THE IDEAS OF SOPHIA DIXON

A Thesis
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in the
Department of History
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by
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Sophia Dixon is a Danish immigrant to Canada who became a Woman President of the United Farmers of Canada (Saskatchewan Section). Because she filled this office when the organization was going into politics, Dixon was involved with the beginning of the C.C.F. She was always idealistic and thoughtful, earning herself a reputation as a philosopher for her ideas. Her ideas sometimes reflect the era she lived in, and sometimes seem advanced. Her experiences in the decades after women received the vote taught her that women are vulnerable living by men's rules and underlined for her the need to change the rules by which society operates.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to thank Sophia Dixon for letting me use her papers to try to analyze her ideas. She has been most helpful, not only in explaining the times, but in debating and correcting my perceptions. I found her an extremely reliable woman whose papers and memories could be corroborated from other sources. Even when Dixon disagreed with me she knew that she could exercise no control over my writing if the thesis were to be mine, and she accepted this restriction.

I am grateful for the help and positive support I received from anyone I came into contact with in the University Archives and especially in the Saskatoon office of the Saskatchewan Archives Board. These people were invariably helpful, knowledgeable and insightful. Thank you.

Thank you to the New Democratic Party for access to the C.C.F./N.D.P. papers and to Roger Carter for access to the MaKaroff papers. To all those people who spoke with me about Mrs. Dixon and who are mentioned in the bibliography, thank you very much for your time and your support.

Gratitude is extended to my advisor, Janice Potter MacKinnon, for her encouragement through this long and sometimes frustrating process. Special thanks are owed to Theresa Walker who typed the manuscript, usually at short notice, but always with good humour and technical knowledge.

Finally, thanks to my family who endured my neglect while this thesis was written.
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<td>C.C.F.</td>
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<td>M.L.A.</td>
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<td>WEICo</td>
<td>Western Export-Import Company</td>
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<td>Y.W.C.A.</td>
<td>Young Women's Christian Association</td>
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PREFACE

When Sophia Dixon boarded the train to go to the Progressive rally in Regina in 1927, the Progressives were in disarray federally and the farmers needed an organization to speak for them. At home in Saskatchewan the Wheat Pool was operating and the two rival farm groups, the Farmers' Union of Canada and the Saskatchewan Grain Growers' Association, had joined to form the United Farmers of Canada (Saskatchewan Section). Nellie McClung and Violet McNaughton were well known throughout the west as reformers. Women were not predominant in any part of society, but neither was it necessary to be the first woman prominent in farm groups or politics.

What has been called maternal feminism was still the ideal for women. Maternal feminists saw women as morally superior to men because they were more nurturing, loving and gentle. For this reason women were to be encouraged into public life to clean up the messes men had made and to improve the world for children. Women were the mothers of the world and must protect the future for the children. They must also protect their own health so they could produce healthy children. They supported legislation to protect women in public jobs so as to protect their ability to bear healthy children.

The problem with the world view of a maternal feminist is that it comes dangerously close to straightjacketing women into nothing but a traditional role. McClung, for
example, could never understand the goals of a woman who wanted no children or for whom children were secondary. She did not seem to realize that she and other prominent suffragists could afford to be prominent because of their husband's income and because of the child and house care provided by other women not as materially well off. Despite the problems with maternal feminism these women did enlarge the sphere of action for women and did provide a rationale for women like Sophia Dixon to move onto the public stage. McClung herself could have been speaking directly to Dixon when she wrote:

Too long have the gentle ladies sat in their boudoirs looking at life in a mirror like the Lady of Shalott, while down below in the street, the fight rages, and other women and defenseless children, are getting the worst of it. But the cry is going up to the boudoir ladies to come down and help us, for the battle goes sorely; and many there are who are throwing aside the mirror and coming out where the real things are. The world needs the work and help of the women and the women must work if the race will survive.¹

Sophia Dixon was never an elected M.L.A. or M.P. She was not the first woman president of the C.C.F. In fact, although she was the only Saskatchewan woman on the first National Council of the C.C.F. she has been largely forgotten. Why then is it important to be concerned about her ideas? In the first place Sophia Dixon was widely regarded within the C.C.F. as "the philosopher of the group".² Any of the early party activists who worked with her regarded her as "very bright and capable".³ The late Helmer Benson, who knew her well in the 1940's, claimed that
"she was the type of person who had studied economics all her life. Wherever she went, wherever she spoke, people listened to her because she had a way about her; she knew what she was talking about."  

In her support for birth control in the 1920's Dixon showed that she had reached beyond the straightjacket of the maternal feminists' ideas of sexuality. Still, when she felt her children needed better care and a better teacher she did not hesitate to resign from all offices and all organizations that required her to travel to stay at home to teach and care for her children. Her priority, like the maternal feminists, was with the children and always would be.

To study the life and ideas of Sophia Dixon is to tackle the question "what happened to the women's movement between the vote and the 1960's?" Dixon worked and wrote for better conditions in the home and the school, better health care and a more caring attitude for the downtrodden on the part of politicians. She was, however, caught in a period where women were not really accepted in public roles, and therefore she had few support groups to nourish her. In many ways she accepted the retiring female stereotype and would not push herself forward even when she secretly wanted a riding nomination in the late 1930's. Quietly and competently Sophia Dixon worked in the background, gaining trust and respect until her very competence demanded recognition and she was named the first female Returning
Officer for the City of Saskatoon in 1952. Her handling of this job got her another, as Manager of Western Export-Import Company. Her treatment in this business venture opened her eyes to the vulnerability of women playing in a man's world by men's rules. It radicalized her to the extent that she feels almost comfortably a part of the modern women's movement.

In all of Mrs. Dixon's writing one can see a deep core of belief which does not change, although the emphasis may, a belief in the necessity for peaceful co-operative living with justice for all. Perhaps this explains why so much of her writing sounds so contemporary. She rarely approached any issue which concerned her without considering future implications. She did not ever let the issue of the moment divert her from the global picture. This truly radical desire to look at the roots of all issues with a clear head meant that "she had a way of digging out uncomfortable things that had to be looked at and perhaps people didn't want to look at". Sophia Dixon was not always a comfortable colleague because she would point out the error in the party line if she thought the party was wrong. Her philosophy would not allow her to bend the truth as she saw it. Because her thoughts lead us so naturally from woman submissive to woman assertive, and because they are so clear and insightful, the ideas of Sophia Dixon are well worth investigating.
Mrs. Dixon has graciously given me access to most of her papers. When I first contacted her in 1984 she was most hesitant to allow a thesis to be done on her. She did not want her family to be exposed. When I suggested that I would like to examine her ideas she agreed to let me begin to photocopy her papers. Over the next three years I sorted through them and photocopied those containing her writing.

It was not until I had sorted the papers in my possession and begun to write that I realized how brave Mrs. Dixon had been to let someone else try to interpret her most intimate thoughts. She is most concerned that the picture of her which emerges may be unflattering. I suspect that sometimes she now wishes she had not given me access to her papers. Mrs. Dixon has read the first draft to correct errors of fact. She disagrees with some of my conclusions, but realizes that she can have no editorial control.
Footnotes


3. Gladys Strum, taped interview, Saskatchewan Arts Board.

4. Helmer Benson, taped interview, Saskatchewan Arts Board.

5. Diana Wright, taped interview, Saskatchewan Arts Board.
CHAPTER I

THE EARLY DEVELOPMENT OF DIXON'S SOCIAL CONCERN

Sophia Rossander was born in 1900 in a peasant community in Denmark. Her father was a maker of wooden shoes, an art dying under the impact of the industrial revolution. Her family was extremely poor. Sophia remembers being responsible for the care of the baby when she was but five years old. Because her mother had to work in the fields to help provide a living, no one else was available.¹

At age seven Sophia went to school where she began to learn the realities of social position. A little boy named Jens, from the poorest family in town, was lowest on the pecking order. One day the teacher overheard the children taunting "Jens shall be last, Jens shall be last". She gently and privately admonished the young Sophia not to do this and Sophia reacted with shame for yielding to the herd instinct to pick on the weakest.²

Because the Rossander family was poor with no prospects in Denmark, it was easy for a relative who had previously emigrated to Canada to persuade Sophia's father to come too. When she was eleven the family came to Canada to a homestead near Kerrobert. Almost immediately the young Sophia was sent out to work on neighbouring farms. At two of the homes where she worked she was humiliated and badly treated. One family made fun of her accent and treated her as if she were retarded. Fortunately, she was able to get a
position with a dentist's family who treated her like a family member. Here she learned English quickly and began to feel more confident in her new country. Although the work was hard and the hours were long for a young girl, the family treated her with dignity.

Sophia left the dentist's home when her father was in danger of losing his team of horses. Sophia gave the creditor the last 25 dollars from her wages of three dollars a week on the condition that the creditor would give her father more time to pay the rest of the money owing. The creditor's wife wanted a maid and "[t]hat good Samaritan act of mine was all the man needed to be able to tell his wife that if she took me on she could count on getting a good slave".3

The year 1915, then, saw her in Kerrobert working for her father's creditor. In this home Sophia felt psychologically abused, treated

as an automaton, not to be seen without wearing a maid's cap and eating alone except for the dog, in the kitchen. The woman seemed to need that style of maid to impress people, but without her willingness to pay for it.4

The 15 year old Sophia began her day at 6:00 a.m. and worked through to evening, except during school hours. The young girl was even slapped on the face by her employer "because something had gone wrong on a society prestige committee and she had to tell somebody and it was all so foreign to [Sophia] that [she] did not find the right words for sympathy".5
Despite the horror of the year 1915, despite a lack of support from her family, despite a language barrier she had not long overcome, Sophia dreamed of a better life. She wanted to be a teacher. In 1916, while working for her father's creditor, she wrote her grade ten examinations. Despite her handicaps Sophia Rossander was awarded the Governor General's Medal for the highest marks in Saskatchewan for that year's Grade 10 Departmental examinations. By June of 1917 Sophia Rossander had completed her grade 11 and had taken three months of Normal School training in Saskatoon. This training gave her an interim teacher certificate and in 1917 Miss Rossander began her teaching career.

Teaching conditions in the rural schools of Saskatchewan were difficult. At one school, in 1917, one of the little boys locked Sophia and the Inspector into the school for a joke. The Inspector was not amused and Sophia got a bad report. At another school, in 1920, after working very hard to get two girls through their grade eight examinations by giving them extra hours of her time, Sophia lost her job. The girls' father was the chairman of the board and when his children passed their exam he simply shut the school. The workload of preparing for eight classes was terrific and commercially prepared materials were frowned upon. Teachers were expected to teach all subjects to each of eight grades in a school. In addition, many schools included janitor work as part of a teacher's duties. Teachers were to be
creative, to make their own materials and to sacrifice for students. Self sacrifice and a missionary zeal to teach had been emphasized at Normal School. Nothing less than this, plus a harsh discipline was required by the Inspector. It was not uncommon for families to board the teacher as partial payment for their taxes, so privacy could be difficult for a teacher to find. Alternately, sometimes a teacherage was provided beside the school, far from town or from a neighbouring farm, and loneliness became oppressive.

Harsh conditions, notwithstanding, Sophia had saved enough money from her teaching jobs to help her family again in 1918. During the great flu epidemic of 1918 Sophia had come home to find that her parent's farm was due to be sold for non-payment of taxes. Sophia paid these back taxes. She did it because, of course, she had to. The community at large respected her greatly for this action, according to a conversation Sophia overheard. She could, after all, have bought the land for the price of the back taxes and retained title for herself. She never considered it. How could she take her father's land? She gave to her family: books, a gramaphone and records for the four youngest children, tonsillectomies for her two young brothers, a place to stay when siblings needed shelter. Sophia Rossander was a giver, not a taker.

In 1919 Sophia decided that she wanted to take a business course, perhaps to temporarily change her profession. To do this she went to Regina to Business
College. Because her time was more or less her own she took
time off to attend every convention that she could. Her
intent was to broaden her knowledge and her interests were
catholic. She attended the Grain Growers’ Convention and
the Trustees Convention. She went to the people’s forum
church services and any discussion group she could find. At
one of these church services she heard a preacher tell his
audience that the Bible must never be taken literally. God
had given us a brain to use and we must approach all things,
including religion, with our intellect. This idea was a
reassurance to Sophia. Her father had been a converted
Seventh Day Adventist since his arrival in Canada. He had
preached at his children day and night until they left home
and found excuses not to visit so as to avoid the misery.
Sophia’s younger sister Marie feared her father’s religious
zeal from the time he had read them the story of Abraham and
Isaac and told them that he too, would sacrifice his
children if God commanded it. However, the sermon at
Metropolitan Methodist freed Sophia to use her brain without
guilt and she investigated every area of social progress
that she could.

When she resumed her teaching career in 1919 she became
secretary of the Kealey Springs local of the Saskatchewan
Grain Growers Association. In 1920 Sophia moved to a rural
school near Tramping Lake. A teacherage was provided on the
school grounds. This offered the advantage of privacy.
Sophia would not have to come home to find the children of
the house dressed in her clothes pretending to be Miss Rossander as they played school. On the other hand, the isolation could be devastating. Sophia began to be afraid of the dark, sleeping with a lamp so the walls would not close in upon her. The noises at night were frightening. After the intellectual ferment of the city of Regina Sophia was placed in a vacuum in this rural school and she craved companionship.

At this point Sophia was introduced to Charles Dixon. Charles was a 39 year old bachelor with a well run farm and a Ford touring car. Moreover, his early life had made him a soulmate for the young Sophia. Although Charles' father was a teacher Charles had been kept out of school to run the farm. Charles hated the farm and resented his older brother who had been favoured enough to be given business training. When he threatened to leave home Charles' father decided to send him to Agricultural College in Guelph. He accepted the offer, but he would have preferred a choice. All his young life was work and religion. The farm work and the farm education were forced on him and the religion seemed hypocrisy. Sophia Rossander, with her sceptical view of religion, must have been a pleasant surprise for Charles Dixon. Meeting a farmer who loved and quoted poetry must have been a pleasant surprise for Sophia Rossander.

Sophia doesn't remember a marriage proposal. She remembers learning about the Progressive political movement
from Charles Dixon. She remembers long talks far into the night. At first she feared marriage. She did not want to become the property of a man, bought and branded with a gold wedding band. She did not want to exchange the use of her body for the price of her board and room. Suddenly she realized that the idea of marriage no longer filled her with panic. She grew calm about the idea and there was gradual movement toward a decision to marry Charles Dixon. Though neither wanted a church wedding they found that it was the only way to get the legal certificate. The wedding was held on December 10th, 1921 with as little ceremony as possible. Charles, Sophia and probably the minister, felt uncomfortable with the religious setting.

After the wedding Charles and Sophia moved to his small four room house near Tramping Lake. The election of 1921 had been a mere one day before the wedding and the young couple were elated with the results. In fact, Charles wrote to his family in Ontario to congratulate them on their good sense in electing Agnes Macphail, and only at the end did he mention, in passing, that he was now married. The children of the marriage arrived quickly. All four had been born by 1926.

In the meantime the marriage of Sophia's parents was disintegrating. In 1922 her father decided that God's plan for him was to sell religious literature from door to door. He left his family with no money and no means of support while he went out to work for the church. He was a failure
as a salesman and the church eventually sent him home. While he was away Sophia's mother and young siblings came to Sophia for $200.00 so that they could buy storm windows and fuel. Sophia provided both. By 1923 Sophia's mother could tolerate her marriage no longer. She left, with her four young children and went to work. The two older children were left with Sophia while the two younger went with their mother to her housekeeping jobs. Subject to sexual harassment, Mrs. Rossander returned home to the promise that "all is forgiven", only to discover that it was worse. In 1925 she left again.

In 1926, and pregnant, Sophia supervised the move from Tramping Lake to a new farm near Unity. The situation at Unity was difficult at first. The facilities for laundering diapers were not adequate. The storage space was too small, the mice were too numerous. Besides these problems, the boy was sickly with asthma. He had difficulty with his breathing at night and Sophia was afraid to sleep too soundly in case he needed her. From 1921 – 1926 Sophia was caught up with her parents' domestic problems and with the care of her own young children.

Still, with all the turmoil, Sophia found time to read and study. She and Charles had acquired a great many books for five cents a copy. Included were "literature, poetry, plays, biography, famous speeches, debates, world religions, economics". Although Sophia realized that "To be a person one needs an independent income... Uneven income
is at the bottom of most human problems including women's problems"¹⁸, she was very bothered by Ibsen's *The Doll's House*. In this play, Nora, the heroine, is forced to desert her husband and children to obtain any kind of recognition that she is an individual. Sophia knew that she could never walk away from her children's needs even if it meant that she could never persuade society that she was a person as well as a wife and mother.

During this period of her marriage Sophia began to write to Violet McNaughton, Women's Editor of the *Western Producer*. McNaughton liked her writing and encouraged her to continue. When McNaughton arranged to loan a book to Sophia she suggested that Sophia spend the money she had saved to join the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom. Sophia did so.

Although her husband at first opposed Sophia's involvement in the peace issue on the grounds that she had too many domestic responsibilities, he finally came around. Sophia convinced him that the only way to be certain their children would not be used for cannon fodder was to work for peace. He agreed, but expected that Sophia would limit her activities to the peace movement.⁹

In the 1920's and 1930's there was a belief that the Great War had been so terrible that there could not be another. Canadians believed the Great War had not made the world safe for democracy. They did not want to involve themselves in corrupt European politics and were more prone
to isolationism. Peace activists in Canada, of whom there were very few, were centred mainly in Vancouver and Toronto. The group in Vancouver included Laura Jamieson, Secretary of the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom. This well-known woman inspired Violet McNaughton, the editor of the Women's page in the Western Producer, to promote peace. The promotion included encouraging women to search the school texts to find examples of the glorification of militarism so this could be removed. The peace activists also disliked cadet training in the schools in the place of physical education. Since cadet training was a cheap way to provide exercise the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom had little success in removing it from schools despite impassioned speeches by J. S. Woodsworth, the leader of the Labour Group, and Agnes Macphail, the first woman M.P. in Canada, in the House of Commons.

Towards the end of the 1920's McNaughton and the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom encouraged women to sign peace petitions. In 1929 Macphail, McNaughton and Jamieson went to Geneva for a peace conference. When they were there it became obvious that they had no understanding of international diplomacy. Even McNaughton admitted that Macphail was beyond her depth in European diplomacy. Nevertheless, Laura Jamieson's idea of peace as encompassing one's whole life, politically, economically, ethically and even in the family had an impact on Dixon.
Peace for Sophia was not the absence of war. Her Danish heritage with its patriotic songs of the sweetness of living rather than aggression had left its mark. "Peace must be positive", according to Sophia.

It must be an essential characteristic, pervading a living, moving and well-adjusted society where every individual enjoys the fullest and freest expression of his personality, without such freedom being to the detriment of any of his fellow men.

Sophia believed that to bring peace one must work to keep all individuals well-adjusted in their homes and jobs and health. In an early essay on peace she wrote that:

Just as the individual, who is most maladjusted, sooner or later finds the conflict in his mind too great and suffers a complete breakdown, so is a society containing many maladjusted individuals and groups in danger of complete disintegration through irresponsible violence to a major degree - through war.

