

"'Fight like Auður': Gender, Ethnicity, and Dissent in the Career of Salome Halldorson, Manitoba Social Credit MLA, 1936-41"

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This research explores the career of one of the foremost female leaders in the Icelandic Canadian community in Manitoba during the 1930s and 40s, Elin Salome Halldorson,[1] Social Credit MLA, 1936-41. Known only through the general biographies that appear occasionally within popular histories of the community, Halldorson's complex political career has remained largely unexplored. Using Halldorson's papers as well as newspaper coverage of her career, this paper provides an expansion of her biography as well as an exploration of the broader implications of her career namely her navigation of gender, dissent and Icelandicity in the often inhospitable political climate of the interwar and early wartime era.

This discussion requires an appreciation for the restrictive atmosphere in which Halldorson operated, as well as the politics within the Social Credit party itself. It also necessitates a more critical understanding of the comparatively prominent standing of Icelandic Canadians within the cultural framework of this period, one which historians have generally accepted as inextricably connected to xenophobia and anti-migrant sentiment. This research reveals Halldorson's negotiation of notions of gender and Icelandicity in a rapidly changing political environment, illustrating that while she enjoyed a good deal of success within the discourse of Depression-era economic reform, her more subversive usages of Icelandic and gender identity in her wartime pacifist women's campaigns failed to undermine persistent notions of female subservience, the hyper-conformity of Canadian wartime politics, and the primacy of Canadian nationalism in public representations of Icelandic Canadian identity

[1] Earlier references to the Halldorson family occasionally spell their name "Halldórsson". The shifting spelling of their name is indicative of a broader trend towards Anglicization of Icelandic Canadian names, most notably though the removal of the traditional "ss" in patronymic names and the removal of accents and non-Anglo characters such as Þ, Ð, and Æ.

Although this paper hopes to assist in Halldorson's reinstatement as an important figure within Icelandic Canadian and women's political historiography, it also explores the origins of her exclusion. Halldorson carefully crafted a somewhat simplistic public image in her campaigns, frequently referring to herself as both the noble and loyal "pioneer settler from the land of the Vikings" and the innocuous "lady school teacher turned politician". These references similarly characterise historical references to her life and career particularly several small community biographies which emphasize her community service and downplay her tumultuous political career. While her English writing appears to embrace the language of both Canadian nationalism and domestic femininity, Halldorson deliberately employed these notions in her attempts to garner Anglo-Canadian support for the acceptance of the Icelandic Canadian community, increased in female political participation and leadership, and eventually for radical wartime politics. Although Halldorson's subversive manipulation of these simplistic, palatable notions of gender and ethnicity in her political campaigns challenges existing notions of interwar and wartime women's and political and ethnic history, however, the unsurprising brevity and seemingly uneventful nature of her career has helped to push her to the margins of Canadian history. It was, however, the barriers Halldorson faced and the frustration she endured which provide crucial insight into the surprising and uneven parameters of interwar and early wartime ethnicity, gender and politics.

Halldorson has received scant attention from Icelandic Canadian and women's historians. Her absence within the Canadian women's political history canon may be due to her membership in a conservative political movement, particularly one which enjoyed only a brief period of vibrant female activism also characterized by the language and logic of traditional gender norms. Janine

Stingel's acclaimed 2000 investigation into the intrinsically anti-Semetic nature of Social Credit ideology in Canada may have also inadvertently contributed to a general perception of the movement as being uniformly hostile to progressive political elements, creating an image of female Social Crediters, particularly one from a non-Anglo ethnic community, as trapped within a non-negotiable and intolerant environment.

Halldorson's writing initially fails to dispel these impressions of ethnic female participation in the Canadian Social Credit movement. Her frequent use of traditional nationalist and gendered language as well as her work with the sometimes inaccessible Icelandic Canadian press and Icelandic language in her political campaigns have all contributed to a somewhat hazy vision of her career and political beliefs. Although these factors may help to explain Halldorson's absence within Canadian women's historiography, her exclusion from mainstream Icelandic Canadian history appears quite unusual and presents new questions about the traditional portrayal of historical female figures within the community. Icelandic Canadian historiography generally prides itself on Iceland's history of comparatively progressive property and political rights for women, yet figures such as Halldorson and her other well-known female contemporaries, such as author Laura Goodman Salverson, occupy the outskirts of mainstream history and commemoration. Daisy Neijman notes this "silence" surrounding accomplished female figures such as Salverson appears as "an anomaly for a group that produced so many newspapers and magazines, and was so keen to list its achievements in its adopted society."[2] While the origins of Salverson's exclusion also relate to her decision to write in English for an English audience as well as her contentious treatment of

[2] Daisy Neijman, *The Icelandic Voice in Canadian Letters: The Contribution of Icelandic Canadians to Canadian Literature* (Ottawa: Carleton University Press, 1997), 183.

important Icelandic and Icelandic Canadian historical events, the community's continual ostracization of her work and legacy, even following Anglicization, is remarkable. Halldorson, in contrast, was a popular figure within the Icelandic Canadian community. Accounts in the Icelandic Oral History Collection at the Provincial Archives of Manitoba from members of the community's interwar population frequently identify her as a person of prominence alongside other well-known Icelandic Canadian figures such as Charles "Cartoon Charlie" Thorson, Disney animator and co-creator of Snow White and Bugs Bunny, celebrated spy and alleged inspiration for the James Bond movie series, Sir William Stephenson and arctic explorer Vilhjalmur Stefansson. Within the community's popular culture as well as in their official tributes to important political and spiritual figures such as Páll Thorlakson, Sigtryggur Jónasson, and Jón Bjarnason, Halldorson appears as one of very few well-publicised visions of female Icelandic Canadian leadership and political activism.

Although Halldorson occupied a unique space within the interwar Icelandic Canadian community as a persuasive and popular female political figure, her marginal position within Icelandic Canadian historiography remains that of the "lady schoolteacher turned politician." Focussing mainly on her long teaching career and stint as principle of the Icelandic Jón Bjarnason Academy in Winnipeg, popular biographies of Halldorson often downplay her controversial political life in favour of her personal history, relationship to Icelandic culture and traditions and her service to the community. Such biographies frequently identify Halldorson as the first Icelandic baby born in the Lundar district in Manitoba and the role of traditional culture in her childhood. These histories also credit Halldorson with unusual intelligence including her ability to play music

by ear, as well as her "colourful and eccentric personality", penchant for watching horse racing, knitting, crochet, and fast driving.[3] Beyond her years of school teaching and one well-publicised motion she introduced to the assembly in 1937, however, the details of this lady schoolteacher's political career remain untouched.

