens in most western democracies.[159] As Pettman suggests, there is something "about citizenship, or about women, that makes it...hard for women to become full citizens."[160]

In Israel, military service is perhaps the most important determinant of citizenship rights, and bears out the argument that "the more militarized the state, the more closely knit are citizenship and military service."[161] The terms upon which young women are conscripted into the IDF -women may be released from duty upon marriage or if they become pregnant- indicate that women's citizenship in Israel is primarily based upon marriage and motherhood. Unlike men, women are not called upon to serve in the reserve army. The inflexible assignment of army occupations on the basis of gender further establishes a rigid gender hierarchy.

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[157]Yuval Davis, *Gender and Nation*, 68.

[158]V. Spike Peterson and Anne Sisson Runyan, *Global Gender Issues* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1993).

[159]Kathleen Jones, "Citizenship in a Woman-Friendly Polity," *Signs* 15 (1990),781.

[160]Pettman, 19.

[161]Francine D'Amico, "Citizen-Soldier? Class, Race, Gender and Sexuality and the US Military," in ed. Susie Jacobs, Ruth Jacobson and Jennifer Marchband, *States of Conflict: Gender, Violence and Resistance* (London: Zed Books, 2000), 107.

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6.7 Conclusion

This chapter has demonstrated how the critical juncture of 1951 imprinted a legacy on organized women. I argued that the legacy was the withdrawal of the Israeli women's movement from electoral politics for two decades following close to thirty-five years of electoral representation at the national level. I argued that the legacy was maintained (or "produced") by a consensus of organized women that local politics, but not national politics, was the only suitable site for the political participation of women. The legacy was reproduced through WIZO's concentration on social welfare work such as providing childcare, vocational training and services for new immigrants, as well as its engagement in political lobbying and so called citizen education. Whereas the first two areas of activity did not necessarily negate WIZO's involvement in electoral politics, in its political education seminars WIZO continually claimed that Israeli women were simply not sufficiently politically mature to gain greater acceptance into electoral politics. WIZO thus substituted its own potential to serve as a base to elect greater numbers of women into the Knesset with its claim that it was providing training necessary for women to seek candidacy in political parties.

The core attributes of the legacy reflected the inability of women's volunteer organizations to convert social welfare work into "political capital."[162] A comparison of the legacy to the antecedent conditions of the critical juncture demonstrates that organized women wielded greater influence as an electoral body (with representatives in the legislature, and in the 1930s, a seat on the highest governmental council) than in the 1950s when its efforts in political lobbying led to scant gains.

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[162]Herzog, 267.

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This chapter has also shown that the end of the legacy occurred during the 1970s as a result of the emergence of a second-wave feminist movement in Israel. This new feminist movement refused affiliation with the larger women's organizations, and broke the previous consensus that organized women should not collectively engage in political power. The election of Marcia Friedman as a feminist representative on the Ratz ticket in 1973, and the attempt by the Women's Party to be elected to the Ninth Knesset in 1977, although unsuccessful, signaled that the new Israeli feminists rejected nonpartisanship and political lobbying as methods for effecting egalitarian gender relations. By the 1970s however, feminist political claims were not recognized by women voters.

The appointment of the Commission on the Status of Women in 1975 marked an important advance in Israeli feminism by shifting the locus of activity from the women's movement exclusively to that of government by placing responsibility for advancing women's status on government; which would use the usual tools of politics such as legislation, policies, and internal monitoring --all of which increased in scope during the 1980s and 1990s. Scholars have suggested that such measures, which they call "state feminism," have the potential to substantially advance feminist claims. But it is not clear that governmental bodies in Israel are sufficiently committed to feminism to significantly effect change without the cooperation of an independent politically assertive feminist movement.