Because she believed that peaceful life was not possible in maladjusted people, she saw the need for public support of mental health and social health schemes. This desire to make a healthy society eventually led her to join such groups as the State Hospital and Medical League, which supported socialized medicine and preventive health care, and to propose birth control accessibility.

Like a true socialist Sophia regarded capitalism as one of the main causes for war. She believed that primitive people might have an excuse for war because:

food, clothing and shelter were scarce because little was known about nature's laws and how to increase her bounty. Only that which nature had released practically unaided was available for human consumption. Scarcity was the realistic cause for strife and death.
Technology, however, had ended the scarcity. The problem now was one of distributing the plenty. Because the salaries paid to the workers were never enough to buy the actual production, it was necessary to expand to new countries abroad to sell the extra production.

Modern wars, whatever their immediate provocation may have been, [are] caused by strife between different national groups of owners of capital wealth for opportunities for export and expansion and further profit abroad.\textsuperscript{14}

If capitalism is now the major cause of war and one wants peace, it follows that one works to eliminate capitalism. In 1926 the United Farmers of Canada (Saskatchewan Section) was formed. This organization had important members who were vocally critical of capitalism. The Dixons joined the organization. From an interest in peace, Sophia moved into the farm organization where she would shine.

In 1927 the United Farmers of Canada sponsored a meeting for the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom. Laura Jamieson, the Vancouver Secretary of the League, came to Unity. Sophia Dixon, who had corresponded with Jamieson about school matters, was asked to chair the meeting. It was her first attempt, but she did it well and enjoyed it. Because she was to speak at the Unity school the next day, Jamieson stayed with Dixon. Sophia was very fond of Laura Jamieson because Jamieson, too, saw life as completely inter-related. No progress could be made toward a peaceful world unless the health, the housing and the education of society were improved as well.
In July of 1927 the Dixons agreed that Sophia needed a break from her domestic routine. She and her sister Marie went to Regina to a Progressive rally. The Progressive Party had virtually disintegrated, but the problems of the western farmer had not been solved. Supporters of the old Progressive Party, like the Dixons, were looking for new solutions. Hence, Sophia went to Regina.

While in Regina Sophia met J. S. Woodsworth, leader of the Labour Group, Agnes Macphail, the first Canadian female M.P., and Bill Irvine, the one member of the Labour Group. Sophia came to meet Macphail again in Watrous where she and Marie had stopped to relax. Time permitted more conversation between Macphail and Dixon. When Sophia boarded the train in Saskatoon for Unity, Macphail and Bill Irvine were also present. The three talked until Biggar where Macphail disembarked to speak. She was due in Unity the next day and was to be welcomed by Dixon to her home before and after her public meeting. Dixon and Irvine continued their conversations all the way to Unity. Irvine was amazed that this rural farm wife could be so educated, and could have such a well-thought-out philosophy. This was a heady thought for a 27 year old who had been confined to changing and washing diapers for the last five years.

Perhaps because of the encouragement of Macphail and Irvine, perhaps because her children could now be left in another's care for short periods, 1927 begins the period when Sophia became active in community affairs. It was
fortunate indeed that another pregnancy did not interfere with her public involvement.

At the time of Dixon's marriage, Canadian society was heavily influenced by the ideas of the maternal feminists. These people believed that there was a wide divergence in male-female sexuality. Men were considered much more easily aroused and lustful. It was the job of females to dampen their husband's ardour and divert them to more spiritual relationships. Only when men could overcome their animal instincts about sexuality could a world more beneficial to women be created. Any encouragement of birth control was negating the value of motherhood. Besides, some maternal feminists believed that birth control could be used by men to subjugate women. Because birth control techniques sought to separate sex from procreation, they were feared by maternal feminists who felt the effect of them would be to increase the sexual demands on women, both inside and outside of marriage. Maternal feminists wanted to raise men to the level of self control which women possessed, rather than to drag women down to the lustful depths of men. Most of the women's organizations of the time promoted the mothering ideal.\textsuperscript{15} Because of this these organizations did not support birth control either. Certainly, the Homemakers Clubs did not publicly support birth control.

Other writers in Canada, who cared little whether women got the vote or influenced reform were against birth control as well. They regarded it as a form of race suicide for the
educated and affluent to limit the size of their families while the poor and illiterate produced many children. Women were accused of being selfish in their desire to limit family size. Women were accused of trying to destroy the family by avoiding birth. These writers never considered that too many children put unrealistic demands on a family's resources. Mother had less time to be the devoted parent or the appealing spouse so praised by the media of the time if too many children drained the finances of the family or the health of the mother. Small families could help a family to cope with rising costs and rising expectations.\textsuperscript{16}

Despite the arguments against birth control in Canada, Canadians were obviously practising it. The birth rate began to fall in 1851 and fell steadily even without efficient technology or the free dissemination of information. Many forms of contraception were used. The rhythm method was available even though the doctors of the time had the rhythms confused. Douches, advertised as vaginal cleansers to keep one regular, were regularly advertised in papers, ladies magazines and Eaton's catalogue. The feminine hygiene industry grew to a multi-million dollar industry. Condoms were available, even in Regina, according to advertisements in Marie Stopes' papers. Sheaths, as they were called, and diaphragms were not the preferred method of birth control because they were associated with prostitution. The preferred method appears to have been coitus interruptus. Considering how unreliable
the method is, one can only conclude from the falling birth rate that Canadians were very serious about limiting the size of their families.¹⁷

If an accident happened and a pregnancy occurred, women could and did resort to abortion. Folk remedies using quinine, tansy or rue were used. Doctors were enraged that women did not seem to regard abortion before the second trimester as anything more than fixing their regularity. The medical profession was against the practise and forced women to resort to non-medical abortions or to pay high prices for illegal medical help. Angus McLaren's studies suggest that while the risk of death was low, about one tenth of one percent, many women died from abortions, leading one to the conclusion that large numbers of them were being done.

In the early 1920's Marie Stopes in England and Margaret Sanger in the United States began their birth control clinics. Their rationale for providing this information was that birth control could help to create a more stable family life. It permitted sexual and emotional fulfillment for spouses. It also permitted the spacing of children so mother would have the time and health to give them the attention they deserved. Stopes and Sanger approved of birth control because children were so important they deserved a stable, happy home with fewer financial difficulties. Only limiting the number of children in a family could do this. Because birth control reduced some of
the stress from conjugal living it could also strengthen the marriage bond.

These ideas were appealing. Vancouver groups invited Sanger to come to speak to them and help them organize in British Columbia. Laura Jamieson of the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom, a woman much admired by Sophia Dixon, offered to organize Sanger's talk in British Columbia. Sanger was brilliant. She presented birth control as an aid to spiritual growth and undercut the fears of those who saw it as another way for men to dominate women. A birth control clinic was set up in British Columbia, run first by Alexander Stephen and later by Lyle Telford who had family in Saskatchewan. Until 1930 this was the only Canadian birth control clinic, and the concept of birth control was only supported in socialist magazines and by socialist speakers.

Although a clinic was not organized in Saskatchewan the United Farmers of Canada were interested in the issue. In 1929 the organization called for birth control clinics to be set up and for birth control information to be available so that mothers would not be overburdened by too many children.

Although Sophia had wanted four children when she married Charles in 1921, she had not wanted them all in four years. She believed that she "could have done so much better for them, had they been better spaced". The problem for couples who wanted fewer children was that it was illegal not only to sell birth control devices, but to
give anyone advice on how to prevent conception. The minimum jail term for an offence was two years. By the mid 1920's Dixon had heard of the American birth control activist, Margaret Sanger, and how she was arrested for opening birth control clinics in the U. S. A. Dixon began a correspondence with her.

By 1925 Dixon had had three children, a year apart each time, and was pregnant with the fourth. Her personal doctor volunteered to do an abortion, thinking it to be in her interests, but she decided against it. Although the official position of the medical establishment was against birth control and abortion, the individual practice was evidently sometimes different. Dixon also felt demeaned by snide remarks from the medics about her being "some kind of sex maniac, having a fourth child so soon". When Dixon asked for birth control advice and was refused, she claimed that she "couldn't be sure if they were really scared of two years in jail or if they told the truth when they said they didn't know anything about birth control themselves". Dixon finally got an ex-army doctor who was practising family medicine to tell her that it might help if she tried sitting up immediately after intercourse and coughing real hard!

From personal experience, as well as philosophy, Dixon knew that a woman could never have control of her life unless she had access to birth control information.
Women can have no freedom or equality until they own their bodies. A woman should not become a mother except through her own choice. A woman can scarcely take an intelligent interest in public affairs when her mind is filled from month to month with distressing doubts and fears as to her possible or probable condition, or when she is overworked trying to provide the bare physical necessities for numerous children to whom society will never do justice, or worse still when she is overburdened with invalid children as children often become in crowded families.22

She believed that scientific birth control was the great need of the age. Although discussion on birth control was very rare and the topic was uncomfortable for many people, Dixon believed it was necessary. It angered her that dissemination of helpful literature on sexual matters and birth control "is illegal, the crime (?) being punishable by an exceedingly heavy jail sentence and an enormous fine".23 Dixon suggested that birth control was kept from people for nefarious reasons: "The priest requires large flocks; the militarist cheap cannon fodder; and the exploiter cheap labour."24

Writing in the 1920's under the pen-name 'Interested', Dixon suggested that:

We must overcome the sex prejudices and taboos which have been instilled into us for centuries and face this subject with a clean and open mind. If we can, by making this information legal, have happier marriages, more independent men and women citizens, and a better quality of children, we shall also become in a better position to prevent national disasters and promote the best interests of a new commonwealth of nations.25

Although Dixon wanted birth control information available to all married couples, she did not regard it as
the best scheme to improve the world.

In all probability were all to achieve power to prevent absolutely having unplanned-for babies without any corresponding encouragement occasionally to plan for some, our people would soon be on the decrease. Responsible people will not in cold, clear reason call into this world children for whom they cannot provide.26

She believed that provision of birth control should go hand-in-hand with social improvement.

The financial burden of the child falls with undue weight on individual parents. The race being the real and permanent beneficiary, when increases in population take place, should devise further ways of making it easier for parents to provide for the next generation in their keeping. We already tax all land for the education of children. We are on the right road when we agitate for municipal doctors and municipal hospitals . . . [N]ot losing sight of individual freedom we must ever use co-operation in more and more of our enterprises.27

Sophia Dixon was evidently not the only Saskatchewan woman desirous of having birth control information available. In September of 1930 she received a letter from Margaret Sanger's birth control clinical research bureau telling her that "Recently, the Star Phoenix at Saskatoon had in its Question and Answer column the information that birth control advice would be given by Margaret Sanger. As a result of that small item, we have been swamped with letters from Saskatoon, Regina, Edmonton, and innumerable little prairie stations."28 The Sanger Clinic had "the names of no doctors interested in this subject for the whole of the western provinces", so they wrote to the Editor of the Star Phoenix for the names of "public spirited citizens willing to do some work for this great cause in Canada".29
Sophia Dixon's name was on the list. The Sanger Clinic suggested to Dixon that the Canadian law was full of holes. They suggested that subsections 2 & 4\(^{30}\) practically allow birth control instruction on a legal basis for married people in need of it. These subsections suggested that no one could be punished for providing information on or devices for birth control if the public good was served. It could be argued that the public good was served by allowing couples to space their children or by preventing conception in an unhealthy mother. They further asked Dixon if she was in touch with women who would work to provide birth control information for needy women.

That same year, 1930, the United Farmers of Canada, of which Sophia and Charles Dixon were members, passed a birth control resolution at their convention. It read:

BE IT RESOLVED that the United Farmers of Canada in convention assembled, do forthwith advise our government to raise the ban on safe, sane, and hygienic contraceptives; and

BE IT ALSO RESOLVED that we advise that there be immediately made provision for training of all practising physicians in the application of such contraceptives, and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that we advise that clinics added to all hospitals far and wide for the purpose of dissemination of such contraceptive methods as are found most suitable for each case.\(^{31}\)

This resolution was passed in 1930 with no debate!

Unfortunately, out in the country this birth control resolution appeared to cause problems. The Catholic church opposed it and apparently put pressure on their members not
to join the U. F. C. (SS). When the U. F. C. (SS) sponsored Farm Women's Week was held in 1930, the women passed a motion to rescind the birth control resolution because, as Louise Lucas, woman President of the U.F.C. put it, "If you let it stand, you are going to lose a good portion of the membership of this organization on religious principles and we cannot afford to lose one single member on anything like that at the present time, at least." The rescinding motion reached the floor of the 1931 U.F.C. (SS) convention supported by Lucas.

At this point Sophia Dixon got the attention of the chair to propose a milder resolution in favour of birth control. The original birth control resolution was rescinded and Dixon asked permission to introduce her motion. The motion required a two-thirds majority which it received. Mr. Tom Johnson (later speaker of the Legislature) re-iterated Louise Lucas' arguments against the birth control resolution. "Any motion on this subject will have the effect of antagonizing a certain group of people and that is what Mrs. Lucas was trying to intimate to you."

Johnson explained

I am speaking against this motion for that reason. Personally, I want to say this, it is a matter that has my entire sympathy and I think it should happen, but, if you are going to rescind a motion because it affects your organization finances you cannot introduce another motion which would do the same thing.33

When Mrs. Dixon got the floor she took advantage of the information she had gleaned from the Margaret Sanger clinic
the year before. She claimed that her resolution merely made use of the loophole in section 207, subsection 2 of the 
Criminal Code, which read that "no one shall be convicted of 
any offence in this section mentioned if he proves that the 
public good was served." The argument could be made that the public good was served by free dissemination of birth control. A lively debate followed the introduction of 
this resolution over whether the U.F.C. (SS) ought to cave in to a certain church on a matter of principle. Mrs. Dixon offered to withdraw her motion if convention thought that the U.F.C. would be hurt by it. Convention loudly refused and called for the question. When Mrs. Dixon pointed out that no other group in Saskatchewan could bring this up to the doctors and tell them they are not living up to what they should in the way of lessening our public burden, not even the Homemakers, a very rowdy convention called for the question and passed the resolution, despite potential problems with the Catholics.

Mrs. Dixon appeared the hero of the hour with line-ups of delegates waiting to shake her hand at the intermission. Some Catholic delegates from the Cypress Hills even insisted on taking Dixon to supper in appreciation. However, the fight was not over. George Williams, the retiring U.F.C. (SS) president, who was hoping to become the leader of the new political party on the horizon, had been out of the convention when the birth control resolution was passed. Years later Tom Johnson, who with Louise Lucas
spoke against the birth control resolution, told Dixon about "how he had found Mrs. Lucas 'in tears' over [her] politically dumb resolution. So what could he do but accompany Mrs. Lucas to confer with Williams on how to undo the damage that [she] had brought about." Williams had the U.F.C. Board of Directors recommend that Dixon's birth control resolution be rescinded because of possible damage in the country. When Williams' idea met with resistance, he responded by saying:

You may say you are not going to bow to the religious convictions of any people. It is only small people who cannot bow to religious principles. Is birth control, on the part of those who want it, a principle or an expediency? Socialism is opposed by the same church. Nobody asked you to withdraw your principles that you enunciated in your economic platform because a church opposed it. It was a principle that meant good or evil for the people in a real economic sense. Birth control does not mean that. The reason why birth control is practised comes from the economic situation and not from anything else.

When Dixon got the floor after Williams, she made the point that all of Williams' arguments could be contradicted but in the interests of the U.F.C. (SS) she agreed that the motion to rescind should be carried.

Although she publicly supported Williams, privately Dixon was angry. In a personal letter to Annie Hollis, ex-woman President of the U.F.C. (SS), whom Dixon greatly admired, she admitted that:

While I intend to give full support to Williams in organizing our economic forces where a desirable thing is being accomplished, I cannot easily forgive him for saying that there is 'no principle
involved' in asking 'that practicing physicians supply preventive information to needy cases who ask for it and where the public good would be served'. There's just as much 'principle involved in saving a woman's life as there is in saving the buildings which only constitute the shell of a home in the resolution to prevent evictions, foreclosures and seizures.

I have wondered a good many times if we did right to withdraw that resolution. I do not think any priest or bishop has any right to say to the U.F.C. you withdraw that motion or our Catholic members must withdraw from your organization. I think every individual Catholic member should have the right to choose for himself which principle he owed the most loyalty. I am inclined to believe a good many Catholics would stay with us, for the resolution asked for assistance only for those women who in their medical advisers' opinions would be subjected to undue danger or strain. I have a hunch if the priests got too nasty about it, it might be at the expense of losing some members from their church.

... I wonder sometimes if we are more concerned with getting into power, political or otherwise, then (sic) with obtaining real human liberty.38

Perhaps with humour, perhaps with spiteful relish, Mrs. Dixon included the name of George Williams on a list to birth control clinics in British Columbia and Ontario whose members had written to her and asked her to send them names and addresses of people interested in the information. Several months later Williams, Lucas, Dixon and a few others were relaxing over a cup of coffee after a late board meeting. Dixon used the opportunity to ask if Williams had ever heard from these clinics. Williams face brightened and he said, 'what a relief to know that it was you who gave them my name and address. What relief! I had been so sure that it was the 'Liberals' who were out to get me and had
set a trap for me." Ever after Dixon regarded Williams as a curious mixture who could fight for freedom and humanity first, but could not see the principle involved in a woman wanting to control her own body.

As far as Dixon was concerned the fight was not over. In 1932 she was writing to the Birth Control League of Canada for information and advice. The Rev. A. H. Tyrer, an Anglican, told her that "I feel you have a pretty clear vision of the whole situation and I advise you to keep on plugging away". He also sent Dixon half a dozen books on methods and advised her to get women to sign the declaration blanks included when she handed out the books to be on the safe side. In 1933 Dixon was in contact with a Frances Moren who was willing to speak on birth control to a meeting in Unity. Dixon made it clear that she could not personally sponsor a meeting but that she would try to interest the Homemakers in doing so. The Homemakers was an organization set up in Saskatchewan and affiliated with other women's institutes all over the world. It was designed to give status to women in the home and to make the views of these women known to society. In Saskatchewan the Homemakers' Clubs were administered by the University and were forbidden to promote political aims. Controversy was also to be avoided. When Dixon approached her home club, the Queenston Homemakers, to sponsor Frances Moren as a speaker on birth control, they agreed, even to the extent of suggesting they
ask for a collection at the end of the meeting to defray expenses.