Allison L. McKinnon's 1992 article in *The Icelandic Canadian* is one of the very few community oriented biographies of Halldorson which provides a broad overview of her election and political career. Although McKinnon's work incorporated some forgotten details of Halldorson's political career, she omits any reference to her pacifist campaigns as well as the resistance she faced from her own party as well as the Icelandic Canadian community.[4] Instead Halldorson's story, writes *The Icelandic Canadian* editor Carol Mowat, fit well into popular Icelandic Canadian consciousness as "a cultural vignette so familiar to us all: the stoic Icelandic woman who becomes a teacher, (whose) career went beyond the one room schoolhouse to the Jon Bjarnason Academy and a stint in politics."[5] In keeping with the traditional emphasis on education and literacy which characterizes Icelandic Canadian culture and historiography, one which community members view as a continuation of the Icelandic saga tradition, Halldorson's education occupies an important space within such biographies. A student of Winnipeg's Wesley College from 1905-1910, she studied German, Icelandic, and Latin while playing on the college's hockey team, and was elected as "Lady Stick" or female student body head. Following her graduation, she

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[3] Lundar Historical Society, *Wagons to Wings: History of Lundar and Districts 1872-1980* (Lundar: Lundar Historical Society, 1980), 417-8.

[4] Allison L. McKinnon, "Elin Salome Halldorson: Teacher and Politician," *The Icelandic Canadian* 50.3 (Spring 1992): 123-124, 124.

[5] Carol Mowat, "Editorial," *The Icelandic Canadian* 50.3 (Spring 1992), 123.

taught throughout Manitoba and was hired as a language instructor in 1920 at Winnipeg's Icelandic Lutheran High School, The Jón Bjarnason Academy. (JBA)[6] She became principal in 1926 and dean of JBA in 1927, leading the academy through a period of intense financial adversity following the Lutheran Church's decision to withdraw the academy's funding.[7] She also received a medal for her teaching record from Buckingham Palace on the occasion of the Royal visit in 1939 and taught until the age of 70.[8] In her 1946 autobiography published in the Icelandic newspaper *Heimskringla,* Halldorson wrote that her decision to enter politics stemmed from her concern for the young unemployed alumni of JBA.

> Boys and girls who had been my pupils came in to school saying that they had looked for jobs for weeks and months. These boys and girls were clever and their plight aroused my wonder. I had not been more clever at their age and yet teaching jobs had never been lacking to me. I began to wonder what was going on and I somehow reached the conclusion that the fault lay with money.[9]

Although Halldorson frequently refers to the role of her career in her decision to pursue politics, community histories, such as *Wagons to Wings: History of Lundar and Districts, 1872-1980*, often attribute Halldorson's interest in politics to her father Halldór, an Icelandic fisherman and migrant turned farmer who had served as an alderman in Iceland instead.[10] Halldorson wrote that prior to his death in 1921, her father's politics occupied a prestigious place in the family, seldom forcing Salome to question her own political persuasion.

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6 McKinnon, 128-9.

7 Ibid.

8 Lundar Historical Society, 418.

9 Elin Salome Halldorson, "Autobiography of Elin Salome Halldorson," Provincial Archives of Manitoba (PAM), MG 14. B3, 6. This autobiography is one of three drafts contained within Halldorson's papers at the Provincial Archives of Manitoba. This autobiography appears to have been edited and retyped following Halldorson's death in 1970 and includes a short biographical appendage and tribute as well as additional information on the Halldorson family's experiences on the homestead and early Icelandic Canadian culture.

10 Lundar Historical Society, 418.

> My people were strong supporters of the Liberal party of Sir Wilfred Laurier. My father was a great admirer of his. A large portrait of a very distinguished gentleman was hanging above the organ in our living room. When a lady visitor asked whose picture that was my mother replied "this is papa's friend, Sir Wilfred Laurier."... I had full confidence that my father knew all the answers in politics... any new departure in politics did not enter my mind... as I had never taken any interest in (it)."[11]

Despite a family tradition of political service (her brother Kristjan also served as an MLA for the Liberal Progressives from 1945-53) Halldorson's career and life outside of Lundar was a significant factor in her exploration and involvement in divergent interwar politics. It was in Winnipeg where Halldorson explored diverse political movements including the campaign of the recently elected Social Credit Premier Bill Aberhart, who spoke to a full house in the Winnipeg's Walker Theatre in 1935. Hoping to spark a prairie-wide Social Credit movement, Aberhart's appearances attracted Manitobans from a variety of political backgrounds, particularly through his calls for radical economic reform. Alvin Finkel asserts that a blurry vision of the party's political leanings was standard during their early years due to their voracious criticism of the capitalist finance system and the popular support they garnered from CCF and Communist party members.[12] Icelandic Canadian politician and CCF co-founder Magnus Eliason recalled that Halldorson fit well into this early contradictory image of the party, noting that her reputation in the Icelandic community during the 1930s was that of "a left-winger". "She was considered to be a progressive," recalled Eliason, "and then during the 1930s instead of aligning herself with the CCF, she aligned herself with the Social Credit… A lot of people thought that Social Credit was a left wing party."[13]

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11 Halldorson, (1970) 5.

12 Alvin Finkel, *The Social Credit Phenomenon in Alberta*, (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1989), 47-8.

13 Magnus Eliason, Interview with author, March 19, 2003, Winnipeg.

Attracted to Aberhart's explanation of the causes of the economic crisis facing Manitobans, Halldorson wrote that "I though that there was truth in what he said and straightaway started studying Social Credit."[14] "At the urging of (her) friends" Halldorson also began to hold community meetings and lecture on Social Credit in numerous small Interlake communities including Silver Bay, Darwin, Hayland, Eriksdale and Lundar where, she writes, "people were very interested in this new concept."[15] Her campaign also resonated with most voters in her home constituency of St. George who selected Halldorson over the incumbent Liberal candidate Skuli Sigfusson in 1936, making her only the second woman ever elected to the Manitoba Legislative Assembly.

Halldorson began a Social Credit campaign early in the spring of 1936, prior to Premier John Bracken's announcement of a July election, "without having any intention or interest in politics."[16] The accuracy of Halldorson's modest description of her campaign is difficult to gauge, particularly in the absence of records surrounding her election, however, the majority of the campaign appeared to have been organised at a grassroots, only receiving official endorsement and support from Walter Kuhl, a representative from the Aberhart administration in Alberta, just a few short days before the election. Halldorson campaigned throughout her riding in French, English, and Icelandic prior to and during her term as MLA. She also published several booklets and speeches in both English and Icelandic and employed community publications such as the Icelandic newspaper *Heimskringla* to provide Icelandic Canadians with information on monetary reform,

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[14] Halldorson, (1970) 6.

[15] Ibid, "My Parliamentary Career," draft submitted to *Heimskringla* 25 September 1946 PAM MG 14. B3, 2.