CHAPTER 7

CONCLUSION:

HISTORICAL INSTITUTIONALISM AND THE MODEL OF
CRITICAL JUNCTURE AS A NEW PERSPECTIVE ON GENDER AND POLITICS

I chose historical institutionalism as a theoretical perspective to examine the withdrawal of

the Israeli women's movement from electoral participation for two important reasons. The first

reason was that the historical institutionalist approach enabled me to ask a question about a

decision made by the Israeli women's movement which has, until now, been understood by Israeli

social scientists as entirely obvious, and therefore not pertinent to the study of gender and politics

in Israel. I originally embarked on this research because I was not satisfied by the meagre

explanations offered by Israeli social scientists as to why the Israeli women's movement stopped

running for Knesset. If the establishment of the Israeli state somehow brought about the

disintegration of the Israeli women's movement, I wanted to understand why it was specifically in

1951 that statehood had such an effect on organized women, and how the state effected this

disintegration. If it was the ascendance of a nationalist movement (in this case Zionism) which

discouraged women from participating in a separate political movement, as was the case in Egypt

in the 1950s and in Iran in the late 1970s and 1980s, I wanted to know exactly what were the

concrete processes by which the women's movement was dismantled. Did the state pass

legislation prohibiting women's organizing, as in Egypt and Iran? Or did the women's movement

embrace a new role in keeping with nationalist demands on women? If so, why? And how did

the women's movement make the transition from demanding equal rights to affirming nationalist

conceptions of gender? It seemed to me that the pervasive assertion by Israeli social scientists

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that the women's movement ceased electoral participation after 1951 because the movement no longer thought it appropriate or advantageous for separate organizing by women was too casual an explanation for the apparent demise or transformation of one of the first social movements within Zionism and in Israel, and, if winning legislative representation is taken as a sign of political advancement, one of most politically involved and effective women's movements internationally in the first half of the twentieth century.

But asking the question of why the women's movement ceased electoral involvement was a theoretical challenge in itself. Asking why an individual, group or movement *did not* do something, is not easily answered because it implies or assumes that certain decisions are more logical or rational than others. Moreover, in this particular case the decision to withdraw from electoral politics was taken during a convention session of a women's organization after a short debate. While the minutes from this meeting provide a rationale of the decision to withdraw from electoral politics, in my view it is not sufficient to explain why the members opposing WIZO's participation in electoral politics arrived at their position, and how their stance prevailed. My question was, what caused organized women who had supported the fielding of separate Women's Lists for election over thirty years, during the movement for women's suffrage, and after during the British Mandate, to suddenly change their minds about electoral participation? In my mind the very fact that the debate over the continued separate participation of women in electoral politics was raised at all indicated that electoral participation was not universally approved by the women's movement, and that dissonance among members had been brewing for some time.

But an investigation into why such a decision was made had to be taken without implying

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that the reasons given during the convention meeting were not the "real" reasons or that the decision itself was illogical. I found that historical institutionalism enabled me to probe into this decision without falling into either of the foregoing traps. I could assess the trajectory of the Israeli women's movement through its emphasis on what Immergut calls "alternative rationalities."[1] Until now, the dominant areas of historical institutionalist study have been political economy and the study of international and domestic organizations.[2] As a recent critique of cultural theory has indicated, scholars are beginning to realize the methodological scope of historical institutionalism.[3] Because of its broad and flexible understanding of institutions, there are no theoretical barriers preventing the extension of historical institutionalism beyond its current theoretical domain, into the field of social and political movements, such as the Israeli women's movement. My analysis of the rejection of electoral representation by organized women in Israel extends the analytical applicability of the historical institutionalist approach through its examination of the structural and historical factors shaping the decisions of the Israeli women's movement. Historical institutionalism's emphasis on path-dependency as a way in which particular decisions foreclose certain options and determine outcomes reflects the effect which the women's movement's decision had on the subsequent development of Israeli feminism.