Dixon confided to Moren that

I must say that if there was any opposition to the proposal, it was not articulated. There was an expression, however, that we should be very careful in advertising. Some said that an invitation to the various Homemakers' Clubs in the vicinity would suffice, along with a little word of mouth advertising. One woman suggested an ad in the local paper that the subject would be social hygiene and for women only would head off the possibility of a section of the public treating it as a laughing matter.41

Unfortunately, this meeting did not come off as Ms. Moren was confined to Vancouver when an election was called and her employer Dr. Lyle Telford needed her at the clinic because he was a candidate and there would be extra work.42

Despite the ban on involvement in controversial issues, some of the Homemakers were interested in birth control. In 1934 the Crooked Valley Homemakers asked Dixon to give a talk on contraception at their regular meeting.43 She spoke on the same issue to at least two other clubs. Dixon was very cautious to outline the differences between birth control and abortion in her talk, and to give little direct "how to" information because she didn't want to have to serve her two years in prison for breaking the law.44 Dixon pointed out that some so-called contraception was available—even through the Eaton's catalogue—advertised as preparations to keep feminine parts clean and healthful. "Responsible, married people are entitled to this information if they want it."45 Dixon continued,
especially since a man can divorce his wife, or refuse to support her if she refuses intercourse. Dixon urged the clubs she spoke to to bring resolutions to Homemakers Conventions, urging "the speedy removal of legal barriers which prevent married people from having access to scientific methods of prevenception [sic] by amendments to the Criminal Code of Canada".46

By the spring of 1936 some of the clubs had obviously responded. Dixon wrote letters to the Unity Courier and the Saskatoon Star Phoenix announcing that the resolution to remove birth control from the Criminal Code was coming before the June meeting of the provincial Homemakers convention. Dixon urged her readers to recognize that

the question is not at all whether or not we have birth control. It is definitely a question of whether we have the harmful kind or the scientific kind. Space does not permit going into the available detailed figures on the American Birth Control Business Racket, but they run into many millions. Like Canada, their outdated laws in regard to the matter hamper proper medical supervision. House to house canvassers, slot machines and thinly disguised feminine hygiene advertisements are the chief devices to further sales to a gullible public. Many of the products thus sold are useless or definitely harmful and most of them quite expensive. This unregulated salesmanship extends into Canada, who furnishes her share of financial wealth to the racketeers at the expense of impaired physical and mental health to many of her people. Through a legal overhauling of this section of the Criminal Code, the medical profession could assume its proper status as health advisers to their patients, and the Birth Control Business Racket could be curbed.47

Miss Oxner, who administered the Homemakers' Clubs through the extension department at the University, was not
amused at Dixon's attempt to force the birth control issue to public attention and rebuked her in a letter for not keeping the resolution confidential. Oxner had in fact got the Dinsmore Club to withdraw the resolution before the convention and probably did not appreciate the publicity. It appears that Oxner did everything in her power to stop birth control resolutions coming to the floor of the Homemakers conventions and that she was a little too clever, even for Dixon, who described the 1936 and 1937 Homemakers conventions to a friend thus:

Mrs. Charles Coldwell took her monthly check from her brother that she really should have used for something else and went to the convention as a visitor. She said I was to use my ability and my newly won prestige and put that birth control resolution over. You know the Dinsmore Club have sent it in for two years. A year ago Miss Oxner got them to withdraw it without discussion--this year Mrs. Coldwell and I were to see that they didn't withdraw and that it got a little airing to say the least. But Miss Oxner beat us to it, she had them withdraw it by letter before the convention opened. But we got a very polished gentlewoman from Cut Knife to get up the last morning and ask very innocently what happened to that resolution, inasmuch as she would be unable to report to her club who would want to know. Of course, we knew but we wanted Miss Oxner to state it officially in the convention. So Mrs. Coldwell is going back next year no matter what and see that Miss Oxner doesn't railroad a third convention. In the meantime, Mrs. Telford led me into conference in her room, and we drafted a resolution to set up a committee to help with resolutions the year around, composed of Miss Oxner, the convenor of legislation, and Mrs. Conboy, legal adviser. You should have seen the big works then, the main excuse being that it was up to the clubs to get their own authentic information re: resolutions. But we didn't want the high moguls to have the excuse to throw out resolutions because they were improperly worded or didn't contain the right information. We carried it, and I think that is
why Miss Oxner is not publishing my prize essay in the Homemakers' column in The Western Producer.49

After 1937 Dixon's public involvement in the birth control issue stopped. By this time, though, the public mood had changed. In the 1930's A. H. Tyrer, an Anglican minister, began a clinic in Ontario to provide birth control information. He was in close contact with Stopes and Sanger, but his main support came from A.R. Kaufman, a rubber manufacturer from Kitchener. Kaufman had first realized the importance of birth control when his company nurse suggested he offer information on the subject or sterilization to his laid off workers and they agreed. He began to provide his workers with information and the demand for more from other workers led to the Parent Information Bureau in 1931. Kaufman wanted to provide cheap, effective birth control. Experience told him this was condoms and spermicidal jelly. He sent his nurses to visit prospective users on the recommendation of doctors, ministers, social workers and other patients. One of Kaufman's nurses, Dorothea Palmer, did not wait for the recommendation. She went door to door. She was charged with a criminal offence, but acquitted in 1936 on the grounds that she was serving the public good.50 This did not make providing birth control information legal. Only a change in the Criminal Code could do that. It did, however, change the way the law was applied, and lent a certain
respectability to the subject. Information was now available and Dixon could involve herself in other areas.

Despite the fact that free access to birth control information did not become legal until 1968, Dixon had enough information personally. By 1927 her baby-bearing years were in fact over. She would not again be prevented from having a public role by pregnancy. When her public political career ended abruptly in 1934, it was lack of childcare, the other major problem of working women, which caused it, not pregnancy.
2. Ibid.
4. Ibid.
5. Ibid.
7. Speech to the Saskatchewan Action Committee, S.D.P.P.
8. Ibid.
9. Sophia Dixon to Deborah Powell, April 8, 1982, S.D.P.P.
12. Ibid.
13. Ibid.
14. Ibid.
16. Ibid.
18. Speech to the Saskatchewan Action Committee, S.D.P.P.
20. Speech to the Saskatchewan Action Committee, S.D.P.P.
21. Ibid.
22. Newspaper clipping of a letter written by Dixon, not signed, dated 1920's, S.D.P.P.

23. Ibid.

24. Ibid.

25. Ibid.

26. Newspaper Clipping, dated 1920's, S.D.P.P.

27. Ibid.


29. Ibid.

30. Section 207 of the Criminal Code part 2. No one shall be convicted of any offence in this section mentioned if he proves that the public good was served by the acts alleged to have been done, and that there was no excess in the acts alleged beyond what the public good required.

4. It shall be a question for the court or judge whether the occasion of the manufacture, sale, exposing for sale, publishing, or exhibition is such as might be for the public good, and whether there is evidence of excess beyond what the public good required in the manner, extent or circumstances in, to or under which the manufacture, sale, exposing for sale, publishing or exhibition is made; but it shall be a question for the jury whether there is or is not such excess.


34. Ibid, p. 504.

35. The minutes read that Homemakers can deal with birth control. Mrs. Dixon knew they could not and said they could not.


38. Sophia Dixon to Annie Hollis, March 21, 1931.
40. Dixon to Tyrer, April 17, 1932, S.D.P.P.
41. Dixon to Frances Moren, September 7, 1933, S.D.P.P.
42. Moren to Dixon, September 12, 1933, S.D.P.P.
43. Dixon to Bertha Oxner, July 31, 1934, S.D.P.P.
44. Notes from a speech Dixon gave to several Homemakers Clubs, undated, sometime in 1934, S.D.P.P.
45. Ibid.
46. Ibid.
47. Star Phoenix, newspaper clipping, undated, S.D.P.P.
48. Dixon to Mrs. White, November 8, 1937, S.D.P.P.
49. Ibid.
CHAPTER II
DIXON'S RESPONSE TO THE DEPRESSION

During the first years of their marriage, Charles Dixon had been rather jealous. Somehow, by 1930, he seemed to have overcome the problem. Sophia was now able to become more involved in organizations without causing major problems at home. She was even able to speak publicly. She gave a speech on Agnes Macphail to a Unity group in 1928, which put her squarely on the side of ordinary people. The rich, Sophia said,

are not to be punished for their lack of social consciences, but at the expense of leaving them only moderately rich, the poor are to become also moderately rich. This does not necessarily mean money as we understand it, but in the access of [sic] good things of life.¹

Sophia became more involved in the United Farmers of Canada as well. She was chosen as a delegate to the 1931 U.F.C. (SS) by two local lodges. Neither lodge could afford to send a delegate alone. They decided to pool their resources and send one delegate between them. They could not agree on a man, but both locals could agree on Sophia, who went with her husband's blessing.

Between 1927 and 1931, when she was chosen as a U.F.C. convention delegate, Sophia had continued to write. Her name was well known to the Star Phoenix on the birth control issue. Mrs. MacNaughton encouraged the writing she did for the Western Producer. The editor of the Unity Courier was
delighted to publish Sophia's reports of local public meetings. She was accurate, she wrote well, and she wrote for free. Even if Sophia could not attend all the affairs she wished to, she kept up with current events by reading everything she could buy or borrow, and she wrote to the editor of any paper which would print her material to lend her support to the agents for change.

When Sophia rose in the 1931 convention to speak in favour of a birth control resolution she accomplished three things. First, she made sure that convention was told that information and help with birth control could be made available. Second, she made herself known to convention as an intelligent, articulate woman, and was selected, with Neva Myrick, as a Director of the U.F.C. (S.S.) in 1931. Third, she made herself unpopular with Louise Lucas, woman President of the U.F.C. (SS).

At the 1931 convention Sophia Dixon made such an impression that she was nominated for President of the Women's section by Warren Hart, although Louise Lucas eventually won the post. Sophia withdrew her name from nomination because her children were too small to permit her to take such a strenuous job. When she was nominated as a Director, it almost seemed as if she were trying to dissuade people from voting for her. She said, in part,

*If you see fit to elect me I shall try to give some measure of service ... but have not Board experience with Women's Work. ... I have no public speaking experience so consider this point when you vote.*
Sophia's belief was that a woman should not put herself forward, or advertise her abilities. Those abilities should shine through so clearly that it was obvious to all that this was a superior candidate for any job. She was, nonetheless, chosen as a Woman Director for 1931 and again in 1932.

The 1930's were a difficult time for the people of Saskatchewan. During the 1920's the public debt had been greatly expanded with road building and providing telephone service. When the price of grain plummeted and the drought decreased the amount of grain harvested the available money in Saskatchewan shrank. People had no crops, no money and very little hope. There were many cases of hunger and misery to be found in the province. Provincial and municipal governments had the constitutional obligation to provide relief to the people, but they had no money. The Federal government had access to more money to alleviate the depression conditions, but there was doubt about the constitutional power of the federal government to legislate in cases like the provision of relief, regulation of wages, hours of work or the provision of Unemployment Insurance. Neither the R. B. Bennett government in Ottawa, nor the J. M. T. Anderson government in Regina, dealt effectively with the depression. Concerned citizens began to look for their own solutions.

As part of this solution, in the spring of 1931 Sophia, with the other U.F.C. (SS) executive, was involved with
setting up mass meetings to choose delegates to take a memorandum to the Anderson provincial government. Because conditions were so bad for farmers and workers they had agreed to present joint requests to the government. No one really expected the government to act upon the requests, but the meeting was to provide an additional justification for the U.F.C. (SS) to go into politics as it had been permitted to do at its 1931 convention.

When in 1931 it became obvious that the Anderson government would not respond satisfactorily to the delegation, plans were made for a joint convention in 1932 with the U.F.C. (S.S.) and a small group representing the needs of urban workers and led by Regina alderman M. J. Coldwell. At this convention it was decided that the U.F.C. (S.S.) and this small labour group should go into politics. M. J. Coldwell was chosen as leader of this newly formed Farmer-Labour Group because George Williams of the U.F.C. (S.S.) considered that his recent trip to Russia would make him a political liability as a leader. Sophia Dixon was on the Political Directive Board of the Farmer-Labour group and helped to oversee the first years of political action.

In 1932 Sophia and Neva Myrick, as women Directors of the U.F.C. (SS), prepared the program for Farm Women's Week at the University. At this convention education was a prime concern. Co-operation, and the use and control of credit and money were areas touched upon. Because Sophia believed that "Education should result in better health, both
physical and mental and in improved social adjustments in an interdependent world"; health, economics and international relations were also big topics at Farm Women's week. Sophia defended the emphasis on the peace issue being discussed in International relations. The danger of war was a big incentive to make thoughtful people more thoughtful she suggested.

The fear of bloody conflict or chemical warfare is a constant spur to some of us to deny ourselves personal preferences and indulgences in our immediate housekeeping sphere and devote some time to try to understand housekeeping in the larger sense.

War is not a surface condition which can be removed with a scraper. The root causes are generally conceded to be the unfair discrimination in favour of those who own and against those who do not own. . . and the profit motive in industry. . . . If ever it was necessary to push our statesmen from behind, it is now.

One of the unfortunate results of the inability of governments the world over to deal with the depression was the rise of fascism, with its emphasis on military solutions. Dixon was well aware of these developments because she had information coming to her from overseas in the form of papers and magazines. Her knowledge of world events was surely very unusual at the time. This knowledge of the growth of fascism spurred Dixon to work hard for solutions to the depression to prevent fascism and/or war in Canada.

The hand of Sophia Dixon can also be seen in the fact that more time was left for discussion in Farm Women's Week.
in 1932. "Please bring questions and suggestions galore", she begged. "If questions are not answered they will at least cause somebody to think." Writing to the Western Producer before Farm Women's Week, she urged men to come to the Week with their wives and sisters because "We are trying to solve the problems of humanity rather than the problems of women." If the problems of humanity were to be solved, informed citizens were a necessity.

In a democracy where the final responsibility for the welfare or otherwise of our human group comes back on us as individuals, we should not be too busy to make some effort to weigh together some of the issues that closely affect us all. From 1931 - 1933 Sophia Dixon attended numerous meetings of the Executive of the U.F.C. and of the Political Directive Board of the Farmer-Labour Party. Because of her domestic responsibilities she did not travel the province speaking to new groups every night as Louise Lucas did. Mainly, she educated people by her essays, letters and U.F.C. study material.

Sophia Dixon always had a strong faith in the value of education to bring about "the permanent enlightenment of the masses" by "the spreading of certain ideas, the encouragement of certain thought processes". She warned that:

We want to do things in a hurry. If we could be patient, get the educational outlook. . . . It is more important to train a half dozen leaders than to talk to a thousand people every night who are swung over to our point of view, and then the next night under the spell of another's oratory, like a pendulum are swung to the other extreme.
To this end she did a great deal of writing and individual research which she publicized by speeches and letters to the editor. Four topics which particularly concerned her in the period 1927 - 1935 were monetary reform, social credit, technocracy and fascism. The first three concerned Dixon because they seemed to offer solutions to the depression. Fascism worried Dixon because she foresaw it as a possible result if depressed conditions were not overcome. While Dixon would be the first to admit that her ideas were not original, they were thoughtful and well publicized. Dixon's holistic approach to life meant that she was afraid that breakdown in any area of society could lead to war. Her responsibility as she saw it, was to warn people about this breakdown and point to peaceful solutions.

Dixon believed money was merely tickets to obtain goods and services. Because the people she was trying to educate were not all well read, she kept her explanations very simple. "It all started in a perfectly natural way", she explained.

When our ancestors many generations ago wanted to trade some cattle for some wheat or some salt for some beads, they just did. This simplest of trade is called "barter". . .

After a while, if the person who was to receive the cattle did not care to take delivery of them just at that particular time, he would accept a receipt showing he had transferred the wheat and was to receive the cattle at some future time. Such receipts were the equivalent of money.

In time, gold became acceptable as receipt for goods. . . because gold is light, pretty and scarce. It became customary to let goldsmiths
store the gold. The receipts which the goldsmiths issued for gold stored at first corresponded to the gold in storage.

It is but a short step from there to the modern bank which issues money bills (or receipts) many times the value of the gold on hand. Bankers may do this safely, knowing that very few people demand gold so long as paper bills are acceptable to their fellow men as tickets for goods and services. . . .

[However], no money gets into circulation except as a loan to industry to produce something to sell and return the loan with interest. The interest can never be paid because under bank monopoly there is no other source of money. The producer has to charge enough for his goods to pay not only wages but various business costs and profits to other industries, taxes, interest and profits for himself. Prospective consumers haven't received enough wages to pay the cost of articles. . . . Under our financial system, gluts of undistributable goods are inevitable. 11

The results of the money system which had been created could be seen by everyone in the 1930's. Dixon reminded the women at Farm Women's Week in 1935 that it was not unemployment which was the problem, but maldistribution of goods. This poor distribution was caused because money was issued as debt in the first place. According to Dixon.

If you have a dollar upon which you are not paying interest, some one else is paying the interest without having the dollar. 12

Dixon used a simple analogy to show how this demand for interest caused poverty for many and riches for the few.

I knew a teacher once who let her children play bank. The banker was to lend ten dollars (marbles) to each of ten children at ten percent interest. The hundred dollars (marbles) were all they had among them. Obviously it cannot be done. Through deals of various kinds, the more cunning ones might repay, but one or two unfortunates at the end of the row would have lost their principal to pay the other fellow's interest. 13
Dixon believed that because the directors of banks and large companies were the same people, it was in their interest to create credit at their banks for their companies. These companies then sold goods, the price of which included interest, to consumers. In order to repay the loan the stronger companies were forced to take from the smaller companies or from the poor because not enough currency was in circulation to cover the interest. Consumers never had enough money to buy all the goods, so production would be cut back. Even if the company closed and the bank took over there was no problem because the banks were by and large owned by the same people as the companies, so ownership was merely transferred from one hand to the other. If inflation occurred, the property value of the business, even if it had gone bankrupt, would increase enough to bring profit to the bank shareholders.

The problem was that there was a need to distribute income to people so they could purchase "better health and a higher degree of culture". Purchasing power must stay circulating in society and must not be allowed to be swallowed up in interest payments to the "fifty big shots". Bill Irvine, an Alberta M.P. who co-operated in parliament with J. S. Woodsworth, had suggested that a Major Douglas might have the answer so Dixon investigated Social Credit with the help of a good friend, Kathleen MacDonald.

... We started with open minds and finally decided that even the Douglas Social Credit was, by itself not a cure for our economic ills.
Dixon looked at Douglas' A plus B theorem and decided his diagnosis of the cause of the economic crisis was wrong. The Douglas people generally admitted that B costs at some time or other became A money or purchasing power, but that the time lag for B to become A caused insufficiency which must be made up by social credits, or increased spending power. Dixon disagreed.

"This premature appearance of purchasing power causes inflation, i.e. rise in prices. Still that does not prove an insufficiency, but rather that those who collected the inflated prices received larger profits and enlarged their portions of purchasing power." The time lag, then, did not create money shortage according to Dixon: neither did bank profits because this became purchasing power in the hands of shareholders. "If a bookkeeping flaw is accountable [for the shortage of purchasing power]" wondered Dixon, "why cannot it be remedied as such? Why issue consumer credit to cancel something which was not a legitimate charge in the first place?"