[16] Ibid, 2.

international peace and unemployment. While her Icelandic campaigns sometimes differed from those she presented in English, Halldorson also incorporated Icelandic themes in campaigns geared towards a mainstream Anglo-Canadian audience. This blend of cultures fit well into the newly minted Social Credit Party who actively courted non-Anglo communities on the Canadian prairies and also hoped to create platforms that were compatible with certain ethnic community values and aspirations.[17] Halldorson's election, as well as her usage of Icelandic identity in public speeches and publications reflects this atmosphere within the early Social Credit movement as well as her desire to create a positive image of Icelandic Canadians as a whole in Manitoba. This desire is evident in her speeches to Anglo-Canadian audiences which focussed on the Icelandic Canadian community's affiliation with larger political and cultural traditions which fit well into and even predated Western Canadian institutions and notions of progress and settlement.

> My parents came to this country as pioneer settlers from Iceland- the land of the Vikings- so I come of a strong and sturdy race, who had an instinctive love of freedom and were the first to establish a representative parliament... (I) identify myself with the history and ideals of my race. I too am a freedom-loving pioneer, with a strong will to set out in search of a new and better world.[18]

Her usage of the Icelandic language and elements of Icelandic culture in her campaigns poses interesting questions to traditional historical notions of the cultural climate of the interwar years. Historians such as Howard Palmer assert that the 1920s and 1930s resembled a xenophobic "wilderness of discrimination" in which anti-migrant sentiment and economic tensions created little room for expressions of non-Anglo identities.[19] Stewart Henderson's recent work on trans-

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[17] Finkel, 77.

[18] Ibid, *Speech of Miss Salome Halldorson Member for St. George, Delivered in the Manitoba Legislative Assembly*, *February 26 1937*, (booklet) PAM MG 14. B3, 1.

[19] Howard Palmer, "Reluctant Hosts: Anglo-Canadian Views of Multiculturalism in the Twentieth Century," in *Immigration in Canada: Historical Perspectives,* ed. Gerald Tulchinsky (Toronto: Copp Clark, 1994):

Canadian handicraft festivals of the 1920s suggests, however, that the relative prominence of Scandinavian culture in Manitoba may have been part of a broader privileging of Scandinavian ethnicity, suggesting that interwar Anglo-elites viewed Scandinavians not as foreign migrants but as "close cousins".[20] This mentality fit well into the popular nineteenth and early twentieth century theories of racial hierarchy which asserted the superiority of northern European peoples over other European groups and all racial groups outside of Europe, or Nordicism. Understanding Halldorson's frequent usage of Icelandic ethnicity and history in her campaigns and career, then, requires an understanding of the development of a comparatively open discourse surrounding Icelandic identity in Manitoba as part of the growth of Scandinavian privilege during the 1930s and 40s.

For the provincial and federal governments, Icelandic Canadians appeared as a desirable racial/ ethnic group who would help to occupy and establish Euro-settler dominance in the newly redistributed territory surrounding Lake Winnipeg in the 1870s, an area still populated by several Aboriginal communities. Although Icelandic Canadian settlers, many of whom were fleeing a series of volcanic eruptions and dire economic and social conditions in Iceland, were complicit in the Anglo-Canadian campaign to remove and relocate Aboriginal Manitobans, understanding the community's larger relationship to the Anglo-Canadian state and other ethnic Manitoban communities is complex. While the early Icelandic Canadian community faced varying degrees of discrimination, some began to ascend to positions of prominence in Manitoba society shortly after

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297-333, 312.

[20] Stuart Henderson, "'While there is Still Time . . .': J. Murray Gibbon and the Spectacle of Difference in Three CPR Folk Festivals, 1928-1931." *Journal of Canadian Studies* 39.1 (2005): 139-74, 150.

the community's initial arrival in 1875. Icelandic Canadians also entered into the realm of local and provincial politics relatively early with the election of the first Icelandic MLA, Sigtryggur Jonasson's in 1896. Historians must understand this degree inclusion and acceptance of Icelandic culture and Icelandic Canadian leaders in Manitoba, however, as a part of extension of privilege and shifting notions of race rather than the growth of pluralism. It is in such instances that scholars of Scandinavian Canadian history have sometimes failed to reconcile the implications of Scandinavian privilege, focussing instead on the negotiation of migrant life and the development of dual identities. Scholars such as Daisy Neijmann, for example, focus on the role of Icelandic Canadians in the growth of proto-multiculturalism such as author Jóhann Magnús Bjarnason, (1866-1945) whose writing focussed both on the stories of Icelandic Canadian themes and as well as their Ukrainian Canadian and Métis neighbours. This, she writes, is evidence of an early Icelandic Canadian vision of a "completely new and multi-cultural" third space for migrants and the "muted and nameless, those who lived on the margins of Canadian society."[21] As Anne Brydon cautions in her discussion of Icelandic-Aboriginal relations and the construction of Icelandic Canadian myth, however,

> Social and ideational forces have shaped and selected the memories on which Icelandic-Canadian histories have been based, and their nostalgic narration glosses over less palatable behaviours and events...the stories of other nations and ethnic groups are accessed sporadically, as long as they fit into the myth of the historic unfolding of the new identity.22

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[21] Daisy Neijmann, "In Search of the Canadian Icelander: Writing an Icelandic Canadian Identity into Canadian Literature," *Canadian Ethnic Studies* 18 (1997): 64-75, 69.

[22] Anne Brydon, "Dreams and Claims: Icelandic-Aboriginal Interactions in the Manitoba Interlake," *Journal of Canadian Studies* 36.2 (Summer 2001): 164-190, 167.

Although the roots of Icelandic Canadian privilege predate Halldorson's election, Katrina Srigley asserts that historians must also be particularly mindful of shifting definitions of race and ethnicity within the interwar period as they pertained to new opportunities for women. Changing employment patterns as well as displays of ethnic loyalty during the World War One all contributed to the fluctuation of Anglo-Canadian white privilege that extended categories of "whiteness" and privilege to previously unwelcome English-speaking Italian and Jewish women but continued to discriminate against Black Canadian and Aboriginal women.[23] Interwar ethnic representatives such as Halldorson, then, do not represent the uniform progress of ethnic communities as a whole within Manitoba, however, her election, popularity, and successful integration of Icelandic elements into her mainstream political campaigns again signaled a broader degree of Anglo-Canadian tolerance and appreciation of the Icelandic culture and community.