A second reason for choosing the historical institutionalist perspective was its utility in imposing order on a wealth of historical detail. My archival research provided more than one
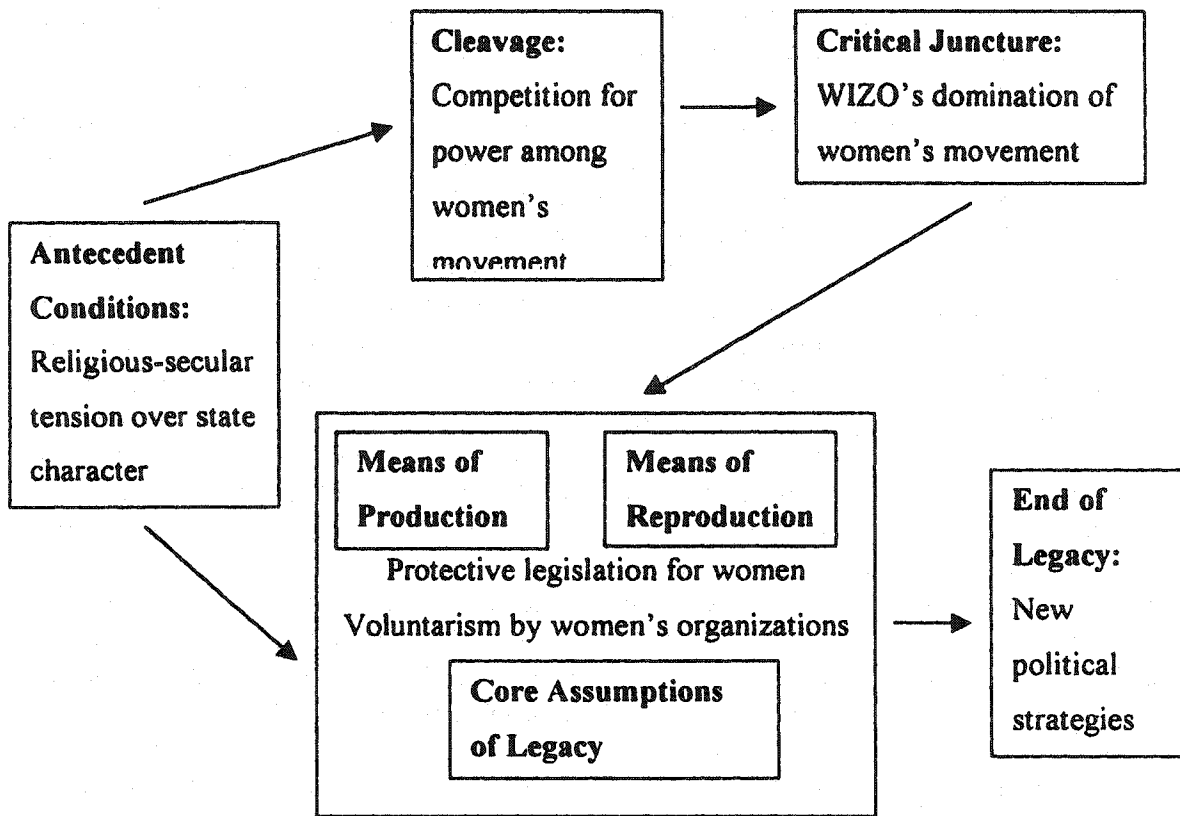
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[1]Immergut, 18.

[2]Two examples are the European Union, and the American Federation of Labour. See Sven Steinmo, Kathleen Thelen and Frank Longstreth, *Structuring Politics: Historical Institutionalism in Comparative Analysis*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992).