Dixon believed that issuing consumer credit through Social Credit dividends would merely become profits for individuals or corporations to re-invest. If the purpose of the dividends was merely to allow the consumers to take from the owners of real wealth Dixon doubted if the "fifty big shots" would allow it. "The owners of real wealth would probably wish to decide on what terms they will part with their goods." If, however, the consumer credits were
re-investable by those owning the machines, they would help the capitalists to gain 100% control of the economy so much faster. Dixon could not understand why "the Douglasites consider it so sinful for surplus money to be lent at interest, second hand, yet justify investing it directly and receiving the interest (profit) first hand". In 1935 Dixon wrote to the electors of the Battlefords warning that

new credit based on sales cannot help but benefit the owners of the most resources and best equipment more than those less fortunately situated in the natural course of competition, which S. C. believes desirable. Obviously, those who own the factories and natural resources today would be helped to increase their holdings. The concentration of the ownership of wealth would be intensified.

Dixon summed up her ideas about social credit when she compared it to the CCF thus:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Social Credit</th>
<th>C.C.F.</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Socialize banking</td>
<td>1. Socialize banking</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Free dividends to all</td>
<td>3. Social insurances to those requiring them for any reason.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Social Credit Dixon claimed "would make the rich richer and life a little more tolerable for the poor". Dixon thought the Social Credit idea was in ingenious way to make capitalism work for a while longer. She, however, believed that Canadians were entitled to a much larger share of their cultural heritage than social credit would provide as it
propped up the capitalist system. In the federal election of 1935 the readers of the Unity Courier were told that:

The C.C.F. would not only relate total purchasing power to total production and sales, but distribute the purchasing power in such a way as to give more equal opportunities to men and women to enjoy goods and contribute something to this much heralded "cultural heritage" of ours.

The C.C.F. would take over large scale industries, lower prices of goods, raise wages and give proportionate social insurances to those who cannot work for any reason. Social Credit would make the rich richer and give all (including the poor) the bare necessities. Through a dividend it would be like injecting a hypodermic into private competition, which is now faced with a breakdown. We are entitled to a much larger share of the "cultural heritage" than Social Credit can give us. Let us not at this time or any future time sell our birthright for a mess of pottage.

As for Dixon herself, she planned to vote C.C.F. because "the only program that will give you your share of Social Credit is that of the C.C.F.".

Dixon was impressed with the aspect of Social Credit which denied any special virtue in work. She believed that the hours a person spent on dull routine tasks which could be better done by a machine were hours of cultural loss to a community. "The contribution of Social Crediters in the shifting of emphasis from sellers to buyers and from producers to consumers should strengthen the demand for a saner economic order." This saner economic order, Dixon hoped, would provide time and money for study and cultural activities.
Unfortunately, Dixon feared that Social Credit could pave the way for Fascism, her greatest fear in the 1930's. Dixon was very informed about fascism because of the material she read from abroad. In this she was surely not representative of most Saskatchewan women.

If for instance, people have accustomed themselves to the idea of the feasibility and desirability of limiting their reform fervor to monetization policy only and it should prove abortive, there might not be time to rally the masses in support of something more comprehensive before the forces of reaction should hasten the decline of civilization to a hopeless degree.  

Dixon defined fascism as "dictatorship in the interests of an over-privileged small group at the expense of the mass of the people". Because Dixon believed that the dividends Social Credit promised would benefit the capitalists greatly, and the masses slightly, she saw Social Credit as dangerously close to Fascism.

Dixon regarded Fascism as the concentration of reactionary ideas. In Germany the most intolerant, brutal and sadistic elements had gained power only to commit vicious outrages against people whose views did not coincide with Hitler's ideas. Most of us, Dixon wrote, "have a fair veneer of neighbourly consideration most of the time, but when occasion demands it, the desire to inflict pain can be very neatly resurrected from our sub-conscious [sic] minds through the stimulus of fear". Even in 1933 Dixon was familiar with the fate of Jews, women and Socialists who opposed the Nazis because of her wide reading.
None of the fascists, regardless of the colour of his shirt "will help the fellow with no shirt", Dixon warned. She also noted that fascist organizations are very clever at duping their supporters because they appeal to people who are tired of the inaction of existing governments, while they are sponsored by big interests who are clever enough to stay behind the scenes.

We should not forget . . . that the stress and strain of the last few years has drawn Canada and Britain into taking actions which have a tendency to give us much less liberty than we had, and we may yield to fascism completely, too, unless citizens generally, and government, in particular, become far wider awake to the dangers and adopt a far more aggressive policy for the protection and security of all its citizens.

Dixon was outraged that those organizations which purportedly wished to help the fellow with no shirt, that is the German and the Italian Social Democrats, did nothing. She believed that those Socialists had had the governmental power to socialize banking and big industry, but they did not use it. They were too busy waiting for a more opportune time. Meanwhile, the opportune time passed them by and their force and influence in affairs declined. Because Social Democrats did not act the fellow with no shirt turned to Fascism because it offered easy answers and quick solutions.

Because of Dixon's overwhelming concern with peace, the Fascist's policies regarding women frightened her. She was well aware from her reading that Hitler and Mussolini were both encouraging big families. Fascists, she wrote, were
consistent in their belief that women were to be kept in a condition of servitude and used for the recreation of the tired warrior. Women were to exhaust themselves in childbirth, raising soldiers for the Reich. Any woman who resisted this idea was removed from her job by protective arrest, if necessary. Why would it be necessary for the women to produce so many children if war were not planned, Dixon wondered?

To Dixon, all these problems were interlocking. The capitalist system created poverty in the midst of plenty. If the masses, wanting their share of the plenty, turned to the wrong kind of monetary reform, it would only increase the concentration of ownership. Fascists offered quick solutions and demanded foreign expansion to keep the economy afloat. Expansion required soldiers in case of resistance so the women were to be breeders of cannon fodder. Even in Canada citizens were not safe because,

How often we see articles in Canadian publications urging the women to give up paid employment as a solution to the unemployment problem! This is one of the earmarks of fascist thought, not yet crystallized into a definite party program perhaps, but nevertheless it is well to recognize it, before reaction becomes supreme on every side. Dixon regarded Fascism as a device that entrenched groups use when "the ownership of wealth has concentrated so much that the system seems about to collapse with its own top weight". There was a danger in Canada because our system, too, had ground almost to a halt. People were in need and no one in power seemed able to help.
Dixon believed in state control of banking and key industries as a partial solution. However, she did not want deadening jobs and a subsistence lifestyle, but quality life and culture. For a time in the 1930's she thought perhaps these things could be brought to humanity by scientists and technical experts. Accordingly, she examined Technocracy. The Technocrats, an organization led by Howard Scott from the United States, believed that the technology already in existence in the 1930's could provide a society wherein everyone could be maintained with a comfortable lifestyle, working only 16 hours a week. Dixon was on the mailing list for Technocracy information and was at first much impressed with their ideas. Technocracy provided much information describing how much the man-hours needed to create a product had decreased since the industrial revolution. The organization also provided information about new products like cars which could be made to last ten times as long for half the cost, and Ramie, a fabric made from a fibrous nettle plant, as a substitute for wool, pulp and paper and cotton, which was apparently indestructible. The idea of providing work for all and getting rid of an industrial system based on planned obsolescence appealed to Dixon as much as control of banking.

True to Socialist ideals, Dixon believed that no one person or group of people had developed all the machines designed to make life easier for humankind, therefore no one person or group should be the only benefactor.
The natural resources and machines should belong to all the people. The technocrats with their graphs, charts and statistics say they can estimate the amount of energy required in producing all physical needs and luxuries per year. They propose to divide this according to population.36

Each citizen would receive an equal portion, called an energy certificate, which could be used like money to purchase any product desired.

Although at first each citizen would get an equal amount of the national wealth under technocracy, Dixon realized that "later it might be desirable to give more as inducement to better work or to advancement".37 Dixon very much liked the idea that the energy certificates, as one's share of national wealth were to be called, were not transferable. The fact that they must be spent by the person to whom they were made out would mean that "there would be no graft, gambling or stealing, because the certificates would be valueless to anyone else".38 Technology might, in fact, be the solution to crime because

It is said that over ninety percent of crimes are property crimes. It is very evident if we were to organize in a way calculated to take care of everybody instead of each one having to fight his own battles, or else be a failure and an object of charity, we would remove the incentive to property crimes.39

The effects of the depression all around her made Dixon look for new solutions to the problems of capitalism. In 1933 Dixon, influenced by the Technologists, had decided that "If the bankers, the soldiers, the politicians and the industrialists cannot run this country, it must be done by
the scientists, technologists and the engineers." Without planned obsolescence, factories would have to run fewer hours. Without huge profits to capitalists, spending power could go to the masses. With scientific planning there seemed no reason why the technocrats' ideas could not be put into effect, except that the capitalists would not like to lose their status. The continuing depression made it quite possible that capitalists would lose their status anyway. Scientists could hardly manage the economy worse than businessmen, and the possible benefits were breathtaking. "There should be a great increase in arts, music, literature, drama and sports. With so much leisure and freedom from worry everyone could indulge hobbies." Technocracy offered hope for Utopia here on earth and Dixon hoped that "the technocrats with their charts, graphs and statistics and energy measurements [would] be [the] economic planning board" proposed by the C.C.F. for the federal government.

In 1933 Sophia Dixon was nominated as Woman President of the U.F.C. (SS). She still refused to campaign for the position. In accepting the nomination, she told the convention that:

Personally, I feel that I could serve you just as well without taking this position, but some of my friends have changed my better judgment. . . . If you do not elect me, there are plenty of ways in which I can serve . . . I am not pleading for your vote; use your own judgment.
Sophia was elected as Woman President for 1933. Because of this position she was to attend the founding convention of the C.C.F. at Regina in 1933.

At this convention Sophia was very distressed over the behaviour of Agnes Macphail. She reported the behaviour in full to her confidante, a feminist and former U.F.C. (S.S.) Woman President, Annie Hollis, just after the convention. Sophia reported that Agnes was not prepared to see a woman's section within the C.C.F. "to nurse women through the kindergarten stages". Dixon herself had reservations about special women's sections. She attended one in Alberta in 1934 and reported to Mrs. Hollis that:

It was an extreme nuisance. Many times I wanted to be in two places at once. The women had some splendid educational features which the men should not have missed. On the other hand, the men discussed and decided things when the women should have been present.

Dixon thought that "Miss Agnes was more or less hysterical all through the convention." Louise Lucas and George Williams had privately reported her unseemly behaviour in Council prior to the convention. Sophia thought they had perhaps "brushed her the wrong way". This thought was dispelled when Agnes told her that "she just couldn't stand 'us socialists' and the element particularly which insisted on calling everybody comrade at the convention". Dixon knew that the farm element did not call anyone comrade, and very few labour people did either. Dixon was worried that Macphail was heading for a
breakdown. Macphail threatened to pull Ontario out of the C.C.F. if things did not suit her.

She even carried the spirit into the subsequent Council meeting - and happened to pick on me as I happened to be in the way. I felt pretty bad for a while, because she was not only rough, but all wrong - and I had done nothing to deserve it, as my particular bent is to try to get a thing worded so as to be acceptable to everybody. . . . I felt for several days as though one of my nearest and dearest had been buried, such an aching void - for you must know Miss Macphail had been the heroine of my dreams.49

At the 1933 convention Sophia was chosen, along with George Williams and M. J. Coldwell, to be Saskatchewan's representative on the National Council of the C.C.F. They chose her, she claims, because she "didn't talk as much as Louise Lucas".50 Probably the fact that she was Woman President of the U.F.C. (S.S.) had a great deal to do with the nomination too. Sophia was at only one meeting of National Council directly after the convention. Money was too scarce for more.

Money was so scarce that it was extremely difficult for Sophia to pursue new directions as Woman President of the U.F.C. (SS). More than money problems, though, Sophia felt that she had to deal with personnel problems. Sophia resented the fact that Mrs. Fisher, the woman whom Louise Lucas promoted for president over Sophia, suggested that she had to go to the U.F.C. (SS) office every afternoon, ostensibly to do Dixon's work. As Sophia told Mrs. Hollis,

Mrs. Fisher's pass on the railway enables her to run into Saskatoon when she happens to be living on the farm and out to the farm when she happens to be
living in Saskatoon. It is very convenient to have a country home and a city home and a pass - but it is unwise for us as an organization to mistake these for brains.51

Mrs. Fisher also helped to tell of the self-sacrifice of the U.F.C. officers and Sophia was not impressed.

The martyrs in the office are not faring so bad. $200.00 a month for Eliason and the girl $85.00 to something over a hundred. The stories about MacAulay hauling down potatoes in his car to keep Eliason from starving and also of Eliason cashing in on his life insurance to keep going are just spreading it a little too thick. There is never any money for a board meeting and we have no opportunity to get together to talk things over or to find out what is really going on. The circulars to directors are few and far between.52

Fisher and Dixon had had disagreements over speaking time at the 1933 Farm Women's Week.53 Behind all the lack of communication, the sanctification of the U.F.C. office staff and the roadblocks put in the way of Sophia's ideas, Dixon thought she saw the hand of Louise Lucas.

Lucas had been involved in the farm movement as an educator, speaker and official for some time before Sophia Dixon burst into public view with her birth control resolution in 1931. Lucas had argued that to pass this resolution would be to harm the U.F.C. (S.S.) and the political party whose birth was on the horizon. Dixon regarded Lucas' approach to politics as "simplistic, ego-centric and sometimes even destructive.--In the beginning, there was God, and then His only begotten Son and then the Gospel according to Lucas."54
Dixon believed that Lucas tried to undermine her when she ran for President of the U.F.C. in 1933 by telling people three false stories. First Lucas suggested Sophia was an Atheist because she believed in birth control. Second, Lucas suggested that Sophia was too ill to carry the job. Mrs. Lucas' preference for the job, Mrs. Fisher, was in fact ill and died in 1935, but she was capable of being controlled by Lucas and Sophia Dixon was not. Third, Lucas suggested that Sophia Dixon's children would be neglected were she elected. Sophia reacted to this slur so strongly that she dealt with it in her speech to the 1933 U.F.C. convention where she was selected President.

After her selection as Woman President, Sophia heard reports that Lucas continued to malign her in the countryside. Because she made so many speeches, Lucas had contact with many people and Dixon believes this contact was used to undermine people of whom Lucas did not approve. One time she attacked George Williams and when word got back to him there was a board meeting held at which Lucas was made to promise to hold her tongue. While Dixon was a woman director, Lucas would demand that she be allowed to read Sophia's reports on the grounds that her voice carried better than Sophia's did. Lucas did have an excellent speaking voice but Dixon, believing that Lucas merely wanted to take credit for doing the reports herself, refused to let her read them.
When Sophia did not run for office in 1934 because of family difficulties, Louise Lucas moved back into National Council of the C.C.F. Her favourite, Mrs. Fisher, became Woman President of the U.F.C. (SS). After this Louise did not attack Sophia again because they were not now equals. Dixon claims that Lucas could be charming to those she considered beneath her because they posed no threat, but she attacked other stronger personalities who might detract from her stardom, real or imaginary. 59

During her time as Woman President of the U.F.C. (SS) and in her speeches for the C.C.F. during the same period, Sophia Dixon always emphasized the importance of children: "It was a woman's duty as a citizen of Canada . . . to take a far larger share in the responsibilities of public life than they had heretofore." 60 This activity she believed was necessary so that mothers could "do better for their children than had been done for themselves". 61 Writing to fellow members of the U.F.C. in 1933 Dixon commented that:

It was your children and mine that moved me to accept my present positions in the hope of doing much more than I have succeeded in doing to help brighten the prospects for their future. 62

Whether Sophia was interviewed in Edmonton, writing to the editor in Prince Albert or talking to her neighbours in Unity, the message was always the same:

It is said that women are interested first of all in the welfare of their children. Are you having difficulty feeding, educating, clothing yours? If not, how long do you think you can continue to provide for them unless something drastic is done to change conditions? Can you afford to let your
children grow up midst other youngsters who are in any way underprivileged? If you are intelligently selfish, you will vote for a change for your neighbour's children as well as for your own.  

Dixon believed that children should be cared for not as charity, but because as citizens they were entitled to help.  

Dixon had a tremendous respect for the powers of women to change conditions.  

Once a woman understands what is happening and inevitably must happen to her children under our present economic arrangements, she, like the she-bear, can rely on great primitive sources of strength and will spare no effort to protect and provide for her cubs.

Dixon admired women who could keep their families off relief by handling eggs or cream and give their children self-respect while living in shacks with little heat and few clothes. She resented the fact that women had to waste their time making blankets from "worn out woolen rags that should have been thrown away long ago" while at the same time being "assessed for taxes to feed the idle men who should be making . . . blankets." Dixon believed that to change the capitalist system was a gigantic task, but that women, because of their love for their children, would help to lead the way.

Truly, it is coming to pass that parent love shall be intelligent and social and shall provide proper conditions of life for all the children of the world and for older folks as well.

Because of her position in both the C.C.F. and the U.F.C. (SS), Sophia Dixon was present for some of the less
pleasant party problems. She introduced the motion that the offices of the U.F.C. (SS) and the C.C.F. be separated. Although both came from the farmers' movement, there had been problems after the 1934 election in running the two groups from the same office. Dixon had heard the underground rumblings of discontent and decided to bring the question into the open for discussion. The C.C.F. provincial convention decided there was wisdom in having the party office in Regina, close to the new C.C.F. official opposition in the legislature. Unfortunately, separation of the two organizations did not stop Frank Eliason, Secretary of the U.F.C. (S.S.), from feeling that his organization had been taken advantage of financially. Eliason also believed that George Williams had made a serious error of judgment in co-operating with Communist speakers in the 1935 election campaign. Friction between the more cautious and the more radical began early in the C.C.F.

Dixon was also present at the meeting called to settle the dispute between M. J. Coldwell and George Williams when Williams had himself selected as house leader after the 1934 election. M. J. Coldwell was not present at the M.L.A. meeting even though he was the party leader. He had gone to the lake to recuperate after the strenuous campaign in which he had not won his seat and no one could reach him. The C.C.F. was in danger of being badly divided between the supporters of each man unless a compromise could be reached. Dixon thought both men behaved childishly and
that there was no credit to either of them that they insisted on throwing accusations at each other which might harm the goal of social justice.

After the election of 1934 Sophia Dixon realized that she could no longer maintain such a public role. She had been away a great deal in the previous twelve months at meetings, at conventions and on the campaign trail. Her children were suffering. The woman she had hired to care for them became cruel to the children, probably not physically, but emotionally. Sophia felt that their self-confidence was taking a beating and that she needed to be home to help restore it. In 1934 she resigned from all offices so that she could stay home with her children.

Even before she resigned from office to be with her four children, Sophia was beginning to be concerned that the new party maintain an enlightened membership to keep the C.C.F. close to its ideals.

I am impressed more and more that just as we shouldn't worship any individual, so worship no organization. We are out for progress and more practical christianity.