It is within the critical framework set forth by Srigley and Brydon that Halldorson's work must be assessed. As a female Icelandic-Canadian MLA in the interwar era, her work appears as part of the broader negotiation of Icelandic Canadian identity, yet her career was also profoundly shaped by the restrictive cultural atmosphere of Palmer's "wilderness of discrimination" and the parameters which defined Icelandic Canadian privilege, most notably Canadian nationalism. Yet Halldorson herself also contributed to discourses of Nordicism and Icelandic privilege. Rather than creating an unlimited third space for other migrant and ethnic groups in Manitoba, her vision of Icelandic Canadian inclusion focussed on the creation of a limited extension, rather than a subversion of Anglo-Saxon supremacy. Furthermore, her membership in the Social Credit Party

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[23] Katrina Srigley, "'In case you hadn't noticed!': Race, Ethnicity and Women's Wage-Earning in a Depression-Era City," *Labour/ Le Travail* 55 (Spring 2005): 69-106, 103.

creates urgent questions about her relationship to the party's well-publicized history of anti-Semitism. Janine Stingel cautions that historians of Social Credit must confront the party's profound and inextricable relationship to anti-Semitism, writing that Social Credit leadership, publications and membership all basically accepted the fundamentally anti-Semitic conspiracy theories of founder C.H Douglas.[24] Douglas, who based his understanding of global economics on his fantasies of a small group of male Jewish elites conspiring to spread of Bolshevism, war, and economic chaos across the western world, had a famously poor relationship with Canadian Social Credit leader, Bill Aberhart. This rift led to informal divides within the party between Canadian followers of Douglas and Aberhart, creating factions which were broadly characterised by their variable expressions of anti-Semitism. Similar to many other prominent female figures in the party, Halldorson initially appeared as a Douglasite, even reproducing Douglas's brief letter of congratulations to her in her autobiography and maintaining connections to the party in Britain, although the full extent of her involvement is unclear.[25]

Although the discriminatory sentiment embedded within Social Credit philosophy remained in tact in Canada, many Canadian Social Crediters, opted for more muted displays of anti-Semitism. While such figures preferred somewhat ambiguous references to "the money powers" and threats to Christianity, others preferred more overtly discriminatory and malicious language. One notable example of this more obvious display of anti-Semitism involved MP Norman Jaques, who was eventually expelled from the party for his views in the late 1940s. Jaques' work as an

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[24] Janine Stingel, *Social Discredit: Anti-Semitism, Social Credit and the Jewish Response*, Montreal: McGill- Queen's University Press, 2000, 4, 13.

[25] Halldorson's records contain several documents which suggest a relationship with British Social Credit members and organizations including the aforementioned letter from C.H. Douglas, Social Credit author S.T. Powell, and one anti- Semitic pamphlet regarding the Jewish threat to the British government.

MP, including his attempts to read passages from the *Protocols of the Learned Elders of Zion* into *Hansard*, represents some of the most disturbing and unabashed displays of anti-Semitism both within the Canadian Social Credit movement and federal politics. Like many of his British counterparts, Jaques blamed global Jewish conspiracies for a variety of ills, from the rise of Communism to the development of moderate liberal movements in favour of coalition work and governance including Clarence Streit's *Union Now* movement, which advocated an international union of North Atlantic democracies.

> And who controls the International Finance? A gang of German-Jewish "international" bankers... Not only German military totalitarianism, but its evil twin, German-Jewish financial totalitarianism must be destroyed... they project the International government which is depicted by the American Wall St. Jew- Clarence Streit in his "Union Now" movement.[26]

Halldorson's 1943 publication *Tax-and-Debt Finance Must Go!*, a series of extended quotes from numerous popular and political figures on the subject of economic reform, clearly indicates that she did, to some extent, adopt of Jaques' and Douglas's special blends of anti-Semitic conspiracy theories. Calling Jaques "a valiant fighter against the Union Now plot, and the Gold Standard Finance it involves", Halldorson quoted from his work extensively in the booklet's chapter "Federal Union, A Plot to Perpetuate Tax-and-Debt Finance."[27] Yet Halldorson's conscious exclusion of explicit anti-Semitic language when quoting Jaques in *Tax-and-Debt Finance* suggests that she felt uncomfortable with such language.[28] While she may have shied from

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[26] Norman Jaques, *Western Producer* 30 Jan. 1941, as quoted in Stingel, 37.

[27] Salome Halldorson, *Tax-and-Debt Finance Must Go!* Winnipeg: Thorgeirson Company, 1943, 29.

[28] Halldorson clearly excludes explicit references to a Jewish plot in the quotes she uses from Jaques in her writing. For example: "'Something closer than friendly cooperation between nations (not bankers' governments) may develop naturally when we have dealt with Hitlerism, but the answer to German Nazi-ism is not

explicit references to a Jewish plot, however, the conspiratorial tone of Halldorson's own writing also suggests that she still embraced Social Credit theory similarly imbued with Douglas's anti-Semitic vision.

> But here again, the hidden dictatorship of international finance has sneaked (sic) in, like a thief in the night, and has prevented the British nations from the full exercise, or even full recognition, of their powers of sovereignty.[29]

Gauging the extent to which Halldorson consciously embraced anti-Semitism, however, remains somewhat difficult. As president of the Manitoba Social Credit League Halldorson advocated the adoption of William D. Herridge's proposal for the creation of a broader "union of Anglo-Saxon peoples" within Canada.[30] Yet, in addition to her conscious editing of Jaques' work in her own publication, Halldorson's work also seldom focussed on the role of Christianity in Social Credit, a hallmark of anti-Semitic expression in party literature.[31] She also appears to have condemned the targeting of "racial and religious groups" in the movement during the early 1940s, the period in which, according to Stingel, the anti-Semitic sentiment within the party was becoming both commonplace and increasingly vicious. Halldorson wrote of this blame not as unjust, but as divisive and counterproductive.

> So instead of laying the blame on the actual cause of the trouble, i.e. (The) monetary system... we turn on each other. The poor blame the rich, and the rich blame the poor; the employers blame the workers and the workers blame the employers; the east blames the west and the west blames the east; the city blames the country and the country blames the city. Not a few blame some other racial or religious group. We are all pulling in different directions, and there is no unity in our demands...[32]

German-controlled International Finance.'" Norman Jaques, as quoted by ibid.

[29] Ibid, 25.

[30] Minutes of a meeting of the executive of the Woman's Group of the Social Credit League February 7, 1939, PAM MG 14. B3.

[31] Stingel, 77.

[32] Halldorson, (1943) 39.

This somewhat contradictory vision of anti-Semitic theory in Halldorson's writing makes it difficult to establish a definite conclusion regarding her own beliefs. Yet it is clear that despite her discomfort with explicitly anti-Semitic language and campaigns, she did not oppose this element within the party as part of an imagined tradition of Icelandic Canadian inclusivity. In this respect, Halldorson's career and personal politics illuminate the parameters of interwar inclusion and xenophobia. Her failure to extend Anglo and Scandinavian privilege to other Manitoba ethnic communities is disappointing, yet hardly surprising, given the broader political and cultural atmosphere in the Canadian West. It is perhaps important to note, however, that for Halldorson Social Credit philosophies appeared as an important "humanitarium (sic) conception." [33]

In contrast to the relatively mainstream references to "pioneer settlers from the land of the Vikings" and financial conspiracy theories in public, Halldorson employed more radical and subversive gender imagery in her campaigns for increased female political participation. Only the second woman ever elected to the Manitoba Legislative Assembly, Halldorson appeared as a popular female figure as well as a curiosity to the Winnipeg media in the first few years following her election. Halldorson, wrote *The Winnipeg Evening Tribune*'s Lillian Gibbons was "a friendly little person by nature...(who) can milk the cows, bake bread and 'send the men out to the fields well-filled'."[34] Winnipeg newspapers even reported what kinds of flowers she had on her desk, noting that she offered "a pleasing touch" to the Assembly.[35] Such coverage suggests that the

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[33] Ibid, (1946) 1.