[3]Lecours, 1.

surprise: first, the women's movement in Israel was not, as has been the conventional view of historians and social scientists, entirely dominated or even led by women affiliated to labour Zionism, second, that the movement was continuously involved in political activism for over thirty years from 1918 to 1951, and third, that the component organizations of the women's movement constantly swung between cooperation and fierce competition with one another. While the history of the Israeli women's movement is in itself a fascinating and impressive example of women's political organizing, its narrative did not answer the question I had originally posed. Historical institutionalism offered a way to channel the social history I derived from archival sources to explain a broader political process. In particular, the model of critical junctures devised by Ruth Berens Collier and David Collier harnessed this information to make the case that the decision of the women's movement to withdraw from electoral politics cannot be understood without understanding the history of the women's movement itself. That is, the critical juncture model argues that major political turning points cannot be understood in isolation from the process which leads to them. Table IV presents a revised version of the critical juncture model.

The first stage of the critical juncture model refers to the antecedent conditions which lead up to a crisis or cleavage, which in turn sets off the critical juncture. Chapter 3 refutes the prevalent argument found in analyses of the pre-state women's movement which claims that the predominant focus of the pre-state women's movement was the struggle for women's labour rights, and that the pre-state women's movement went into decline after winning women's suffrage and following the WWC's loss of autonomy to the Histadrut, both in the mid-1920s. An examination of the antecedent conditions shows the confluence of two types of political activity by women in Palestine. The movement for women's suffrage began in Palestine in the early 1920s

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TABLE 1V

The Revised Critical Juncture Model


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                          ┌────────────────────┐        ┌──────────────────────┐
                          │ Cleavage:          │        │ Critical Juncture:   │
                          │ Competition for    │ ──────▶│ WIZO's domination of │
                          │ power among        │        │ women's movement     │
                          │ women's            │        │                      │
                          │ movement           │        │                      │
                          └────────────────────┘        └──────────────────────┘
┌────────────────────┐
│ Antecedent         │
│ Conditions:        │
│ Religious-secular  │
│ tension over state │
│ character          │
└────────────────────┘
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Means of
Production

Means of
Reproduction

Protective legislation for women
Voluntarism by women's organizations

Core Assumptions
of Legacy

End of
Legacy:
New
political
strategies

This table is an adaptation of the critical juncture model devised by David Collier &
Ruth Berens Collier, *Shaping the Political Arena: Critical Junctures, The Labour
Movement and Regime Dynamics in Latin America* (Princeton: Princeton University
Press, 1991), 31.

when it formed the first Women's List which articulated women's political demands in the first representative body of the Jewish community. Organized women were also extensively involved in providing social welfare services in a community where begging and charity were the only forms of social assistance available to the population. These two movements, advocacy for women's political and legal rights, and the establishment of a social welfare system formed the core issues of the pre-state women's movement, which was comprised by five women's organizations; the UER, Hadassah, the HNI, WIZO, as well as the WWC, all of which were tightly organizationally, financially and politically linked. The pre-state women's movement was sufficiently strong in the 1930s and 1940s to send electoral representatives of the Women's Lists to two subsequent Elected Assemblies in 1931 and 1944. The Women's List provided the platform from which the founder of Hadassah and Zionist leader Szold assumed a seat on the National Council in 1931 in order to establishment the Department of Social Service. This position was itself a recognition of the women's movement's claim that social welfare needed to be public and systematic, rather than based on private charity. By revising our understanding of the pre-state women's movement, an examination of the antecedent conditions therefore sets the context for the next stage of the critical juncture; the cleavage which emerged within the women's movement during the 1930s and 1940s.

Collier and Collier argue that critical junctures are triggered by a crisis or a cleavage. Chapter 4 argues that throughout the 1930s and 1940s a cleavage was developing within the pre-state Jewish women's movement over two models of political activism. During this period the pre-state women's movement began a gradual drift from supporting partisan politics to viewing itself as an apolitical organization supporting the development of a civil society in Palestine. The