C.C.F. is a practical medium through which to work for the time being. Keep it useful as long as possible, but it isn't infallible and may go into the hands of red irresponsibles or reactionary stand pats. The more real understanding and enlightenment among the people the better[.] [F]acing realities and clear cold analysis are needed - good intentions isn't [sic] enough in coming struggles - If enough people understand the issues we can keep our leaders straight - it works both ways - our leaders daren't do anything really effective in our behalf unless they can be 100% sure of our support[.] [E]ducation should be our watchword. It is a fairer distribution of goods
and services and a healthier society we want - the C.C.F. still stands for these and it is for us, the membership, to see that it continues to stand for it.72

Even in the 1930's Dixon had doubts about the C.C.F.'s ability to maintain its principles when faced with political realities and the need to compromise in order to gain votes. Dixon was much more interested in promoting the ideas of the C.C.F. movement than in the party, even though she did work long and hard for the C.C.F. party. In this her intellectual integrity is unblemished, but her worth as a party leader must be questioned.
1. Speech given by Sophia Dixon on Agnes Macphail, undated but sometime in 1928, S.D.P.P.


3. Newspaper clipping, undated, S.D.P.P.

4. Ibid.

5. Ibid.


7. Unity Courier, November 20, 1933.

8. Dixon to Annie Hollis, March 21, 1931. S.D.P.P.

9. Ibid.


11. Essay written by Sophia Dixon on the money question, undated, S.D.P.P.

12. Sophia Dixon to the women at Farm Women's Week, June 17, 1935, S.D.P.P.

13. Ibid.

14. Ibid.

15. Ibid.


17. Essay by Dixon on the Social Credit, undated, S.D.P.P.

18. Ibid.

19. Ibid.

20. "To the Electors of the Battlefords", undated but dealing with the 1935 federal election, S.D.P.P.

21. Ibid.

22. Ibid.

23. Ibid.

24. Unity Courier, October 9, 1935.

25. Ibid.
26. Essay on Social Credit, S.D.P.P.

27. Ibid.

28. Letter to Farm Women's Week, June 17, 1935, S.D.P.P.

29. Ibid.

30. Essay by Dixon on fascism, undated, but written in the early 1930's. S.D.P.P.

31. Ibid.

32. Ibid.

33. Ibid.

34. Letter to Farm Women's Week, June 17, 1935, S.D.P.P.

35. Workers were to be between the ages of 25 and 45. Retirement was to begin after age 45. Income was computed at twenty thousand dollars annually per capita.

36. Essay by Dixon on technocracy, May, 1933, S.D.P.P.

37. Ibid.

38. Ibid.

39. Newspaper clipping, 1934, S.D.P.P.

40. Essay on Technocracy, May, 1933, S.D.P.P.

41. Ibid.

42. Ibid.


44. Dixon to Annie Hollis, July 31, 1933, S.D.P.P.

45. Dixon to Annie Hollis, April 14, 1934, S.D.P.P.

46. Dixon to Annie Hollis, July 31, 1933, S.D.P.P.

47. Ibid.

48. Ibid.

49. Ibid.

51. Dixon to Annie Hollis, April 22, 1933, S.D.P.P.
52. Dixon to Annie Hollis, January 5, 1933, S.D.P.P.
53. Dixon to Annie Hollis, April 22, 1933, S.D.P.P.
54. Dixon to Judy LaMarsh, December 13, 1975, S.D.P.P.
55. Ibid. All three arguments are described in this letter.
56. Ibid.
57. Interview with Ove Hansen, August 6, 1987.
58. Dixon to Judy LaMarsh, December 13, 1975, S.D.P.P.
60. Unity Courier, undated, 1933, S.D.P.P.
61. Unity Courier, July, 1933, S.D.P.P.
62. Dixon to Secretaries and fellow members of the U.F.C., December 23, 1933, S.D.P.P.
63. Prince Albert News, January 5, 1934, S.D.P.P.
64. Ibid.
66. Unity Courier, January 12, 1934.
67. Ibid.
69. Frank Eliason to members of the Political Directive Board, Saskatchewan Arts Board, Williams papers, A 156.
70. Interview with Sophia Dixon, also in Georgina Taylor's interview with Dixon in the possession of Taylor.
71. Ibid.
72. Dixon's ideas scratched on scrap paper and dated the 1930's, S.D.P.P.
CHAPTER III
POLITICS VERSUS FAMILY COMMITMENTS

For the 1934-1935 term Sophia Dixon kept her children out of school and taught them herself. Dixon was upset that the teacher hired for the country school her children attended "insulted both the intelligence and pride and even exercised physical cruelty".¹ There was a School Attendance Act compelling children the ages of Dixon's children to attend school, which was breached by this action. Dixon managed to evade its provisions because she had support from the Deputy Minister of Education, Dr. Huff and the school Inspector. Huff knew that Dixon was not just an ordinary mother, but also a qualified teacher, familiar with the public school curriculum. When it was to be reviewed in the fall of 1931 she was asked, as a woman director of the U.F.C. (SS), to criticize and comment on the draft copy. Of the committee of three who were responsible for this guide, "two, Dr. Huff and Mrs. Summers, thanked [Sophia] personally and very profusely and the other one, Mr. Mills, of the Saskatoon Normal . . . wrote [her] on several occasions and told [her] how valuable [her] help had been".²

The Dixons set up a school room in their home and the children went to work. The children enjoyed the intellectual stimulation of long conversations and sibling competition
and their knowledge bloomed. When they tried town school in Unity in 1935 for a change they all headed their grades.3

With her children back at school full time Dixon had more time to write. Coincidentally, this was the year that the Homemaker's essay contest was to be *Adapting Saskatchewan's Rural Educational Programme to Meet Present Day Needs*. Sophia Dixon wrote the entry for the Queenston Homemaker's Club and won first prize in the contest for the benefit of her club. Dixon believed that a good school system must provide for physical, mental and social health for a child. To provide for these goals Dixon had many practical suggestions.

First, teachers must be selected more carefully. They should show an aptitude for teaching and for social service. Entrance to teaching should not depend on one's ability to pay for the training. Some form of federal-provincial plan should be worked out to pay for necessary training which should include general knowledge to ensure appreciation for the social material one is required to teach. Practical knowledge of heating, ventilation and hygiene should be included so that good health can be maintained in a suitable environment. Most important, teachers should have "the ability and desire to assist the developing of interesting well-coordinated personalities, rather than to prepare for exams".4

Second, some method must be found to have fewer grades in a room to reduce the complexity of the teaching
assignment. Consolidation of the rural schools and busing were seen as one method to achieve this goal. The chief handicap here was the long hours a child must spend on a bus. Dixon had several ideas for dealing with this problem. In Denmark children went to school on alternate days. They had homework to do for their off days. Dixon believed from her observation of adults who had only Danish public education that "the alternate days system produced better results in scholarship than our two hundred days a year for eight years does for Saskatchewan children". Dixon knew from experience that a rural teacher could not keep all the children busy at all times and children therefore dawdle. Dixon was convinced that "the child in normal health with average intelligence" could easily cover the year's work in one hundred and twenty days with some well planned homework if the alternate day system were used.

Perhaps, Dixon suggested, school districts could experiment. Some might try the alternate day system, some might try the Winnetka system of individual instruction in personal skills and cooperative projects in social subjects. The High School systems might try a community boarding house so students could live close to school from Monday to Friday. Boarding houses would require good supervision, but proper conditions for doing homework could be better organized than in the somewhat crowded farm homes. Dixon was not concerned about the cost of these
boarding houses because parents could send food and bedding, which they supplied in any case. Housework could be provided by the children themselves, working in teams. Community schools with boarding facilities could provide a real choice of subjects as well as skating rinks and sports equipment for enjoyment and physical health.

If better teacher training and a better method of providing facilities were looked after, Dixon hoped that the third main feature of her reforms could come about. Dixon wished to change the departmental examination system. The aim of the school, she believed "should not be a standard product, dragging the children with imagination down to an uninteresting level, and causing the less gifted to be misfits and to regard themselves as failures, rather it should be to study and meet the individual needs and aptitudes of each child". 7 This can hardly be done in a school system which uses examinations as the "end-all" 8 of education. Dixon believed that all of these reforms should come at the same time. She wished to see Dominion-provincial co-operation pay for the reforms "rather than waiting till abnormal expenditures are needed to care for the wrecks of the school system in hospitals and jails". 9

At Christmas time of 1935 the Unity local board had hired two teachers for grades five and six and seven and eight. Unfortunately they both seemed to Dixon to lack any teaching ability at all. Dixon and many other parents requested that the board terminate the probationary
contracts of these teachers, but they got no satisfaction. Dixon believed this teacher question came down to whose rights came first, and she put herself squarely on the side of the children rather than on the side of tenure rights for teachers.

When the Teachers' Federation asked, in 1938, for security of tenure Dixon opposed the idea. If Saskatchewan had a system of teacher selection and training which excluded those not fitted by inclination to teach, Dixon would not have been opposed to rigid tenure protection. She believed that many poor teachers could never be found guilty of gross misconduct but could still be a negative influence on students forced to remain in their care by the School Attendance Act. Dixon believed that Trustees must be left able, without malice, to terminate a contract with an inadequate teacher. "The recent request of the Teachers' Federation has been worded so that it does not admit of the possibility of there being any teachers who are either useless or detrimental to the educational process". Dixon applauded the attempt by the Teachers' Federation to improve qualifications and pay, but opposed rigid tenure in case it was at the expense of our children who not only suffer as individuals where there are teacher misfits, but will be unduly handicapped in their lack of solid preparation to meet any unsolved social problems this older generation must of necessity leave them as a legacy.
Although all of Dixon's children excelled in school examinations, Dixon still regarded the system as destructive. She regarded it as a "handicap to our future citizens to have the school monopolize the best of their waking hours for ten or twelve of their naturally alert and free years". Bright children were stifled by dull and routine tasks and slow students never got the help they needed. Dixon wanted the Department of Education to print up well designed school aids for students to encourage them to work on their own. This, in conjunction with the alternate day of school attendance, which she had suggested in 1936, would enable districts to supply the small classes needed for "Progressive Education".

Education, however, was not Dixon's only concern during the years she was at home with her children. Health care was also a priority. As early as 1932 Dixon was writing and speaking on the subject. Dixon told the Queenston Homemakers that for her,

a properly nationalized health service means that all doctors and nurses who are competent will receive adequate pay, good conditions and a proper pension. Their interest will be for the prevention of disease first, and its cure second.

Dixon definitely disagreed with the idea of doctors being paid a fee for service because that meant that "doctors get the most employment and the most pay when we are most ill." Surely this was the reverse of what was wanted. Prevention rather than cure of disease should be the priority. State medicine with its emphasis on prevention
would mean that "it will be a reflection on the doctor's vigilance if he allows too much sickness to occur in his territory". Residents using the services of salaried doctors could feel more confident in their course of treatment because he would have no financial motive "in prolonging treatment or in recommending expensive services". Dixon told her readers and listeners in 1932 that:

The happiness and well being of any person depends upon his health. The health of all the people should be [the] first care of the state. To sum up, a socialized medical and nursing service is cheaper, far more efficient and reliable, will give the people more confidence, will give the doctor more security, freedom and opportunity for improvement. A socialized system will be more just, being within reach of all and will prevent extreme suffering and expense by or on behalf of anybody.

Finally, prevention would be the key-note throughout. Doctors must be financially free to co-operate heart and soul in a nation-wide program of prevention. We would prevent illness ever earlier and earlier until our people would glow with positive good health and the inevitable resultant happiness. We would be a joy to ourselves and to our friends and neighbours. We would hasten the day when the world shall be one big happy family.

In the fall of 1936 the ratepayers of the municipality of Round Valley passed a by-law "authorizing the council to engage a medical practitioner at the salary of $4,500.00 a year". When the contract was drawn up these ratepayers were most dissatisfied. It was generally believed that "the proposed services from the doctors will not be in proportion to the remuneration promised them, and that the contract is
not encouraging a preventive program to a sufficient extent". The rate payers, who asked Dixon to be their spokesperson, had discovered that the Council had promised payment of $4,500.00 to be supplemented by payments of 50% for emergency x-ray work, plus a blank sum for anaesthetic, drugs and office supplies. In addition, the doctors required a surgical contract which would require the Rural Municipality to pay 50% of the fees set by the College of Physicians and Surgeons if the patient could not pay himself. The doctors also insisted that all calls be office calls and that they be limited to the hours of 7:00 a.m. to 11:00 p.m.

To Dixon and the Ratepayers' Association all of these demands were outrageous.

[W]ithout necessarily casting any reflections on Dr. Routledge and Grier you can see that there are no safeguards against ex-ray [sic] work and operations developing into a racket. . . . [T]he people in this municipality want to be able to go to their doctors with confidence, safe in their knowledge that these can have no pecuniary interest in advising either ex-ray or operations.

Dixon considered that the base payment of $4,500.00 per year quite sufficient pay. The Municipal doctor from a neighbouring Rural Municipality worked happily for that sum. The contract that Round Valley had signed was so open-ended that no one knew how much the medical care was going to cost. Previously, the Rural Municipality had paid 50% for ex-ray work and operations for the indigent "without any thought of paying also a salary to a doctor". Why would
any area desire to continue to pay the same costs as previously paid in addition to a salary in lieu of fees? Dixon had personally persuaded people to vote for a salaried Municipal Doctor on the grounds that it would be cheaper than fee for service considering the number of relief cases found in the area. She thought it was unfair to make the ten percent who were off relief pay their own medical bills through the salary to the doctors and then to have to "pay the 50% scale of fees for the 90% as well".23

Dixon and the Ratepayers' Association wanted all surgery to be included under the general salary. Medicines and x-rays, anaesthetic and travelling expenses were all to be part of the doctor's expense and not to be paid as part of a surgery contract.

When Dixon and her friends met with Council to put forth their objections they got nowhere. Council decided that the local Unity doctors would serve the rural people well. The doctors were known and trusted by Council, who probably wished to be generous to them. This decision was made despite the fact that one doctor at least had campaigned hard against the by-law. Now, this same doctor wanted the Rural Municipality business. "[A]pparently his chances of collecting fees from individuals had become so "slim" as to cause a complete reversal of position"24 Dixon was very unhappy about hiring a doctor so obviously antagonistic to the idea of state medicine.
The council tried to allay Dixon's objections by claiming that the section in the contract which required those able to pay for their surgery to do so, while indigents' bills were paid did not mean that. It was just a technical way of stating that the Municipality should pay all bills. The prohibition on night calls did not mean that either.

Just as the original surgical clause was quite satisfactory, because our council was a nice council and wouldn't turn down anybody's operation bill, so this night clause was quite satisfactory, because our doctors were nice doctors and would attend all cases without abiding very strictly to the letter of the contract. 25

Council, as well as Dr. Routledge, told Dixon that the Health Services Board had approved the contract glowingly. Dixon, who had been in contact with the Board herself knew differently.

Dixon got nowhere with her cautions. Less than one year later her fears seem to have come true. The two doctors who persuaded council to give them such a favourable contract were gone. In line to inherit this contract was a doctor who evidently would treat relief recipients only in an emergency.

The Homemakers in the area were concerned and had Dixon write to the Minister of Public Health.

The women with whom I am associated are ever ready to do their bit and have been and will be putting on dances and entertainments in aid of local hospitals. . . . In my own municipality meagre cream cheques have been given gladly in order to contribute to the doctors' salaries as per those contracts. The residents of these areas are almost
100% on relief and they like to be assured of medical examination and treatment before their cases or those of their families become "emergency."  

Although Dixon's fear that service might not be available was allayed, her fear of the ultimate cost of the 1937 contract was not. After asking several times for the amount of money the scheme had cost, no figures have been published except the item of $14,571.25 to December 31st, 1938 in the council minutes of January 9th, 1939, which is not clear. Ratepayers would like to know if this figure represents the unpaid total for two years, or the unpaid total for one year, or the paid and unpaid total for two years, or the paid and unpaid total for one year (1938).  

If this total of $14,571.25 was for one year, it was clearly out of line. If it represented two years, it was still vastly more than the $4,500.00 yearly which the Ratepayers had agreed to pay. Dixon remained outraged that council had been so shortsighted as to sign an open-ended contract in the first place. Although Council was probably justified in thinking that a generous contract was safe with trusted local doctors, these doctors were gone within the year. Council could not have foreseen this, but the contract remained in force for any doctor who might not be so careful with expenses or surgery.  

Dixon and her friends lost this small fight over state medicine. She thought emphasis was put on the wrong end of the system. Cure instead of prevention was emphasized and costs were exorbitant. Rather than continue to tilt at windmills Dixon stopped fighting this contract, even though
she believed it was not answering the real needs of the community.

At almost the same time a new political problem rose on Dixon's horizon. Dixon had never been fond of Louise Lucas. Their difficulties prior to 1934 have already been mentioned. In 1935 Lucas was a federal candidate in the Battlefords constituency. Although Dixon worked hard for the party, and spoke in favour of the candidate when it was necessary, she distrusted Lucas. She did not want Lucas as a candidate for Wilkie in the 1938 provincial election if she could prevent it. The problem was that Wilkie provincial constituency needed a canvass organizer. When Joe Phelps went to a C.C.F. training school in Regina in the fall of 1937 he came back convinced that Louise Lucas should do the job. Lucas was a hard worker and popular with many C.C.F. people. Lena and Joe Phelps and Ove Hansen, all influential C.C.F. supporters, wanted her to work in the Wilkie area.28 A special executive meeting of the Wilkie constituency was called and "Joe Phelps, who is not a member of the executive, bullied a resolution through that we ask for the services of Mrs. Lucas to be canvasser and organizer for practically two-thirds of the constituency".29 Dixon was angry about this possibility and objected "to any one being railroaded in here over our heads".30 Dixon's special complaint about Lucas was that "she does too much unfavourable talking about her fellow workers . . . and too often she does not know her facts or endeavour to find out
the facts before indulging in destructive propaganda". 31 Dixon had had this propaganda aimed at her and therefore believed that Lucas was "the most unscrupulous woman I have had dealings with - she doesn't even need to inquire; her obnoxious god lets her know by intuition when a person is an 'Atheist' and ought to be annihilated". 32 Dixon suspected that Regina officers of the C.C.F. knew the problem with Lucas and asked Clarence Fines "why the provincial office can't chuck her instead of letting her come here to get rid of her". 33 Dixon would have preferred to see Lucas work nearer Lucas' own home because she suspected Lucas wanted the nomination in the expected 1938 election. Dixon could not "see why people of her prominence couldn't work nearer home and run in their own constituencies". 34 In fact, if Lucas was hired to canvass organize, Dixon was quite prepared to resign from the executive over the issue. Her resignation was accepted by Lena Phelps, who defended Lucas as a person who is "not one to go behind anyone's back to say things -- if she thinks their methods or ideas are questionable she will tell that person so to his face." 35 Part of Dixon's complaint against Lucas in 1937 may have been that Dixon herself wanted the party nomination for 1938. When Clarence Fines was due to come to the Wilkie constituency in January 1938 to "work like a son of a gun for a couple of weeks". 36 Dixon suggested he look for candidate possibilities. "I know people who are intellectually honest are few and far between", she told
Fines. "but there are some; and too often they don't get publicity". Dixon also told Lena Phelps that the telephone poll in the Unity area showed "the Lucas vote was much weaker than the Hindley vote, but I am still generally respected through here as the C.C.F. representative". These gentle hints were too gentle it seems. Even in 1937 a potential candidate had to be more forthright. Sophia Dixon could not be so because she believed it was not proper to put herself forward. It may also be that the constituency did not want her as a potential candidate. At any rate, no one seemed to rise to Dixon's gentle hints.