[34] Lillian Gibbons, "An Album of Winnipeg Women," *The Winnipeg Evening Tribune* (newspaper clipping) Salome Halldorson Papers PAM MG14 B3.

[35] A.V. Thomas, "The Legislature's Day," *The Winnipeg Tribune* 19 February 1937.

"only lady member" assumed an interesting but ultimately unobtrusive place in the Manitoba Legislature. Halldorson herself appeared to embrace these traditional gendered images, frequently employing domestic references in her English writing on the role of women in politics and economics. This political usage of domestic imagery was part of a longer tradition for Manitoban women and was an integral part of provincial suffrage campaigns. Other Icelandic Canadian women played an integral role in this earlier movement including Margaret J. Benedictson, founder of the first women's suffrage organization in Winnipeg and editor of the Icelandic Canadian women's magazine *Freyja*.[36] Although Halldorson's sister, Maria, was the first president of the Lundar Women's Institute[37] and her mother co-founded the Lundar Ladies Aid Björk,[38] it appears that no members of her family were directly involved in Icelandic Canadian suffrage campaigns. However, her writing clearly illustrates her familiarity with traditional maternal feminist language evident in her depiction of female economic and political participation as a natural extension of traditional women's labour. "(Women) have been for centuries the holders of the family purse and managers of the homes, and on the whole they have managed well," she announced to the members of the assembly and a packed gallery in her reply to the throne in 1937, "government is only a larger housekeeping."[39] According to Halldorson, female political participation was also an important reserve force in the nation's battle with the dire social and economic conditions of the 1930s. "If the men, holding the reins of government, had managed as well, we would not now be

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[36] Bendictson, interestingly is another prominent female Icelandic Canadian female figure who remains largely absent from popular histories of the community.

[37] Lundar Historical Society, 417.

[38] McKinnon, 127.

[39] Halldorson, (1937) 7.

faced with as we are a state of economic chaos for which our leaders have no apparent remedy..."[40]

This language fits well into the historiography of the role of gender in Social Credit politics, particularly their broader vision of women's economic freedom as directly linked to the protection of acceptable female labour within the domestic sphere. Although recognize the party's attention to female poverty and the election of a small handful of female officials in the 1930s as evidence of comparatively progressive gender politics,[41] understanding the conditional nature of their acceptance of female political participation is crucial to locating the parameters of Halldorson's involvement and prospects both within the party. It was the underlying notion of subservience evident in the domestic imagery used to justify female political participation, argues Bob Hesketh which also resulted in the dramatic decline and almost complete elimination of official female political participation following the party's purging of Douglesite and anti-Semitic elements in the post-war era.[42] He writes that the interwar era presented unique opportunities for female activists, resulting in the creation of what he terms the women's "crusader phase" of the late 1930s and early 1940s, also coinciding with the party's transition from a left-of- centre to a right wing party.[43] Yet he cautions against understanding this period as one of unfettered feminism since "the restraints inherent in the concept that a woman's political activism was essentially justified by her domestic virtue became more and more obvious within Social Credit through the 1940s."[44] Adding to this

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40 Ibid.

41 See for example Edward Bell, *Social Classes and Social Credit in Alberta*, (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1994), 77.

42 Bob Hesketh, "From Crusaders to Missionaries to Wives: Alberta Social Credit Women, 1932-1955," *Prairie Forum* 18.1 (1993): 53-73, 54.

43 Ibid, 53.

44 Ibid, 62.

construction of conditional, subservient female power, both Halldorson and her female counterparts in Alberta associated female political participation with "economic chaos" and the pervasive delineation from common sense. Although these women argued that female political participation provided the remedy to what they described as the inherently male political and economic corruption, they also discussed women's political power as a secondary, "emergency" force. "When money is plentiful, this is a man's world," wrote Halldorson, "when money is scarce, it is a woman's world."[45]

Halldorson was among several women elected through the party in the 1930s including Edith Gostick, Edith Rogers and Cornelia Wood. While the relatively large number of women elected to and involved with the party during this "crusader phase" is impressive, women who aspired to positions of leadership within the party during this period still faced significant barriers. Although Aberhart initially accepted women as electoral candidates, his beliefs about women's role in the Social Credit movement were still coloured by his own conservative fundamentalist Christian notions of femininity. Aberhart's dedication to creating financial security for women so that they would not seek work outside of the home as well as his frequent usage of biblical references to "woman as helpmate" contributed to the parameters of female political participation during this period, limiting their positions to those which did not subvert his belief in woman's natural role as attendant to rather than leader of man.[46]

Throughout her term, however, Halldorson appears to have continually tested the boundaries of the party's vision of female political participation, presenting new questions for

[45] Halldorson, (1937) 2.
[46] Hesketh, 55.

historians of the Social Credit movement. Unlike many of her female Albertan counterparts, her writing lacks the profoundly religious tone that characterised the work of other female Social Crediters such as MLAs Cornelia Wood and Rose Wilkenson who frequently imbued Douglasite economic conspiracy theories with "Satanic powers".[47] Wood's vision of female political and economic participation, moreover, hinged on the concept of motherhood as "the most natural and magnificent career for any normal woman", and she argued that women should be eligible for public office only when they had "raised their families to the age of independence."[48] Halldorson's writing, in contrast, employed domestic imagery but omitted traditional references to maternity. This omission also distinguishes Halldorson's politics from those of maternal feminists in the province who, like Wood, viewed motherhood as the basis for female political rights. Herself a single woman, Halldorson's writing illustrates the relative flexibility of the gender imagery she employed, particularly its effectiveness in the negotiation a position of respect and prestige within the assembly during her first few years in office. Instead of invoking credentials based on motherhood, Halldorson employed the image of the intelligent and strict but concerned "lady school teacher turned politician" to broadcast her political beliefs and navigate power dynamics within the legislature. Using this persona, she even publicly scolded her former pupil, Conservative leader Errick Willis, in front of the entire assembly in 1937.

> It was made known to a large number of people last night that I was his teacher in the 11th Grade. I had hoped it would remain a secret, but now it is out, I wish to say that I will take

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47 Hesketh, 60.