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theory of institutional dynamism clarifies the process by which this cleavage developed.[4] The entry of Szold and WIZO as new political actors in the pre-state Jewish women's movement shifted the movement's initial focus on political and legal equality rights for women to a heightened concentration on the establishment of a social welfare network. Although Szold and WIZO agreed that the broad goal of the women's movement was to support the Zionist endeavour to create a Jewish homeland, they were diametrically opposed over how the Jewish women's movement should operate. Szold maintained that Jewish women's organizations based in Palestine, particularly the HNI, should assume leadership of international organized Jewish women. Despite WIZO's massive international membership base (in 1924 it was 8,000 over 24 countries) and financial resources (in 1923 it was estimated at $85,000 U.S.) Szold argued that WIZO should consult the HNI before undertaking new projects in Palestine.[5] Szold envisioned the HNI as forming the centre of authority for the international Jewish women's movement, from which position the HNI would initiate the establishment of new social welfare services and allocate funds. Szold advocated that Jewish institutions in Palestine, including the organizations of the Jewish women's movement, be financially independent and operate without the subventions of international Jewish organizations. For Szold autonomy would allow the institutions and organizations of the Jewish community to emerge as an organic component of the new polity.

By contrast, WIZO rejected Szold's vision of autonomy for Jewish organizations and institutions in Palestine. WIZO's refusal to subordinate itself to the Palestinian women's movement was evident in its lack of interest in supporting the publication of *The Woman*, (which

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[4]Thelen and Steinmo.

[5]See footnote 115, Chapter 2.

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Szold hoped would be the mouthpiece of the women's movement) and its refusal to support the HNI's request to join a representative council of Jewish women's organizations. WIZO's adamant refusal to subordinate itself to the Palestine Jewish women's movement eventually led to its absorption of the HNI as one of its federations, which as a result eliminated one of two independent organizations of the pre-state women's movement. (WIZO later absorbed the second independent women's organization in the 1950s). By 1951 WIZO had positioned itself as the major independent women's voluntary organization in Israel. The introduction of new political actors was thus one factor leading to WIZO's dominance in the movement which meant that its support for non-partisanship could not be contested by organized women.

A second factor behind the growing cleavage between partisan politics versus social welfare activism supporting the development of civil society was a change in political context, a second source of institutional dynamism. This came through the appointment of Szold in 1931 to the National Council as the head of the Department of Social Service. Szold's creation of the infrastructure of a social welfare network was predicated in large part on the willingness of organized women to provide volunteer labour staff to social work offices throughout the Jewish settlement. Publicity and propaganda issued by WIZO and Hadassah indicated that organized women saw Szold's appointment to the National Council as formal recognition of the women's movement and its centrality to state building. This view resulted in a profound disillusionment with partisan politics when in 1949, Rachel Kagan, the WIZO representative in the first Knesset, did not receive the portfolio for the Ministry of Social Welfare. The growing tension between those in the movement, such as Kagan, who supported organized women's participation in electoral politics, and WIZO, which saw its future as a non-partisan voluntary organization,

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triggered a critical juncture, the fourth stage of the model.

The critical juncture unfolded between 1949 and 1951. The expectation that the representative of the women's movement would receive Ministry of Social Welfare served as a meeting point for both the proponents of electoral politics and non-partisan social welfare activity. The loss of the portfolio was exacerbated by other factors. One was that in the new state electoral power, not volunteer activism nor experience, comprised the basis for government coalition agreements. The Mapai government's allocation of the Ministry of Social Welfare to a representative of the orthodox religious party, the United Religious Front instead of to WIZO representative Rachel Kagan, signified that, despite Kagan's superior experience in social welfare work, electoral mandates (the URF won sixteen seats, as compared to WIZO's one) were the only consideration for political power sharing. This marked a fundamental change from the pre-state era when Henrietta Szold's expertise in institution-building and not the strength of her political base, was the reason for her appointment to the National Council as the head of the Department of Social Service.