Dixon's worries about Lucas seem to have evaporated by January, 1938, when the local C.C.F. and Social Credit organizations agreed to co-operate for the election of 1938. This co-operation was aimed at the Liberals whom neither group wished to see elected. Lucas was too closely allied to the C.C.F. to be a canvass organizer in the area if Social Credit suspicions were to be allayed. She was not hired, and the Wilkie territory seemed safe to Dixon.

In 1938 George Williams had sent J. A. MacAulay, his most trusted colleague, to Alberta to try to make an electoral deal with William Aberhart, Premier of Alberta, who wished to have the final say over who was to be a Social Credit candidate in the Saskatchewan election. Williams wished to arrange with Aberhart that the C.C.F. and Social Credit would not run candidates against each other and thus weaken the reform vote. The tactic did not work. Although
Dixon was willing to give Williams the benefit of not judging his actions without complete information she was not happy with the results in her area. Dixon was afraid that Aberhart's refusal and William's attack on him "may stampede some of the C.C.F.ers to vote against co-operation and . . . may spoil the mood of the S.C.ers [sic] themselves for co-operation". Dixon knew that "The C.C.F. cannot win in Wilkie with a S.C. [sic] in the field . . . . If the C.C.F. as individuals, not as an organization, support (and control) as much as possible an independent candidate, it may keep S.C. [sic] from nominating. . . . It would be far better than throwing this seat away"[.]

Before the Social Credit and the C.C.F. agreed to co-operate in Wilkie Dixon was becoming angry with what she saw as Joe Phelps' manipulations, with Louise Lucas' attempts to gain office in an area other than her own, and with George Williams' political deals. "I suppose this letter would convict me of high treason", Sophia wrote to a political friend.

. . . . so you better burn it, but I do wish something could be done to eliminate the old party tactics which have crept into the C.C.F. and which was used by S.C. [sic] too. There are too many office-seeking politicians. I wonder if we could find a way to serve C.C.F. principles before the next election.

Dixon worked to serve C.C.F. principles by co-operating with and building bridges to Social Credit members. Her work in the Unity Social Credit study group was a great help to her here. Whereas in the 1935 Federal Election Dixon used her
knowledge to show the differences between C.C.F. and Social Credit, in 1938 she showed the similarities. The important thing was not the label on a candidate, but the views he or she represented.

When editorials in the *Star Phoenix* labelled the attempt of the C.C.F. to co-operate with the Social Credit as expediency, Dixon hastened to set them right. Rather than expediency, Dixon wrote,

"The C.C.F. and Social Credit not only have a common objective, but their methods are not sufficiently dis-similar [sic] to create any obstacle to immediate and practical co-operation." 42

Dixon said that both parties believed the solution for Canada was to put more purchasing power into the hands of the consumer. This increased purchasing power would increase demand until the economy was healthy again. Although the methods of increasing purchasing power differed, Dixon thought they could work together. Both parties agreed that the public should control the issuance of currency and credit and "provided that the big initial step, that of making government created debt-free money a reality, were properly taken ... reasonable people should have little trouble with the rest". 43

Dixon thought that if public works were needed Social Creditors would not argue with them, and "when sufficient good roads, schools, hospitals, public parks, etc. have been created the C.C.F. will not object to a dividend being given to all as free gifts". 44 Dixon knew that Major Douglas
had admitted that some socialization might be necessary and that Social Democratic governments in Scandinavia had proceeded with caution on nationalization so Dixon did not think it was necessary for Saskatchewan to have a detailed plan before co-operation could take place.

Dixon probably enjoyed the campaign of 1938. She threw herself into organizing for an independent to run in the Wilkie constituency and her writings about the value of running as an independent have an air of deep conviction. Because it was not certain that a good candidate could be found, Dixon herself had prepared to run for the seat. The views she expressed in a letter she could use to accept the nomination are revealing. She told her potential voters that she would vote for any measure in harmony with their interests and against any measure not in their interests. "In other words, I shall have no politics but common sense." Dixon made an attempt to cultivate Social Credit supporters by promising that if she were elected she would "give Mr. Aberhart or his lieutenant every support for which he asks in any measure that is a genuine attempt to introduce Social Credit." She refused to run as a Social Credit candidate because she thought Aberhart's attempt to force his choice of candidate on Saskatchewan voters was reprehensible. "I will support Social Credit wrapped in Democracy, but I refuse to support something that is purported to be Social Credit and wrapped in dictatorship." Dixon believed that because she would
not be part of a political machine she could serve the people best. She had no debts to pay the system and told the voters that they had none either. "Don't think you owe any one a vote, because of something he has done for you in the past. You are not supposed to help a candidate, you are supposed to help yourself and yours in this election." In a special appeal to women voters Dixon asked,

Don't you think it would be an advantage to have a woman's viewpoint on provincial administration? The mother's allowances, pensions and relief are just enlarged housekeeping problems. Will you do your bit for yourself and your country by getting the women represented in this important body?

By the nominating convention of May 21, 1938 George Hindley had been persuaded to run as an Independent and Dixon threw her support to him, rather than run herself, and so her acceptance letter was never used. The platform rather than the candidate was always more important to Dixon and she did not hesitate to leave the field open to a better accepted candidate.

The platform, which Dixon moved, incorporated all the reform ideas current at the time. It had ten main points.

1. public control of credit and currency.
2. debt reduction.
3. socialized health services.
4. equalized educational opportunities.
5. adequate relief.
6. planned agricultural rehabilitation.
7. National Grain Marketing Board with grower control.
8. Crop insurance.
10. Change taxation from property to production and income.
Dixon, as a member of the publicity committee, was proud to display this platform to the electors of the Wilkie constituency. She was sure that they would respond to it and to the candidate Hindley because "he has been fighting for the people's rights for a long time". Dixon reminded voters that:

George Hindley owes no allegiance to any big political leaders; his only bosses are the electors in this constituency. He can be trusted to support good legislation, no matter who is the government or who is the opposition or who brings it in. He can also be trusted to oppose bad legislation. If you will help him get elected on June 8th, we think he will be the best public servant the people ever had. If you are tired of the mess we are in, we hope that you, too, will 'ditch' party politics and vote for common sense.

All of Dixon's campaign literature in this campaign re-iterated her dislike of central political control. She blamed both the Liberals and the Social Credit for this domination. Although the local Liberal candidate claimed he was in favour of something better than relief "the big Liberals generally manage to make little Liberals keep quiet. The Social Credit candidate himself may not be a dictator, but he will himself be dictated to by his Alberta bosses". The only way to avoid this was to vote for a candidate independent of political parties and party discipline, according to Dixon.

After all the work and promise in the independent campaign the co-alition fell apart. The Social Credit party, under orders from Aberhart, withdrew their support from Hindley to support a straight Social Credit candidate.
Joe Needham, the federal Social Credit Member of Parliament, could not stand up under this pressure. He too, withdrew his support from Hindley, who realized that his candidacy might split the reform vote and withdrew on June 2. On June 8 the voters elected a Liberal. Dixon's dream of an independent member for Wilkie was gone.

Because politics was so susceptible to centralized control which Dixon disliked, she believed that perhaps other methods were preferable to create a co-operative commonwealth. The obvious method was to bypass political control by setting up co-operative consumer organizations.

In the early 1920's Sophia had read Dr. James Peter Warbasse's ideas on co-operation. Warbasse was an American co-operator who believed that if people were members of retail co-ops they could improve their living standard. International Co-ops, because they promote understanding and benefits to all the world could decrease the possibility of war. Dixon greeted the ideas with great enthusiasm. Here was a marvelous practical idea to get people to work together for the good of society, and co-incidentally to prevent war. Both Sophia and Charles Dixon were ardent supporters of the idea of consumer as well as producer co-ops. If dividends could be paid to members extra purchasing power would be put into consumers' hands even if the Bank of Canada did nothing. If Credit Unions would lend money based on one's character then neighbours could help
each other to survive. Control could remain local. Dixon worked to set up a local Co-op Store and a local Credit union in the 1920's and 1930's. She was so committed to the idea that she insisted that her only major purchase in the 1930's, a cookstove, be made through the local Co-op. The purchase unfortunately caused hard feelings and extra expense. Despite this, the principle of buying co-operatively was served.

Dixon's belief in the value of co-operation caused her grief just when her children began university. By 1941 three of Dixon's four children had completed Grade 12. Bill, the youngest of the three had received the Governor General's medal for his scholastic record. Both Sophia and Charles were determined that no sacrifice was too great to send their children to the university at Saskatoon. Sophia believed that because of her children's developing social responsibility they would throw their "prospective knowledge and training on the side of sanity in human affairs". Although Dixon realized that University education has no intrinsic magic, she knew that good people can make good use of it and her childrens' "character and scholastic records are such that they are entitled to access if anyone is". Dixon remembered that twenty-five years ago when she herself had won the Governor General's Medal

my father was advised by a prominent citizen . . . of a move to start a subscription list to enable me financially to continue my studies - my father said an emphatic 'NO' and I wasn't advised of what I had missed until years after - no parental false pride shall stand in my children's way.
By 1941 the Dixons' financial position had hardly begun to recover from the depression. Although the children had saved as much as possible from small jobs, Charles and Sophia had little except produce and labour to offer the children. Dixon's fertile brain hit upon the idea of a co-operative boarding house in Saskatoon as the solution to her problems. The idea was marvelous, the execution, a disaster.

By July 4, 1941 Dixon had thought about co-operative boarding arrangements sufficiently to write to Dr. Thomson, President of the University. Dixon believed if a dozen young people could find a large house to rent, supply their own bedding and furniture and bring produce from home they could live cheaply at the University. Dixon wished to know if the University would approve of such a co-operative venture. She admitted that "the Manager would have to have both tact and business ability and housekeeping ability." but the advantages were tremendous.

Young men and/or women would obtain co-operative experience which would fit them for leadership in wider co-operative fields and reconstruction for a better world, but the immediate objective would be to help young people to get to Varsity who might not otherwise get there and to ensure a standard of living more conducive to the maintenance of health than light housekeeping students are apt to provide for themselves.

By July 8 Dixon had been informed that Carlyle King, a well known University professor and C.C.F. supporter, had suggested the same idea to a group of young people who were
allegedly collecting information on the subject. Dixon immediately wrote to Carlyle King that she, too, was investigating the possibility of a co-op house. Dr. Thomson had informed Dixon that there was a ruling of the University against students of both sexes living in the same boarding house. Dixon had been "inclined to disregard sex in application for membership, the important qualifications . . . being that students should be in earnest about studying and about co-operating". However, if only one sex could be accommodated at a boarding house she preferred boys because her only son "had already had an overdose of feminine environment". Dixon foresaw herself as Manager of the co-operative boarding house because "I have more confidence in myself than in anybody else for managing for a group a standard of living conducive to health on a minimum outlay." Dixon was desperate to get university education for her brilliant children and forthrightly admitted that "my motives for getting into a co-operative scheme are quite selfish, yet I would draw endless satisfaction from helping others at the same time I am helping myself."

Dixon met King at the C.C.F. Convention in mid-July. King evidently desired that the Co-operative Commonwealth Youth Movement (C.C.Y.M.) in Saskatoon control the co-operative house. Dixon was hesitant about risking "the success of the venture to people without the technical knowledge or experience". She suggested a compromise,
whereby the C.C.Y.M. would look for suitable accommodation and Dixon would come to Saskatoon to choose from the houses. Dixon asked King if he thought W. B. Francis, a lawyer and co-operator, would help them with a lease so they would not risk eviction in mid-winter. Dixon was concerned about leasing a house and preferred owning, but was willing to admit that owning was impossible at the moment. Because she had no other choice Dixon left site selection to the C.C.Y.M.

King wrote back to Dixon that the C.C.Y.M. had experience in boarding houses and in building. They were looking for a suitable location. King reported that the C.C.Y.M. was delighted to have Dixon as a Manager. King and the C.C.Y.M. agreed that they were to find houses; Dixon was to choose it and supervise the furnishing. Students living in the house were to do the housework co-operatively and to pay a stated monthly rate out of which any surplus would be returned to them. It looked as if Dixon's problems were solved.

By August 10, King and the C.C.Y.M. had found a house. King was even willing to pay the year's rent in advance "in order that you might conserve your resources and the money from the students for . . . mass buying". King seemed delighted with the arrangements. "I have complete confidence in your ability to put this thing across", he told Dixon.
Further, I don't think you will be content to let slip this chance to pioneer in a field of immense possibilities. You and our group, independently of each other, conceived this brain child; I think it the happiest convergence of forces that we shall be able to bring the kid up together.67

King was in agreement with Dixon that management of the house should be as democratic as possible. An advisory committee on housekeeping was a priority because "the students need some machinery whereby they can respectfully suggest to the cook that they are getting turnips, or rice pudding, too often".68 A finance committee would re-assure students that their money was well spent, and a rules committee would see that the house operated with as little friction as possible. King re-assured Dixon that the potential members of the house were top quality people with links to the C.C.F. and other co-operative ventures.

In mid September Sophia Dixon moved in to the Co-op house with her three oldest children. By October 25 she was gone, forced to leave by the democratically acting boarders. They did not like her meals or her housekeeping.69 They said she spent money making jams and buying in bulk that was never authorized. Frustration flowed on both sides.

Dixon had assumed from Carlyle King's letters that all the arrangements were made and the boarders found, but the lady from whom the house was rented refused to move out for three days. The dishes and utensils promised as part of the rent did not exist. The boarders, good co-operators all,
had found different accommodation. Most of the new boarders, recruited off the street by promises that they could control the house, were used to someone else doing the housework. Sophia was consigned to a closet for sleeping space. Until she could beg dishes and utensils from home she had to provide meals and maid service with no provisions. When 100 pairs of socks and an equal number of dirty handkerchiefs appeared in the laundry, Dixon told the boys they had to look after their own small personal laundry items.

At that point, Dixon was abruptly fired. Carlyle King's mother was hired as a cook. Mrs. King got a room to herself, not a closet, to sleep in. A maid was hired to do the housework, and she too got a room. Dixon was forced to live at the Y.W.C.A. for two weeks while she looked for a home for herself and her own children. By November 7 she and her children had less than one dollar amongst them and the Co-op house owed her money which she had advanced for winter coal. The finance committee would not refund the money. Dixon was never a woman to rely on organized religion but in the depths of her despair wrote a diary entitled Dear God to help her understand the pain she felt.

No doubt when you let my eviction take place it was for my own good, but just how to benefit most and learn the deepest lesson from my suffering and humiliation is not yet clear, and I humbly seek the light. Can it be that my earnest and ambitious children need toughening for some future roles in the building of a new society and that such protection as I have been able to afford needs to be withdrawn so soon?
Perhaps I need to be shown that Socialist parties and co-op groups haven't all the dope on social reconstruction. I knew there were many shortcomings in many C.C.F.ers incl[uding] myself, but I ventured my co-op with the element that I thought the most enlightened, unselfish and reliable in crisis. Or, dear God, did you merely intend I should adopt different standards of evaluating individuals?\textsuperscript{70}

Dixon's desperation finally led her to Dr. Thomson, President of the university. He heard her story and provided her children with bursaries from a fund he had at his disposal. Dixon was delighted to know that the money had come from Louis Hantelman, one of the so called Quints elected for the C.C.F. in 1934. It helped to restore her faith in the C.C.F. which had plummeted due to "the injuries [her] family received at the hands of the C.C.F. - C.C.Y.M. sponsored Co-op house".\textsuperscript{71}

When Dixon had finally settled her family into a substandard light housekeeping facility, found a small job, and received some financial aid from Charles, who had just sold some pigs, she resented the attacks she was publicly subjected to. The C.C.Y.M. had a column in the Commonwealth in which implications were made that Dixon had been paid by the hour for her maid service and that she was a terrible cook. Dixon believed that she was owed a great deal of thanks for her work. She did the preliminary organizational work which the C.C.Y.M. had promised to do but had not. She advanced money for bulk purchases to reduce costs. For her efforts she got to sleep in a clothes closet not large enough to stand in, she had to work 14 hours a day for
thirty dollars a month and was humiliated in the Commonwealth.

Most of the students who came to live at the house did not seem to understand that Dixon was not their servant. She was to manage the house, cook and facilitate their co-operate efforts at housework. Dixon probably did not understand that the students did not want another mother. They had been promised control of the house and probably resented Dixon's authority. Dixon was trying to keep costs down, but the boys probably expected more costly meals. The boys complained about Dixon's cooking and Dixon was out. Carlyle King arranged for a maid and for his mother to cook at the house. The boarding house finished the year, remembered with pleasure by at least one of the occupants who stayed. 72

Despite the unhappy beginning to their Varsity careers and the miserable rooms in which they were forced to live for the rest of the year, the Dixon children thrived at the University. They each earned an undergraduate scholarship at the end of their first year. By the time all four were finished they had earned a Bachelor of Arts, two Masters of Arts and two Ph.D's. The sacrifice and humiliation their mother suffered at the beginning on their behalf seems to have been amply compensated for.
1. Notes from an interview on "My Teaching Experience", S.D.P.P.
2. Dixon's presentation to the Unity Board of Education, May, 1936, S.D.P.P.
3. Notes from an interview on "My Teaching Experience", S.D.P.P.
5. Ibid.
6. Ibid.
7. Ibid.
8. Ibid.
9. Ibid.
10. Dixon to the Editor of the Star Phoenix, February 18, 1938.
11. Ibid.
12. Dixon to the Editors of Country Gentlemen, November, 1940, S.D.P.P.
13. Ibid.
15. Western Producer, October 27, 1932.
16. Ibid.
17. Ibid and Unity Courier, October 26, 1932.
18. Western Producer, October 27, 1932.
19. Dixon to The Deputy Minister of Municipal Affairs, January 29, 1937, S.D.P.P.
20. Ibid.
22. Ibid.
23. Ibid.
24. Ibid.
26. Dixon to Dr. J. M. Urich, Minister of Public Health, December 1, 1937, S.D.P.P.
27. Unity Herald, February 2, 1939.
29. Dixon to Clarence (obviously Clarence Fines), December 6, 1937. S.D.P.P.
32. Dixon to Clarence Fines, December 6, 1937, S.D.P.P.
33. Ibid.
34. Dixon to Mr. Kidd, December 11, 1937, S.D.P.P.
35. Lena Phelps to Dixon, January 4, 1938, S.D.P.P.
36. Dixon to Fines, December 6, 1937, S.D.P.P.
37. Ibid.
38. Dixon to Lena Phelps, December 11, 1937, S.D.P.P.
39. Dixon to George Williams, April 9, 1938, S.D.P.P.
40. Ibid.
41. Dixon to Mr. Brown, undated, S.D.P.P.
42. Dixon to the Star Phoenix, April 1938, S.D.P.P.
43. Ibid.
44. Ibid.
45. Nomination acceptance letter which was never used, S.D.P.P.
46. Ibid.
47. Ibid.
48. Ibid.
49. Ibid.