48 Cornelia Wood, PAA Cornelia Wood Papers 86.125.272 (untitled speech), as quoted in Hesketh, 56.

> no responsibility for his words or actions. If he would submit now to a year of my teaching, I might be able to secure more satisfactory results.[49]

Perhaps the most remarkable example of Halldorson's attempt to secure a position of authority within the Legislative Assembly and the Social Credit party was in her public clashes with the Aberhart administration, including the controversial 1936 Social Credit- Liberal-Progressive Alliance announced following the party's secretive leadership election. Although Halldorson was one of the most widely-recognised new MLAs in the 1936 assembly and frequently appeared as a spokesperson for the five Manitoban Social Credit MLAs, she failed to achieve the position of party head, accepting the presidency of the Manitoba Social Credit League instead. When the newly elected Social Credit officials gathered at a closed meeting in Dauphin, Manitoba with Social Credit MP, E. J. Poole, Dr. Stanley Fox of Gilbert Plains won the position of party leader. Shortly thereafter Fox announced that the party would "support" or create an informal coalition with Bracken's Liberal-Progressive minority government, quelling speculation that the province would quickly be plunged into another election. For many supporters of Social Credit in Manitoba, however, the merge created both distrust in the party's new leadership and "bewilderment and resentment",[50] particularly as the Social Credit election campaign had focussed on Bracken's role in Manitoba's economic crisis. Social Credit supporters from across the province voiced their opposition to the merge, particularly the membership of the Social Credit League and its affiliate, the Assiniboia Social Credit Group, who announced to the media that they had passed a unanimous

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[49] Halldorson, (1937) 1.

[50] "Dr. Fox Censured for Action at Conference With Premier Bracken," *The Winnipeg Free Press* 19 August 1936. 3.

motion condemning Fox's actions while "telephone calls, letters and telegrams poured in on the doctor".[51]

> "I am convinced that Dr. Fox pulled a fast one," stated William Leask, chairman of the meeting and president of the Assiniboia Social Credit group. (")Dr. Fox figured he would fix things for himself by becoming minister of health, and he didn't think of the constitution of the Manitoba Social Credit league."...(others such as) A.C. Benjamin, secretary of the Manitoba Social Credit league, said the executive of the league could hardly believe "it was true" when newspapers reported Dr. Fox's Flin Flon statement...[52]

In keeping with the feelings of most Manitoba Social Credit supporters, Halldorson publicly condemned Fox's announcement. Hoping to stop the coalition before it was made public; she boarded a train for Edmonton to personally confer with Premier Aberhart and to state her opposition. Unfortunately for Halldorson, Fox announced the coalition while she was en route to Edmonton. She learned of the announcement during a stop over in Saskatoon after a reporter from the *Saskatoon Star-Phoenix* approached her at the train station. An angry Halldorson told the reporter that she and the rest of the Manitoba party refused to support either Fox or Bracken.

> **Social Credit Party Will Support Bracken According to Leader-** Denial that the Manitoba Social Credit Party will support the Liberal Progressive government emphatically made by Miss S. Haldorson (sic) who made a brief stop in Saskatoon…"I wish to deny that completely," she said, referring to the Star-Phoenix's morning paper report that Manitoba's Social Creditors had lined up with Bracken." I am also of the opinion that other members of the party will not agree to giving support. I wired Dr. Fox yesterday stating my disapproval of joining with the Bracken party."[53]

Following her meeting with Aberhart, however, Halldorson rescinded on her public opposition to the merge and announced that she and the Social Credit League would provide the Bracken

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[51] Ibid.

[52] Ibid, 3, 4.

[53] "Social Credit Party Will Support Bracken According To Leader," *Saskatoon Star-Phoenix*, August 15, 1936, 1.

government with the necessary support within the tenets of Social Credit philosophy. Although she agreed to support Aberhart's scheme, she pushed him again in 1940 to allow the Manitoba party to dissolve the informal coalition, writing "there is talk of an election in any case- and I think myself that it is hard to estimate the effect of such a stand on our part."[54] Later in her brief autobiography, however, Halldorson downplayed both her own opposition as well as that of the broader Social Credit membership to the merge.

> In the first place I was against (Bracken's) request and I disliked it so much that I went to Edmonton to confer with Mr. Aberhart. At the time Mr. Aberhart was was confident that Social Credit would take hold in Alberta in the following eighteen months and he saw clearly that if Mr. Bracken was dependent on our support then we could (force him to implement Social Credit policy.)... Afterwards there were no complaints from my constituents, although it was reported as a betrayal, especially by the opponents of Social Credit.[55]

Although this controversial merge may appear as a footnote in Depression-era Manitoba politics, Halldorson's role as a public dissenter in the Social Credit party is significant given the repressive political atmosphere within the movement. Dissent within the party was not well-received and serious censure and reportedly, physical violence faced those who went against the party. Prior to his defeat by Edith Rogers, another female Social Credit MLA, Premier Brownlee of Alberta nervously recalled his own encounter with hostile Social Credit party members during an election speech in Waterglen in 1934.

> (When) I began to tell them in all sincerity what I thought of Social Credit. A group of big fellows near the door then left the hall, slamming the door violently as they went out. Some of them got into cars and started to blow horns. Others got logs and began pounding the walls and doors of the building from outside...[56]

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54 Elin Salome Halldorson, Letter to the Hon. William Aberhart, 28 March 1940, PAM MG 14. B3.

55 Halldorson (1946), 3.

56 Bell, 77.

Apart from the controversial secret leadership and coalition meetings arranged by Fox and Poole, reports of similarly coercive elements within the Social Credit party in Manitoba also emerged around the time of the 1936 election. Although the party's platform appealed to Manitobans from a variety of political backgrounds, Social Credit organizers in Manitoba were particularly interested in creating party uniformity and distancing itself from leftist parties and organizations. Campaigners who expressed political sentiments outside of the party's official policy such as C. Spence of Winnipeg's North End met with serious censure. Accused of turning the party's election campaign towards the left, Spence was summoned to a closed meeting with members of the Manitoba Social Credit executive and Albertan M.L.A., W. Kuhl, who was also involved in securing Halldorson's endorsement by the national Social Credit Party. *The Winnipeg Evening Tribune* reported the bizarre circumstances of the meeting in the summer of 1936, shortly following the election. Spence, wrote the *Tribune*, stood accused of:

> circulat(ing) reports calculated to injure the cause. Specifically, Mr. Spence is said to have tried to induce workers to include in the organization the returned soldiers group and the unemployed…During the entire session, six husky young men stood guard outside, armed with clubs. Windows were carefully curtained and closed.[57]

Some of Halldorson's correspondence suggests her own entanglement in the more provocative elements within the party, specifically those dissatisfied with the party's leadership. British Social Credit activist S.T. Powell responded to Halldorson's apparent complaints about party leaders in February 1940, writing that the movement suffered from glorified secretaries masquerading as leaders who "will not admit to being taught anything about any subject for fear that he suffers

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[57] "Social Credit Leaders Meet to Discuss Future Politics," *The Winnipeg Evening Tribune,* August 5, 1936, 7.

depreciation in the eyes of his followers."[58] Powell wrote to Halldorson that it was time to "start our movement again amongst almost entirely new people: people without that superiority complex which knowledge of money technique so almost invariably developed."[59] Understanding Halldorson's role as a dissenter within this restrictive political environment is complex, however, as she also served as president of the Manitoba Social Credit League and was also responsible for suppressing dissent and subversive political elements within its membership. However, her public opposition to the coalition certainly indicates that she retained a flare for confrontation.