A second factor behind the critical juncture of 1949-1951 was that organized women of the WWC, some of whom were now elected to the Knesset as representatives of Mapai, could no longer be counted on as allies of the women's movement, therefore depriving the WIZO representative of support in the Knesset. The implications of the new allegiance of Mapai women was starkly apparent in the debate over Kagan's proposed legislation for women's legal rights. Despite their rhetorical support for Kagan's bill, Mapai women voted in favour of a compromise bill proposed by their party, even though it approved religious authority over women's personal status. Whereas the pre-state women's movement was characterized by high inter-dependency and

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co-operation between women's organizations regardless of political affiliation, loyalty to the new state took precedence over what were now argued to be sectarian demands by women. In this environment, the articulation of political demands by women were construed as undermining the drive to build the state.

A third factor which underpinned the critical juncture was the Mapai government's lack of commitment to women's equality. This was manifested in Mapai's selective willingness to incur the opposition of the religious sector over certain issues such as the women's draft, but its refusal to confront the religious over women's personal status laws. In conjunction, these three factors -- the new conventions of political power-sharing, the abdication of Mapai women from the women's movement, and the willingness of the dominant Mapai party to compromise with the religious sector over women's status --created a hostile legislative environment for the Women's List. WIZO's decision to reject partisan politics was based on the growing cleavage between electoral politics and non-partisan social welfare activity compounded by the failures of the first Knesset. The critical juncture of 1949 to 1951 was the self-imposed exclusion of organized women in Israel from electoral politics.

Central to the claim of a critical juncture is the argument that it results in a legacy. The legacy is sustained by three components; mechanics of production, reproduction, and core attributes, and it has a limited duration. The legacy of the critical juncture of 1949 to 1951 was the consensus it created among organized women to support the ostensibly apolitical model of social welfare activity. The legacy of nonpartisanship is thus a counter-point to the antecedent conditions of the 1930s and 1940s in which organized women engaged in electoral politics. The fact that this decision was upheld for over twenty years until 1977, regardless of the strong

incentives the Israeli proportional representation electoral system provided for electoral mobilization by specific sectors of the population, demonstrates how radical the break was with the past, and how strongly the legacy of the critical juncture took hold among organized women. The mechanics of production which sustained the legacy was the public assertion by organized women, now mainly represented by WIZO, that women's voluntary organizations should not serve as vehicles for achieving political and legal equality for women, but for the creation of a social welfare infrastructure. The mechanics of reproduction which reinforced this orientation were WIZO's dedication of its resources to maintaining its social welfare services, legislative lobbying, and providing political education, all three of which were claimed by WIZO to provide organized women with an effective alternative to electoral politics. The attributes of the legacy were that, by separating itself from electoral activism, WIZO unwittingly became subject to the devaluation of women's voluntary organizations, which according to Herzog, recruits women's volunteer labour, while simultaneously rejecting their claims to political representation.[6]

The end of the legacy of 1949-1951 occurred in 1977, when the campaign of a new Women's Party ruptured the consensus of organized women to abjure national electoral politics. The Women's Party was founded in the context of the emergence of the new women's movement of the 1970s which rejected the claim that gender equality was an intrinsic part of the Zionist state and which looked to feminism as a critique of gender oppression. Since the1980s, the growth in number and variety of Israeli feminist organizations have all but eclipsed WIZO as the representative of organized women in Israel. Yet, despite experimentation with a number of different political methods to increase women's political representation (including encouraging

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[6]Herzog, *Gendering Politics,* 266.

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political parties to set a quota of women candidates on their electoral slates) the number of women in the Knesset has not increased significantly. One proposed solution has been to by-pass electoral politics altogether and to promote "state feminism," that is, the establishment of women's policy bureaus which press for legislative protection for women. The continued exclusion of women from the Knesset is thus no longer a result of the critical juncture, but of constant causes which reaffirm the exclusion of women from representative politics. Chapter 6 looked at structural factors, such as the type of electoral system, party politics, socioeconomic status and culture which bear negatively on women's political representation. It also found that the way in which women are integrated in the state, nationalism and citizenship in Israel marginalizes women from political representation.