50. "To the Electors of the Wilkie Provincial Constituency". undated, S.D.P.P.

51. Ibid.

52. "To the Electors of the Wilkie Provincial Constituency", May 23, 1938, S.D.P.P.

53. Ibid.


55. Dixon to the Editors of Redbook, December 1, 1941, S.D.P.P.

56. Ibid.

57. Ibid.

58. Dixon to Dr. J. S. Thomson, July 4, 1941, S.D.P.P.

59. Ibid.

60. Dixon to Carlyle King, July 8, 1941, S.D.P.P.

61. Ibid.

62. Ibid.

63. Ibid.

64. Dixon to King, July 22, 1941, S.D.P.P.

65. Dixon hoped to enlist the Aid of the Saskatchewan Wheat Pool to buy a house to be used as a Co-op house in memory of A. J. MacPhail and Louis Brouellette, but admitted that she needed more time to work on the scheme.

66. Carlyle King to Dixon, August 10, 1941, S.D.P.P.

67. Ibid.

68. Ibid.


70. Dixon to Dear God, November 11, 1941, S.D.P.P.

71. Dixon to Dr. Thomson, November 14, 1941, S.D.P.P.

CHAPTER IV
BUILDING THE NEW WORLD

By the spring of 1942 Mrs. Dixon had regained her equilibrium after the Co-op house fiasco. Charles borrowed money on his life insurance policy and they put a down payment on an old house on Temperance Street. With some misgivings, because she had been accused of being a terrible cook, Sophia began to keep boarders. No one complained about the food or the rules of the house and by fall she had a houseful to look after.

Also in the fall of 1942 Violet MacNaughton came to Sophia Dixon on an errand of mercy. Dorise Nielsen, who had been elected because of the co-operation of the C.C.F., the Social Credit and the Communists in the North Battleford federal constituency, in 1940 had three young children. They had been living on a farm in North Central Saskatchewan and in places in Saskatoon, but these arrangements were not satisfactory. Nielsen had appealed to MacNaughton to find alternate care for them as she could not manage the children in Ottawa. MacNaughton appealed to Sophia Dixon to look after the children. Dixon agreed. It was a mistake. At that time Dixon had a great many boarders at her house. She was getting involved in study groups and she was on the executive of the Saskatoon C.C.F. She had no time to look after young children, particularly children who had been moved around as often as Nielsen's children had been.
There were problems fairly quickly. The older girl was at an age where she wanted to go out with her friends from the previous place in Saskatoon. If this was forbidden she went anyway. Dixon feared that the 13 year old would get in with the wrong crowd. She did not want to be responsible to Mrs. Nielsen for the girl if she should become pregnant. She insisted that she could care for her no longer and Nielsen removed her to Winnipeg at Christmas time.

Before the end of June Dixon suspected that the other children were stealing from her and from others in the house and insisted that Nielsen remove them too. Nielsen's response was to telegraph Bob Paul, her campaign Manager, to go for the children and to write to Violet MacNaughton that "[f]rankly, my opinion is that Mrs. Dixon is on the verge of a severe nervous breakdown". 1

It is true that Dixon had been under great stress since the summer of 1941. However, in the fall of 1942 Violet MacNaughton, who knew Mrs. Dixon well, was convinced that Dixon could manage the children. She prefaced her plea with the flattery that Dixon's children were so bright and so well brought up that they would be marvelous role models for Nielsen's poor lost tykes. Dixon, who had acted the role as family saviour from the time she paid for her father's horses, could not refuse. Against her better judgment Dixon agreed to take the children. When she got inadequate support from Nielsen in managing the children she
needed them gone. She could not have Nielsen's children causing problems in the boarding house which was her living and the means of keeping her own children in University.

The episode was upsetting for all concerned. Nielsen was again confronted with the problem of her children. MacNaughton was caught between two long time acquaintances who now felt a mutual antipathy. Dixon felt guilt that she could not do more to improve the lives of these children. The children needed a full time parent, not an overworked housekeeper.

Through this distressing period Dixon had kept up her C.C.F. contacts. The disagreements with Carlyle King over the Co-op boarding house did not seem to affect Dixon's reputation with the Saskatoon C.C.F. As election year approached and it appeared the C.C.F. had a good chance of winning, a number of people contested the nominations. Dixon was one of the nominees for the two-member Saskatoon constituency in 1944. Although the Saskatoon C.C.F. had already nominated their candidates for the 1944 election, when one of them moved it was necessary to call a new nominating convention. Bill Greengrass, the other candidate thought he should have an automatic place as he had already been nominated. The executive decided otherwise and Greengrass had to campaign as just another of the field. Because of his reputation as a past secretary of the Teachers' Federation (S.T.F.) Jack Sturdy was considered an
obvious first choice as a candidate for the C.C.F. Sturdy was in England at the time, but his friends ran the campaign in his absence and Sturdy did receive the nomination, in absentia. The contest was for the second place on the ballot.

A complicated transferrable ballot was designed for this nominating convention. When the ballots were counted, Arthur Stone, a labour representative was announced as the second place winner. Sophia Dixon was convinced that her name should have been second, based on the crowd's reaction to her speech and the support which she thought she had. Her nominator, Ray Carr, a highly regarded labour union man, and Jim Cumming, a respected S.T.F. official, agreed with her. Cumming moved that the ballots be saved and recounted the next day at four o'clock. When Dixon called to ask the location of the recount, she was told that the ballots had been destroyed. Although Dixon did not make a fuss, she has always believed ballots were destroyed by people who believed it was important for a labour union man to run.

Immediately after the nominating convention she applied for the job as campaign manager for the 1944 campaign. She wished to organize the city "not only for winning the provincial election, but for a foundation for the federal election and for a permanent organization which will be a support to any elected M.L.A. or M.P.". Dixon was chosen as campaign manager and handled the job admirably. When Jack Sturdy a month later came home from
England he often deferred to her views. She had been present in Saskatchewan while he was in England and he trusted her with publicity material because she always checked her facts. Nevertheless, in the midst of the campaign Dixon was given a co-campaign manager, Helmer Benson. Dixon did not always appreciate Helmer Benson. However, he was very outgoing and he could slap people on the back and make them feel part of the team. Dixon was more serious and his camaraderie may have been a balance to the campaign team. Still, Dixon did not like his familiarity at the office. She dared not complain. Women were not believed, they were blamed, she thought. Besides her husband had been jealous and Dixon did not want to upset him. Jack Sturdy sensed the tension between his co-campaign managers, but not the reason. Despite the problems, the campaign was successful. After the polling booths closed Dixon went, exhausted, to the home of a friend for a warm relaxing bath. Benson went to the victory party at the Legion Hall to savour the congratulations for the victory of Jack Sturdy and Art Stone.

After the successful election of June, it seemed important to Dixon and her friends that forward thinking people should be elected to city council to co-operate with the new provincial government. Friends urged Sophia Dixon to run for office as alderman. She agreed to do so. In September the Saskatoon C.C.F. held a meeting to consider
whether it would be wise to run a C.C.F. slate for office. The meeting decided not to name a C.C.F. slate for November, and made that recommendation to the general meeting of the C.C.F. on October 3. The membership endorsed the stand. Sophia Dixon would run for office as an independent. Then, in November, a new meeting, not well attended, was held at which the decision was made to run a slate for the November civic election. Dixon was called by the press to see if she were running for alderman. When she affirmed that she was, it was assumed that she was on the slate as well. Dixon vigorously denied this and ran as an independent. She told Saskatoon voters that,

I am opposed to party politics in municipal affairs and I would like to see Canadians in the not distant future work out a method of truly responsible democratic provincial and federal government without the use of party politics.

Although Dixon ran as an independent, most of her campaign planks could be accepted by any C.C.F. supporter.

Dixon appealed to the voters to "drop the term 'city fathers' by electing at least one mother to the city council". While she was not asking for support merely because she was a woman, she reminded voters that "women more characteristically than men look for human value in administration". Dixon wished to use city council to promote human values. Education costs were a full 70 percent of the budget in 1944, and the student nurses at City Hospital were living in poor conditions. Because education and health were always priorities for Dixon, she
suggested that the federal government must take more fiscal responsibility in these fields to keep municipal tax costs down. Nevertheless, Dixon was "not one of those that wants to run to Ottawa for everything. Self help is the best help". Therefore, Dixon promoted the use of Saskatchewan natural gas as a fuel in Saskatoon. She admitted that she approved "the provincial government's policy of public ownership of trunk lines for natural gas between cities and towns". When the lines reached Saskatoon Dixon wished for the distribution of the gas to be by a publicly owned utility so that the living standard of everyone could be raised, and not just the lives of the few improved.

The one area where Dixon's aldermanic platform seemed to differ from the local C.C.F. was on the question of the poll tax. Her public statement in the campaign claimed that "the poll tax is an uneven, quite unscientific tax, provocative of anything but good morale among many of those who pay it and I shall support its abolition." It is interesting to note that less than one year before this statement Dixon had been a member of a C.C.F. committee charged with investigating the poll tax. The committee, in March 1944, recommended that the poll tax be continued because the cost was small compared to the benefits of controlling the millrate while at the same time emphasizing to all citizens that they had a financial stake in municipal government. This committee recognized that because non-ratepayer spouses and some poor people were badly
treated by the poll tax, exemptions should be based on income to protect the poor, and "the question of the civic franchise should be entirely divorced from the payment of service tax to give the vote to spouses who were not ratepayers". Between March and November Dixon appeared to change her stand, assuming she had ever agreed with the report.

Dixon lost the election, and her problems with the local C.C.F. began. At the next meeting of the Saskatoon C.C.F. executive Joe Thain, another executive member, challenged Dixon's authority to give the report of the education committee. His reasoning was that Dixon had run against the C.C.F. slate in the November civic election from communist headquarters. Dixon denied the charges. The annual general meeting had decided against a slate. Only in the last minutes of a poorly attended meeting, was it decided to run a slate. Dixon had refused to be on this slate because,

The best that can be said is that our membership is split on the question. I do not want to be a party to hurting the C.C.F. by being one of the members of an official slate with such little preparation and time and with the membership divided. If I am defeated as an independent it merely means that the electors want others more than they want me. But, if I go down on a slate the C.C.F. will get credit for a very foolish piece of business and I'll get credit for being too weak to oppose it.

There were five positions open for council. The slate ran only three. There was plenty of room for progressive minded
people to vote for the slate and for Dixon too. Her independent stand did not hurt the slate at all. The arguments were evidently not accepted by some of the executive. At the December 29 meeting Bill Greengrass stated that he could not remain on the executive if Dixon did.

Dixon refused to leave her executive post because she had been chosen by the general membership and was responsible to them and not to Bill Greengrass or to the executive. The result of this confrontation was that the executive decided to appoint a committee to investigate Dixon's civic election campaign, to decide whether she had violated the C.C.F. constitution, or if her campaign had been run by the communists, and to decide if Dixon were eligible to sit on the executive. At first Dixon welcomed the investigation. She told the C.C.F. that,

My conscience is absolutely clear with regard to both the letter and the spirit of the C.C.F. and I have nothing to fear from a thousand investigations. I rather welcomed an investigation because it would put an end to the slander which has been promoted by certain individuals in the C.C.F. A business-like and thorough inquiry would protect me against further personal attacks and protect the organization from the attendant doubt and confusion.¹⁴

Three weeks later the report had not been made and Dixon began to be concerned. The federal election was due and much work needed to be done. It was not in the interest of the party that so much division should be allowed to continue when unity was required for victory.
Dixon had powerful supporters in this controversy. John Evans, honourary president of the C.C.F. and Jim Cumming of the S.T.F. backed her. They told her not to leave her reputation in the hands of a committee.\textsuperscript{15} The executive's ability to set up such a committee was challenged by Dixon's supporters. Peter Makaroff, chair of the committee protested that to exonerate Dixon there and then would be equal to censuring the whole executive.\textsuperscript{16} He believed that the case would go to Provincial Council of the C.C.F. and he, Makaroff, would personally see that Dixon got justice.\textsuperscript{17} Dixon was not impressed. She told the C.C.F. that,

\begin{quote}
If Mr. Makaroff cannot throw his influence against these frustrating tactics in our home constituency, then I am better off without his assistance on the Provincial Council. My allegiance to and support of the C.C.F. will stand up alone and do not require Mr. Makaroff's assistance to stand up.\textsuperscript{18}
\end{quote}

Finally, in frustration, Dixon told Mr. Ford, President of the Saskatoon C.C.F., that,

\begin{quote}
I have decided that unless the ex[ecutive] discharges its investigating com[mittee] forthwith and passes a resolution rescinding its earlier proceedings and authorizes you as pres[ident] by resolution to write me a letter stating that no further action will be taken in the matter, I will apply to the courts for protection and for an injunction restraining the committee and the ex[ecutive] from taking the proposed action.\textsuperscript{19}
\end{quote}

Dixon's firm stand and that of her supporters seems to have ended the controversy on a visible level.
Under cover Dixon's enemies still seemed to be opposing her. Although Mrs. Dixon had successfully run the provincial election campaign in Saskatoon in 1944, she was not considered for the job in the 1945 federal campaign. Mr. Knight, the candidate, and the federal executive remarked publicly that they knew of no one locally who had experience running a campaign. Dixon brought her own name to his attention and told him that she was willing to do the work if he found that his present arrangements were not satisfactory. On May 11 the federal strategy committee decided that Dixon should be in charge of the Broadway committee rooms. Dixon made arrangements with Charles to postpone her business at Unity so that she could do this work, only to discover that Arthur Stone had changed the plans. Stone had sent to Saltcoats for Miss Karin Persson to take charge of Broadway. Dixon made arrangements to go home to Unity. When it was suggested at a membership meeting that she do some public speaking for Mr. Knight, she declined to change her plans for the third time and resigned from the strategy committee. It appears that although Dixon was willing to work, and the membership wanted her to be active, there was a group of people who wished to eliminate her influence.

In the fall of 1945, with all of her children at university and her boarders persuaded to do light housekeeping, Sophia Dixon went back to school. She entered Nutana Collegiate as a full time student to finish her
grade 12. Some of her classes, notably biology, English and Composition, were enjoyable. Other classes and teachers persuaded her that the education system needed an overhaul. Alvin Hamilton, later a conservative Minister of Agriculture in the Diefenbaker government, was her History teacher. He shocked her when he asked her privately one day what she thought of the idea of introducing the Silver Shirts to Canada. She assumed he referred to an American para-military group such as the fascists had set up in Europe prior to the war, but she was too stunned to ask for elaboration and thought he had probably never investigated the silver shirts. Hamilton horrified Dixon with his marking methods. He told her that his test questions were deliberately tricky and she resented the fact that he could change the rules about which answers counted and which did not. His admissions revealed something unsatisfactory about the system.

Such revelations set Dixon to considering what she could do about the educational problems in Saskatchewan. In an article designed to exorcise her anger, Dixon wrote that,

There has been much civil discussion on whether our school district is spending too much money on education. How can such a question be decided without examining the quality of education? I wish we could focus attention on quality a while. If our teachers are a positive influence and promote mentally healthy citizens who will play their parts in shaping a more wholesome world, who minds paying for it? This kind of education is the soundest of all social insurance.23
Dixon's answer to the situation was to run for the High School board at the next civic election. This time Dixon was included, with her consent, on the C.C.F. slate.

Dixon told the voters to think carefully about who was to be given authority over the mental and emotional growth of the young people. They would be citizens of a post war world in which "we will have to decide whether this world will be destroyed by the atomic bomb or worse, or whether we will go forward with the help of atomic energy into new and higher levels of civilization". If students were to be helped to become a happier and better adjusted citizens it was necessary to create a co-operative environment in the classroom. Dixon believed that teaching co-operation was not good enough because "[i]t is either in the atmosphere and imbibed by students, or it isn't." Dixon wanted to be part of the team which decided on staffing and programming to create this co-operative environment. Dixon told voters that she believed "with all her heart" in education as a means to self-realization, so she supported an emphasis on vocational training for the non-academic student. Dixon wished to enlarge the concept of education to allow the "buildings and facilities [to] be available for night classes, for music, drama or discussion groups, or other community interests". Because these initiatives would cost money, Dixon urged voters to "continue to insist on more federal grants to education and on more provincial equalization of costs".
Although Dixon was not elected to the board, she remained actively interested in education. Neither she nor anyone else appears to have solved the problem of how one selects and trains good teachers for the schools. Dixon remained dedicated enough to education to go on to university for the 1946-47 term. That year, as she completed her first term, her children graduated with a B.A. and two M.A.'s as well as an education certificate from Alberta.

One has to wonder if Sophia Dixon ever slept. While she was in high school and at university, and running for the High School Board, she was also on Provincial Council for the C.C.F. and a member of the Provincial Board for the Co-Op Union. Although Dixon was very supportive of the local co-op, holding one of the first one hundred memberships, she was not impressed with the role allotted to women in the Co-op Women's Guild. She wanted to decide policy, not to test Co-op flour in bread and cookies.

During World War II Dixon, along with others like the Mayor, Angus MacPherson, belonged to the Canadian-Soviet Friendship Council, a group committed to improve relations between Canada and its wartime ally, Russia. Russian visitors were welcomed to Canada and cities were twinned. Peace was promoted between the two nations. In the spirit of peace Dixon and Peter Makaroff, delegates to the national C.C.F. convention in Winnipeg, tried to amend a peace
resolution, but they were ruled out of order by Stanley Knowles. The temper of the times was changing. The war was over. It was less acceptable to respect Russia, and people who promoted peace were considered pro-Soviet whether they were or not.

Sometime after the 1948 convention Dixon, Makaroff and Ed Mahood were put on a committee to redraft the C.C.F. policy on foreign affairs. What they came up with, after hundreds of hours and dozens of drafts mailed to constituencies and returned with comments, was a ringing denunciation of capitalism. "In contrast to the large numbers of idle poor in the 1930's, we now find equally large numbers of busy poor".29 Of particular interest to Dixon was the section on peace.

Fantastic expenditures upon armaments make no contribution to international goodwill or to world peace and they render impossible any significant improvements in social services. Sorely needed investment for the rehabilitation of the world's underprivileged peoples is thereby sacrificed and the world's dwindling resources are further wasted for no useful social purpose.30

When all the work was done to redraft the policy it was by-passed. Perhaps it was too radical a document for the McCarthy era, in the midst of a war in Korea. Still, the peace activists who agreed with Dixon co-operated to demand the recognition of Red China and the scaling down of Canada's armaments industry.31 They also wished to condemn the American global defence policy.32 At the provincial council the peace activists, led by Dixon,
Gertrude Telford and Peter Makaroff, managed to find acceptance for their demands to recognize Red China and to scale down Canada's arms industry. When these three went to Toronto to the national convention in 1952 the story was quite different. Not one of the items was passed. Tommy Douglas was, according to the Leader Post, a major player in defeating the so-called pacifist resolutions. Dixon and her friends were written off by the media as "pacifist extremists" who parrotted "the propaganda line of the Moscow-inspired Peace Council".