Halldorson appeared to have recovered politically from her public clash with the party leadership in 1936 and continued to act as a well-recognised politician during her first few years in office. During this time she pressured the provincial government to launch an inquiry into the roots of the Depression, dedicated herself to widows' rights under The Child Welfare Act, farm debt reduction, improving teachers' salaries, women's employment, the provincial censorship board[60] and especially in opposing the Sirois Report and its recommendation to transfer numerous provincial powers to the federal government. Despite her involvement with a variety of political and social issues, it was her persistent aversion to centralisation which motivated her opposition to Sirois that would contribute to one of her most subversive and politically contentious campaigns.

Beyond her calls for economic reform and increased female political participation, it was Halldorson's anti-wartime coalition and pacifist campaigns which gained her a reputation for

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58 S.T. Powell, Letter to Salome Halldorson, 8 February, 1940, PAM MG 14. B3, 2.

59 Ibid.

60 Halldorson sat on the special select committee to "investigate the petition of Amy Hastings and eight thousand others, praying for the passing of an Act forbidding the exhibition in the Theatres of Greater Winnipeg to children under fourteen years of age of pictures classified by the Censor Board as adult". Mantioba, *Hansard Legislative Debates* 13 December 1940, 277.

radicalism and a place on the fringes of the legislature after 1939. Following Canada's announcement of support for Great Britain's declaration of war, the Manitoba Legislative Assembly created a majority wartime coalition under Bracken to provide a united front for the war effort. Halldorson broke with her own party and became one of only three MLAs to form a small opposition to the coalition, announcing to the assembly "that such action (non-partisan government) is subversive of the constitutional principles of representative and responsible government."[61] In her autobiography for the *Heimskringla*, Halldorson hoped to justify her wartime subversion and wrote that it was also the coalition government's consideration of the recommendations of the Sirois Report, which motivated her to oppose the coalition. "As Social Credit policy is absolutely opposed to the idea that authority over each person be placed in the hands of a few men," wrote Halldorson, "I could not in all conscience support the coalition."[62] Interestingly, however, Halldorson failed to mention her role as a vocal opponent to the war itself, a stance which was appeared considerably unpopular with many Icelandic Canadians, particularly her constituents in rural Manitoba.[63]

(Celebrated Icelandic Canadian poet Stephan G. Stephansson spoke to this abrupt shift in political sentiment upon the declaration of war;

> So maudlin, with pity and pathos I stood
> If someone who erred got he lashes;
> If hanged, I'd weep over the ashes.

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[61] Manitoba, *Hansard Legislative Debates*, 26 November 1940, 21.

[62] Halldorson, (1946) 5.

[63] Although Halldorson writes extensively on the political rationale of her pacifism, namely anti-centralization and Social Credit theory, the personal roots of Halldorson's pacifism are not immediately clear. Her two brothers Halldor and Kristjan fought in World War One and both saw action. Although both brothers returned home, Kristjan suffered from the after-effects of *eitur-lofti* (poisonous gas). Jón Sigurđsson IODE "Kristjan Halldorsson," *Minningarrit Íslenzkra Hermanna 1914-1918* Winnipeg: Félagið Jón Sigurðsson, 1923. Available online at *http://veterans.bookoflifeonline.com/cgi-bin/veterans/ww1_search.cgi*

With vocal dispraise such injustice I viewed.

But somehow as soon as the war-craze ensued,
When slaughter en masse was the popular mood
And corpses all over the planet were strewed,
With dumb indecision I stood.

Her wartime campaigns focussed not only on opposition to the war itself, but also on building a broader, implicitly pacifist women's Social Credit movement. Here again Halldorson's role as a dissenter appears remarkable within the context of the now incredibly restrictive atmosphere of the wartime legislature. Other dissenting MLAs such as the lone Communist, James Litterick, endured censorship and eventually banishment from the legislature.[64] As a public opponent to the war and as a popular figure within the community, Halldorson must have also alarmed Canadian officials anxious to promote enlistment and quell dissent within ethnic communities.[65] Although she received little support from other MLAs during this tumultuous period, Halldorson continued to fight for the dissolution of the coalition, while also introducing an unsuccessful bill protesting the government's use of private financial institutions in the funding of the war and co-coordinating an ill-fated wartime vote of non-confidence in the federal government.

Although Halldorson received no support from the pro-war Aberhart administration as well as her former Social Credit MLA colleagues, she continued to focus her challenges to the wartime assembly based on Social Credit principles. In one of her last published speeches, "The Menace of Centralization", (1940) she announced that she "would like to issue another warning to the Hon. Members that the steps they are advocating are leading in the wrong direction- away from true

[64] Although Halldorson was, like most Social Creditors, strongly opposed the Communist and even moderate leftist political parties, she joined forced with Litterick's former ally the left-leaning judge and MLA, Lewis St. George Stubbs in the wartime Legislative Assembly.

[65] Once relatively open forums such as the *Heimskringla* began to transmit the pro-war enlistment campaigns of the Canadian state and included Icelandic language recruitment ads.

democracy and towards over-riding bureaucratic control which is totalitarianism... Social Credit points the way in the opposite direction."[66] Despite her decision to oppose her own party in the Assembly, she also remained president of the Manitoba Social Credit League, using it in her attempts to draw support from Manitoba Social Crediters and sympathetic women's organizations.

Halldorson's activities within the Legislature as well as her persistent appeals to Manitoba women to take a stand against the war failed to preserve her once glowing reputation amongst the Anglo-Canadian media and particularly with both the Bracken and Aberhart administrations. Halldorson hoped to continue to use the same gender-based appeals that had helped to popularise her unemployment and economic reform campaigns among women in her pacifist campaigns, although her writing from this period suggests that she had begun to take a more radical approach, disposing with politics and housekeeping imagery. "Women!" Asked one Manitoba Social Credit League pamphlet written by Halldorson, "Do you want to end Depression and War? Do you want to establish lasting prosperity and peace? The power is yours! … Social justice will prevail when women have accepted responsibility with men in the political and governmental field."[67]

Beyond these petitions to Anglo-Canadian women, Halldorson's pacifist appeals to Icelandic Canadian women in Icelandic appear even more subversive, particularly in their omission of the Canadian nationalist language which characterised her English discussions of Icelandic Canadian political participation. Her work also stood in stark contrast to the activities of other Icelandic Canadian women such as the members of the Jón Sigurđsson Chapter of the Imperial Order of the Daughters of the Empire who dedicated their time to creating publications such as

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[66] Elin Salome Halldorson, *The Menace of Centralization* (booklet), PAM MG 14. B3, 4-5.