Historical institutionalism and the critical juncture model thus demonstrate that the decision by organized women in Israel to withdraw from electoral politics was not made, as is commonly assumed by scholars, on the basis of the events of 1951 alone, but was the result of incremental developments: the growth of a pre-state women's movement, the emergence of a cleavage within that movement between engagement in partisan politics on one hand, and non-partisan social welfare activity on the other. The historical institutionalist perspective clarifies the politically contingent nature of the Women's Lists and the way they pursued different goals at different historical points, and how these reflected the dominant concerns of the women's movement. For the Women's Societies, and later the UER, the Women's Lists were necessary to wage the battle for women's suffrage, and to prevent the religious and secular sectors from compromising over women's political rights. The HNI's and later WIZO's sponsorship of the Women's Lists was an attempt by the women's movement to retain control over, and receive

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public support for, the social welfare network. At the same time, the critical juncture model is limited by its expectation that long-term developments can be divided into distinct stages. While such a division is useful and perhaps necessary for theoretical clarity, it nonetheless imposes false divisions onto history. In this regard the critical juncture model is incompatible with the historical institutionalist perspective; that is, whereas the critical juncture model demands an explanation which fits into four stages, historical institutionalism argues that any type of determinisim is counter-productive for understanding historical processes. The growth of the women's movement and the emergence of a major cleavage within it was not successive but simultaneous. Still, historical institutionalism is a promising avenue for the study of how organized women and women's movements make political decisions. This study may provide the basis for a comparative examination of the way in which other women's movements have made political choices. Certainly the historical institutionalist perspective and the model of critical juncture offer an invaluable method and theory for studying the way in which changes occur in the political history of women.

Glossary

Advisory Council	Established in 1920 by the British Mandate government, the Advisory Council comprised members of the British administration and representatives of the local population.
Agudat Israel	Originally an anti-Zionist Orthodox political party opposed to equal rights for women, Agudath Israel entered into an agreement with Ben-Gurion's government prior to statehood.
Ahdut HaAvodah (United Labour)	Formed in 1919, United Labour became the dominant party of labour Zionism. Members included prime ministers David Ben Gurion and Golda Meir. Leaders of the WWC included Rachel Yanait and Manya Shochat.
American Zionist Medical Unit (AZMU)	Built by Henrietta Szold to provide medical assistance during World War I, the AZMU became the largest health-care provider in pre-state Israel, and became the basis for the Hadasssah Hospital, Jerusalem.
Ashkenazim (Yiddish term for Germany)	German Jews and their descents many of whom spread throughout Europe.
Constituent Assembly	The planned name for the first gathering of representatives of the pre-state Jewish community, changed under pressure from the religious sector.
Elected Assembly	The representative assemblies of the pre-state Jewish community, 1920-1925, 1926-1930, 1931-1943 and 1944-1949.
Eretz Israel (Land of Israel)	The Biblical boundary of Israel.
HaPoel HaZair (The Young Worker)	A political party in the labor Zionist movement, and the main rival of United Labour.
Hadassah	The Women's Zionist Organization of America.

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Hadassah Medical Organization (HMO)	The health-care foundation funded and organized by Henrietta Szold and Hadassah.
Herut (Liberation)	A political party affiliated with the Revisionist Zionist movement.
Histadrut (Organization)	The General Trade Union of Israel founded in 1920.
Histadrut Arzit (Israeli organization)	Palestine federation of WIZO
Histadrut Nashim Ivriot (HNI) (Organization of Hebrew Women)	Women's organization set up in Palestine in 1920.
Histadrut Nashim Zioniot (HNZ) (Organization of Hebrew Women)	The name given to the organization created by the amalgamation of the HNI and the Palestine Federation of Israel.
Irgun Zvai Leumi (National Army Organization)	Pre-state underground Jewish militia
Jewish Agency	The pre-state governing body of the Jewish community.
Keren Hayesod (Collection Fund)	The collection fund for the pre-state Jewish community.
Kupat Holim (Sick Fund)	The health-care provider of Labor Zionism.
Likud	The successor of the Herut Party, also comprising the Liberals and other political parties associated with the right-wing, or Revisionist movement.
Lochamim (Fighters' List)	The list of the Lehi, an underground Jewish militia which ran a list for the first Knesset and won one seat.
Mamlakhtiut (Statism)	Ben-Gurion's guiding policy following Independence.
Mapai (acronym for	The dominant party of the Labor Zionist movement the Mapai party led the coalition government of