[67] Salome Halldorson, "Women: Do you want to end Depression and War?" n.d. (Pamphlet) PAM MG 14. B3, 1.

Minningarrit Íslenzkra Hermanna 1914-1918 (Memories of Icelandic Soldiers) and organizing knitting drives to supply woollens to the Canadian Armed Forces. Although it appears that the majority of Icelandic Canadian women chose not to openly oppose the war, Halldorson was joined by Laura Goodman Salverson in her attempts to fan Icelandic Canadian pacifism. Salverson's 1937 book *The Dark Weaver: Against the Sombre Background of the Old Generations Flame the Scarlet Banners of the New* was well-received by Anglo-Canadians and even won the Governor General's prize for literature, although her work was largely ignored by the Icelandic Canadian community. Unlike Salverson, Halldorson incorporated both English and Icelandic into her campaigns. Although she spoke out against the war in English, one of her undated Icelandic speeches reveals that she reserved some of her most radical sentiments for Icelandic-only forums. Her disdain for traditional female expressions of patriotism in wartime, reminiscent of the activities of the Jón Sigurđsson IODE, is particularly compelling.

> Women have asked me recently whether we couldn't rally together and oppose this war…One woman was a member of a(n) organization whose goal it was to work for peace in the world. She said 30 was considered a good turnout at a meeting. But 1300 women in Winnipeg flocked to a meeting in the blink of an eye the other day, to form a group to knit and sew for the army. It is so much easier to knit than to think about the business of our nation.[68]

This Icelandic appeal also included a more subversive usage of Icelandic ethnicity than her Anglo references to the "pioneer settlers from the land of the Vikings". Icelanders now, she said, needed to learn to fight like Auður, wife of the fugitive Gísli in Gísla Saga. This 13th century story describes Auður's defence of Gísli when she is approached by a cruel bounty hunter seeking information about his whereabouts. Auður pretends to accept a bag of coins as a bribe and then

[68] Salome Halldorson, "Heiðrala Samkona…"(speech) n.d. PAM, MG 14. B3. Trans. Nelson Gerrard.

shames and injures him by using the bag to break the bounty hunter's nose. As Kristin Wolf asserts in her work on the influence of nineteenth-century romantic nationalism in Icelandic Canadian culture, the sagas continued to play an important role in self-definition for Icelanders following settlement in Canada,[69] although the more subversive implications of these stories is seldom recognised by community historians. By invoking the story of Auður, Halldorson hoped to appeal to the most fundamental of Icelandic cultural values, values which she saw as both opposed and superior to wartime Canadian nationalist rhetoric. Moreover, the story of Auður is one which celebrates female physical resistance and even violence, an example that Halldorson probably did not plan to follow, but one which she used to construct a tradition of Icelandic Canadian female radical resistance. Although her speech frequently drew upon themes surrounding women, Halldorson intended this lesson from the Sagas to challenge both men and women in the community who had accepted the advent of war. "It is especially important," she wrote, "for all men and all women to stand up for good and defend it with all our might, just as Auður did in her time, because this war which is now beginning has its origins in hatred, vengeance, cruelty and greed."[70]

While this speech suggests that the Icelandic language may have helped to shield and foster radical politics behind its linguistic boundaries, it is important to note that Halldorson's pacifist campaign was unpopular with many of her constituents. In contrast to the overwhelming support she enjoyed during her 1936 campaign, it was this during the period between the 1939 declaration of war and the following election two years later that Halldorson felt the restrictive political

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[69] Kristin Wolf, "Emigration and Myth-Making: The Case of the Icelanders in Canada," *Canadian Ethnic Studies*, 33.2 (2001): 1-15.

[70] Halldorson, "Heiðrala Samkona", 3.

environment in Manitoba the keenest, culminating in her overwhelming defeat in the 1941. Her decision to restrict more openly subversive usages of Icelandicity such as the story of Auður and her pacifist campaign to Icelandic illustrates both Halldorson's failed hopes for widespread critical and independent thought within the community as well as a general anxiety surrounding the community's appearance to the Anglo-Canadian state and society. Here the parameters of "acceptable" expressions of Icelandic Canadian identity were laid bare, despite Halldorson's best efforts. The only expressions of Icelandic Canadian thought to flourish during this period, such as the IODE knitting circles and veteran memorial book, were those which were subservient to Canadian national identity and policies.

It is the same primacy of Canadian nationalism within Icelandic Canadian historiography which explains Halldorson's historical exclusion. The radicalism of her politics, particularly those within her women's pacifist campaign, created a dramatically different legacy than that of the pleasant and loyal "pioneer settler from the land of the Vikings" and of the innocuous "lady schoolteacher turned politician" which had garnered Anglo-Canadian a significant amount of support and appreciation for Halldorson and her community. Although Halldorson craftily employed these images to further her own political objectives, her increasingly frequent confrontations with the boundaries of female political participation, wartime nationalism and political conformity prompted her to construct a new vision of Icelandic Canadian female activism. Auður embodied Halldorson's appeal to Icelandic Canadian women as a female figure of strength, intelligence and Icelandicity, reminding this privileged ethnic community of traditional obligations beyond the discourses of Canadian nationalism and domestic femininity. The community's discomfort with Halldorson's radicalism and this subversive campaign, however, fuelled what

Brydon described as the "nostalgic narration" of Icelandic Canadian memory, namely the renewed restriction of Halldorson's biography to teaching, rather than politics. Halldorson did, of course, help to craft this image of herself and is complicit in the creation of this distorted historical image of her career, yet it was these multiple identities which were so essential to the vibrancy, success and eventually, her catastrophic defeat.

Beyond a new understanding of Halldorson's lost career as a dissident, however, her work presents new challenges to historians of Canadian ethnicity. The sometimes uncomfortable proximity between Icelandic Canadian privilege and the realities of interwar ethnic discrimination, namely anti-Semitism, provides a reminder of the limitations and implications of Icelandic Canadian identity during this period. Halldorson's work also provides intriguing insights into the navigation of this otherwise xenophobic era through her references to the perceived compatibility of Anglo-Canadian and Icelandic culture and political traditions. Yet her work also illustrates that the growth of this privilege, the community's public acceptance of Anglo-Canadian appropriate values and identities, as well as the restrictive atmosphere of Manitoba wartime politics deeply influenced but failed to completely ensure Icelandic Canadian conformity and subservience.

Halldorson appears as both an anomaly and as an intriguing representative of the dramatic shifts within Manitoba's political climate during the 1930s and 40s. Elected during a desperate and somewhat politically experimental year in Manitoba, her often bold and unyielding dedication to female political representation and participation, pacifism and economic reform is remarkable in its consistency, particularly after 1939. Moreover, her exploration of the parameters of gender, ethnicity and dissent in Manitoba during this period illustrates the speed with which opportunities

for political representation changed and ended for women who situated themselves beyond the prescribed boundaries of political and ethnic expression.

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