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Land of Israel Workers' Party)	the first Knesset under the leadership David Ben-Gurion.
Lehi	Lohamei Herut Yisrael - Freedom Fighters of Yisrael.
Maki (Israeli Communist party)	Rival of Mapai.
Mapam (acronym for the United Workers' Party)	A break-away faction and political rival of Mapai..
Mizrahi Party (Hebrew acronym for Merkaz Ruhani- Spiritual Center)	Orthodox party which opposed women's suffrage in the pre-state period.
Mizrachim (Hebrew for Eastern)	North African and Middle Eastern Jewry (see also Sepharadim)
Na'amat (acronym for Movement of Working Women and Volunteers)	The new name for the Working Women's Council.
Palmach (Israel Defence Army)	An underground military organization of the pre-state Jewish community.
Preparatory Assembly (Assefat Mekhonenet)	The first gathering of representatives of the Jewish community of Mandate Palestine, convened in 1917, the Preparatory Assembly was to lay down the guidelines for future self-government.
Progressive party	An amalgam of three parties set up for the first Knesset the Progressive party later became one of the founders of the Israeli Liberal party.
Provisional Council (Va'ad Zemani)	The body elected by the Preparatory Assembly to arrange the assembly of a Constituent Assembly and a Permanent Council.
Sepharadim	Jews of North African and Middle Eastern descent, see also Mizrachi.
Tipat Halav (Drop of Milk)	Well-baby clinics established by the HNI during the 1920s and 1930s.

Stern Gang	British name for the Lehi (Lohamei Herut Yisrael).
Union of Hebrew Women for Equal Rights (UER)	Headed by Sarah Azaryahu, the UER sponsored Women's Lists and provided legal services for women, the UER was later absorbed into WIZO.
United Religious Front (URF)	A coalition of Orthodox and Zionist religious parties which won 16 seats in the first Knesset, and which later split up into different factions.
Va'ad Leumi (National Council)	The National Council was was elected by the Elected Assembly to govern the Jewish community. It responsibilitities were "Jewish settlements, education, health, welfare and religion."[1]
Va'ad Poel or Hanhala (Executive Committee)	The executive body of the pre-state government of the Jewish community.
Women's Societies	The women's organizations established to campaign for women's suffrage. These were absorbed into the Union of Hebrew Women for Equal Rights (UER).
Women's Equal Rights Law (1951)	A government-initiated law which offered some equality rights to women, but which reaffirmed the control of the religious establishment over Family Law. Rachel Kagan of the WIZO Women's List opposed the bill.
Women's International Zionist Organization (WIZO)	Women's organization founded in Great Britain in . 1920.
Working Women's Council (WWC)	The Working Women's Council was founded in 1914 by women workers unhappy with their position in the male-dominated labor movement. The WWC eventually lost its organizational and political independence and became an auxiliary wing of the Labor party. In 1976 it changed its name to Na'amat (the Movement of Working Women and Volunteers).

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[1]Susan Hattis Rolef, ed., *Political Dictionary of the State of Israel*, (New York: MacMillan Publishing Company,1987), p.310.

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Yishuv (Settlement)	The Jewish settlement of Palestine. Historians refer to the Old Yishuv (before 1882) and the New Yishuv, (1882-1918)
Zionist Congress	The congress convened by the World Zionist Organization.

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