Dixon felt compelled to defend her views from the charge of being pro-Russian and anti-American. Dixon claimed that her desire for disarmament was merely a reflection of the belief that "the next war could easily arise from an incident or an accident in the course of increasing competitive armed security measures". To prevent this possibility Dixon wished to decrease the competition. Dixon publically proclaimed her views at one of the many discussion groups to which she belonged. Dixon's opinion was that Russia, in the 1950's, because it was so backward technologically and had been so damaged by World War II, was not capable of attacking the West, a view she found supported in MacLeans and the Monetary Times. Russian military strategists knew that a quick victory over the United States was not possible; American industry was too advanced. Dixon only hoped that American strategists realized that a quick victory over Russia was just as
unlikely, given the vast territory over which an invading army must travel. For Dixon, the bottom line was that even a successful war against Russia,

wouldn't kill Communism - we fought a successful war, but we didn't kill Fascism - The war of ideas belong[s] to a non-military arena. Actually, if we could shake some of our fear of the Russians and the Russians could shake some of their fear of us - they could afford to loosen up and become more democratic internally, and with less of our production going into armaments we could afford more social services and more economic security for our people.37

Just because Dixon was labelled a radical pacifist and accused of sympathy with Communism, she did not give up her defence of the peace movement. Rather, she was able to shift her emphasis to one of religious conviction if necessary. Dixon reviewed a movie, "The Prince of Peace", a version of the passion play, with a ringing call for peace and understanding.

In essence the Christ story sums up our modern situation. The main difference is that we are acting out today's drama on the world level, and the favoured elements in our Western society are afraid of losing bigger stakes than the old Middle Eastern money chargers or Roman political overlords ever could. Essentially, we are still fickle, and too many of us are as intolerant of our peacemakers as the crucifiers of Christ ever were . . . The sad part is that as individuals we have nearly all benefited by the artificial armament prosperity. We got more to eat than we would have had there been another serious depression. Let us not forget that too much armament may also break us . . . Perhaps the high ethical principles taught by Jesus on the personal level, may yet prove to be politically and collectively smart.38

Although Dixon was accused of being a member of the Peace Council, an organization backed by the Communists, she
was never a supporter. However, when the Western Producer attacked the Peace Council Dixon urged fairness.

I personally will not join a Peace Council, as set up under the Canadian Peace Congress, because, I, too, believe them to be communist dominated and in the main to serve the foreign policy of Moscow. However, let us be fair and try to understand why they start Peace Councils all over the world. They are afraid of us, afraid that our leaders in high places might start a shooting war. Peace Councils is their main defence, as they see it - against the wastage of war. If the cold war had not gone so far, partly through our fault, the Peace Councils would not appeal to so many innocent people. Surely we can do something to put this cold war into [reverse] without supporting communist peace councils.

... I believe that the communists would like the world for communism alright, but they don't want a world laid waste by a modern war. Their religious conviction is that they can afford to wait until Western civilization more or less crumbles because of its own internal weaknesses, but they would like the physical assets left intact. ... In our increasing appeal to fear and in our increasing reliance on armaments, some of them or some of us may out of sheer nervousness start the conflagration as wasteful to us as to them. Which of us, if we are spared want to rule over a graveyard? The only way to win this war is to win by constructive peaceful means. We must set our house in better order and leave little suitable soil for Peace Councils and other "front" organizations to grow in.39

Because Dixon believed that to fight communism one must get one's house in order, she joined a variety of organizations to improve society.

She belonged to the Prairie School for Social Advance, a discussion group dedicated to finding solutions for our social problems, which considered economics, health, education, government and politics. Dixon was also on the
executive for the State Hospital and Medical League which supported preventive medical care in a socialized health care scheme under which doctors would be salaried. Because of her experience in the Unity area with a medical plan based on fee for services, Dixon wanted to avoid that method of delivering health care. While she was a member of the Homemakers Dixon had tried to interest the provincial body in affiliating with the League, but ran into some difficulties with Bertha Oxner. Dixon really had only a little faith in the Homemakers educating people to accept state medicine. "The Homemakers have been especially guilty of plowing and seeding for sentiment for various reform proposals and then forgetting all about caring for a harvest." Rather than trying to prod the Homemakers Dixon preferred to push for socialized medicine through the State Hospital and Medical League and through the C.C.F. Despite the fact that hospitalization came to Saskatchewan in 1948 Dixon was not satisfied. What she wished to see was a system where we have "all the health we can, without the benefit of doctoring; but if we do get ill, let us have a full co-operative diagnostic and healing service without the individual having to worry about paying for it". Dixon wanted a broad health system which would consider the air, the water, the agricultural practices, and the education system as part of our health care. She is not surprised that the neglect of these elements in the delivery of a fee for service type of medicare has led to an
escalation of costs without a similar escalation in good health. She, along with the State Hospital and Medical League, could have predicted these things in the 1950's.

Dixon was involved in one more controversial area in the 1940's, the Housewives' Consumer Association. As early as 1938 Sophia Dixon had suggested to Bertha Oxner that the Homemakers' Clubs agitate to set up a consumers' testing bureau to investigate ingredients, additives and prices. Bertha Oxner discouraged the idea. However, Dixon encouraged the Queenston Homemakers' Club to do some limited investigation of foods and report to the club. When Dixon moved to Saskatoon she and a number of other women set up a consumers association.

The Housewives' Consumer Association wanted the re-establishment of price controls lifted after the war ended. Dixon was concerned that price increases on "milk, butter, clothing, fresh fruits, vegetables and medical supplies are already so serious as to endanger community standards of health". She pointed out that the Marsh report, a royal commission on social services in Canada, showed that a high percentage of workers could not afford a healthy standard of living even with price controls and without them would be in a perilous position. The association also wished to protest the 12 1/2 percent increase in farm machinery because "it is in the interests of our community to see that machinery purchasing power is not drained off to implement company headquarters in the
East to the tune of 12 1/2 % on prices already too high." The consumers' association wished to speak for all low income people who were being hurt by the rapid inflation taking place when price controls were removed. Dixon pointed out that the Consumers' Association gladly co-operated with the wartime Prices and Trade Board to control inflation during the war. Surely inflation was no less a danger now. Dixon appealed to City Council to endorse the consumers request "to the Dominion Government to maintain price controls and subsidies at least on the basic necessities of life".

Dixon's appeal did not move the King government to re-impose price controls. It was, however, obvious that consumers needed information to be protected from unscrupulous advertising, and unhealthy food handling. To this end several Saskatoon organizations set up a consumers' council, to disseminate information on consumer issues and to take consumer action where necessary.

Dixon was the president of this Consumers' Council in 1948. From "a seemingly reliable cultural organization in the U.S.A." Dixon's group discovered that a movie called "The Iron Curtain" was being released. From the script summary it appeared to Dixon that the film was "incorrect and inflammatory and likely to contribute to a 'retreat from reason', rather than helping promote understanding", so Dixon included discussion of the film on her agenda for the Consumers' Council meeting. The Council decided to protest
the message of the film. The editors of the Star Phoenix took exception to this protest and suggested that the Council had "been reading the Communist press. . . . It is the only thing that seems to have any influence on them". Despite protests by Dixon that the Consumers' Council was not Communist, the Star Phoenix continued to treat it as a Communist dominated group. The attack took its toll and the Council dwindled and died.

By 1950 Dixon resumed her writing, this time as a columnist for The Commonwealth. Her column, entitled "the World" was a collage of news of the world, much of which never made it to the local papers, but which Dixon considered important. Her over-riding concern with wars and peace are evident in the items she chose to include. Dixon found the job very time consuming, and gave it up in 1954.

In 1952 Saskatchewan voters faced another election. In 1948 Dixon had worked hard on publicity and behind the scenes jobs, but not as a campaign manager. She was surprised when she was asked in 1952 to act as Returning Officer for the city of Saskatoon, the first woman to fill this post. Dixon recalls that the job was massive. The provincial returning officer asked her to redraw the poll boundaries and re-do all the maps. She enlisted the aid of her husband Charles, who drove her up and down the streets while she counted the houses for her new polls. She had to hire her deputy returning officers and arrange for enumerators, using lists of names provided by the C.C.F.
She still needed more, so she had to use some Liberals and Conservatives which did not endear her to the C.C.F.\textsuperscript{53}

Because Dixon had received so much publicity for her job as Returning Officer it seemed a good time to run again for city council. In 1952 the main election controversy was over subsidized housing. Central Mortgage and Housing had admitted that it was not possible to build houses which could rent for less than 85 dollars per month.\textsuperscript{54} Since this amount was out of the reach of the average working family in Saskatoon it had been suggested that the housing be subsidized at a rate of 20 dollars per month. The Mayor was horrified that anyone would be so fiscally irresponsible as to subsidize 130 units at 240 dollars a year for 40 years. He continued that,

\begin{quote}
in [his] opinion no person has any right to ask the state or any fellow citizen to provide him with residential accommodation at less than full cost. There is no inherent right in the individual to demand sacrifice from others for his own private benefit. The owners of existing houses who are no[w] struggling to pay their own taxes should not have their taxes increased in favour of the occupants of new houses proposed to be built \ldots
\end{quote}

If people prefer to live in unsatisfactory houses in order to drive automobiles and indulge their taste for luxury goods, they have absolutely no right to demand that society at large should indulge them by renting to them houses at less than cost. To charge rents below cost is the common strain of argument that runs through all communistic thinking, and that is a type of thinking that the free people of Canada should not encourage.\textsuperscript{55}

Dixon could not agree with the Mayor's narrow view of social responsibility. To Dixon it was poor economy to
spend money to rehabilitate the undernourished, the ill and the delinquents when many of these problems could be prevented by providing adequate homes for people. Dixon urged the taxpayers to recognize that other cities already had housing subsidy schemes, and that it was time for city council in Saskatoon to take a fresh look at the problem. Dixon promised voters that,

I shall not throw money around rashly, because you and I had to earn it the hard way. On the other hand, we must not miss good opportunities through being too stingy. We must aim for a more beautiful Saskatoon and for more happy homes here. I have applied careful management to my own affairs and can do it with city affairs.56

Dixon emphasized that, as a woman, she was more qualified than the male candidates to do city housekeeping. She had lived in inadequate housing while budgeting for doctors bills and food with too little money. "When a woman has managed through periods of hard times... as I have, - she acquires sympathetic insight and an understanding that should go further than most men's".57 Dixon did not wish to imply that she was in favour of subsidized housing for all. She wanted it only for those people who needed a subsidy. She wished to do a thorough survey of Saskatoon before any plans were made. Dixon claimed that,

I am young enough to appreciate the need of the children and teenagers for recreational facilities, old enough to appreciate the problems of our senior citizens,... and I am man enough to have perspective in the need for business expansion to support more homes at higher standards.58
On these bases Dixon asked for support at the polls. This time, she almost made city council.

The fall of 1952 brought a problem with the local C.C.F. Dixon found that she was accidentally not informed of committee meetings suspiciously often. Because she did not want to be accused of not taking her proper responsibility Dixon resigned from the committees she was on. She did not wish to leave C.C.F. work entirely. She told Roger Carter that,

my services are available to lead discussion groups, or in minor writing or speaking jobs as required. If I am specifically asked to serve in some capacity, I cannot fail to get the notice.59

Dixon still had enemies and those enemies could still cause minor irritations. Still, she had supporters too, and those supporters rallied around Dixon when she confronted Joe Phelps and his plans for the Saskatchewan Farmers' Union.
1. Dorise Nielsen to Violet MacNaughton, July 1, 1943, Saskatchewan Arts Board, MacNaughton Papers, Al.

2. Dixon to Mr. Ford, April 10, 1944, S.D.P.P.

3. Dixon to Mr. Ford, November 14, 1944, S.D.P.P.

4. Campaign speech, undated, S.D.P.P.

5. Ibid.

6. to Fellow Citizens of Saskatoon, undated, S.D.P.P.

7. Ibid.

8. Ibid.

9. Ibid.

10. "Report of the government and community affairs committee with reference to the service tax", March 6, 1944, S.D.P.P.

11. Ibid.

12. Dixon to Mr. Ford, November 14, 1944, S.D.P.P.

13. Ibid.

14. Dixon to Mr. Chairman, undated, S.D.P.P.

15. Dixon to Arthur Ford, undated, S.D.P.P.

16. Ibid.

17. Ibid. Makaroff's position is hard to understand. He and Dixon belonged to many of the same groups, supported many of the same issues, and were both peace activists. Could it be that he knew Dixon had written to the Star Phoenix under the pseudonym Woman Reader on November 17, 1944, attacking the C.C.F. for appointing him to the University Board of Governors instead of a woman?

18. Ibid.

19. Ibid.

20. Dixon to Mr. Knight, May 3, 1945, S.D.P.P.

21. Dixon to Mr. Stone, May 24, 1945, S.D.P.P.

22. Ibid.
24. Radio speech delivered for the civic campaign in 1947 or 1948, S.D.P.P.
25. Ibid.
26. Ibid.
27. Ibid.
28. Ibid.
30. Ibid.
32. Ibid.
33. Ibid.
34. Ibid.
35. Ibid.
36. Rough notes in answer to a Star Phoenix editorial "Warmongering", undated, S.D.P.P.
37. "Is Russia Trafficking [sic] in War?", undated, S.D.P.P.
38. Dixon to P. Waldron, editor of the Western Producer, June 17, 1950, S.D.P.P.
40. Bertha Oxner to Dixon, July 28, 1941, S.D.P.P.
41. Dixon to Mr. C. L. Dent, July 10, 1941, S.D.P.P.
43. Bertha Oxner to Dixon, March 18, 1938, S.D.P.P.
44. Unity Courier, March 6, 1939, S.D.P.P.
45. Submission by the Saskatoon Housewives Consumer Association to the Saskatoon City Council, Thursday, May 23, 1946, S.D.P.P.
46. Ibid.
47. Ibid.
48. Constitution of the Saskatoon Consumers' Council, S.D.P.P.
50. Ibid.
54. Some thoughts on the housing situation by Mrs. Sophia Dixon, undated, S.D.P.P.
55. "Voting in the Dark", transcript of an address on C.K.O.M. by Mayor J. S. Mills, undated, S.D.P.P.
56. Radio talk on C.K.O.M. from the 1952 civic election, undated, S.D.P.P.
57. Ibid.
58. Radio talk from 1952 civic election, undated, S.D.P.P.
Sophia and Charles Dixon had been supporters of farm organizations all their adult lives. Sophia had first become involved with the Saskatchewan Grain Growers' Association in 1919, and had had a more or less continuous involvement with farm groups from that time forward. After Dixon moved to Saskatoon in 1941 it was not surprising that she contacted others with rural roots. When she discovered that Saskatoon housed large numbers of retired farmers who moved to the city for the winter and farmers whose land was close to Saskatoon, it was quite natural for her to help set up a branch of the Saskatchewan Farmers' Union in the city. Dixon was for some years the president of this S.F.U. local and was in the thick of the controversies which raged in that organization in the early 1950's.

After the C.C.F. had been founded in 1933 the United Farmers of Canada went into a long decline. Its best workers, and brightest thinkers were siphoned off into political work when they found they had not the time for both the C.C.F. and the U.F.C. (S.S.) Joe Phelps, with his marvelous organizing ability, rescued the farm organization and it became the Saskatchewan Farmers' Union. Phelps had great enthusiasm and an ability to attract new members. The S.F.U. actually grew in numbers under his presidency. While Dixon appreciated Joe Phelps' work in increasing the S.F.U.
membership, she was much less impressed with his ability to run the S.F.U. affairs efficiently or democratically.

In January, 1952 the S.F.U. was looking for an assistant to the president, Joe Phelps. Dixon thought she would fit the job description admirably, but she could not restrain herself from criticizing the running of the organization, even in a letter of application for a job, suggesting that those responsible for convention arrangements had done an inadequate job, and that the information which came from the office was often inadequate. Dixon was sure that she could solve those problems. She told Joe Phelps that,

> my judgment is generally well regarded by board and committee members with whom I have worked. I might not always be able to think as quickly as desired, but on the other hand, I don't mind telling you that there have been a number of things come out of your office that probably wouldn't have come out if they had the second consideration to which they were entitled. I would expect to carry out the president's decision who is responsible to the people in the final showdown, but I'd also expect to try to detain the president from doing the things he would not do if he had time to think twice.¹

Although Dixon was not given the job as Joe Phelps assistant, she was chosen as a woman Director at large by convention. In this capacity she was a delegate to conferences and she was often asked to do research for the S.F.U. We get a hint of all the things Dixon was involved in when she had to refuse Olaf Turnbull's request that she work in his district for a month.
One of our children, The Western Export Import Company Limited, is ill - I've been selected and advised to study and watch developments and to try to get something done about [it] - a challenging task. I have some work to finish on a study of parity pricing vs. forward pricing for the union which requires some very exacting work. It is high time I got something going on my union international relations convenorship - I haven't done anything on the Provincial resolutions committee - Our local efforts on a brief to the Baker commission are on the way to midair only unless I see that through. . . .

[Dixon]If we had a research department I wouldn't be doing so much of this work unofficially, [but] I think it is in the interests of all of us if I do it.2

Dixon did finish her study on forward pricing and was favourably impressed with the idea. Under forward pricing the government would use trained statisticians to estimate in advance what the consumers wanted and what they would be able to buy. The government could then make a forecast price for each commodity.

The government forecast price would then be the guaranteed floor price. If the markets should go below the forecast price, the government would pay the farmer the difference. If the market should go above the forecast price, the farmer would benefit by that difference.3

Dixon amplified on the topic in the brief she wrote for the Saskatoon local of the S.F.U. to be submitted to the Royal Commission on Agriculture and Rural Life. Dixon believed that the agricultural price forecasts which the government could provide to farmers would help them to decide which crops to increase and which to decrease and "as a result, the character of his output [would be] better suited to
consumer demand and the individual producer [would] get a better return". 4

Dixon much preferred forward pricing to parity pricing, an American system of providing the farmer with an adequate return for their commodities based on production and consumption for the period 1909-1914. Forward pricing was based on the realities of the market and was a flexible, continuous season-to-season adjustment between volume of production and demand. Dixon believed that forward pricing would help to eliminate surpluses of overvalued commodities and scarcities of those which were undervalued. To make forecasting of prices more accurate Dixon urged the government to develop suitable storage programs and facilities for Canadian commodities.

The main advantage of forward pricing was to stabilize farm income "so that it will become sound business for lending institutions, be they public or private or co-operative, to lend money to farmers". 5 Stability was only possible if forward pricing in normal times was combined with compensatory income payments in times of recession. Dixon wished to see the government allow commodity prices to fall to the market level, but to compensate farmers to make up their returns to 75, 80 or 85% of the immediate pre-recession prices. This would encourage farmers to continue to produce efficiently and would maintain buying power which could stimulate the rest of the economy. According to Dixon forward pricing and compensatory
income payments "would help government to do what they are
already committed to do, namely, to maintain a high level of
income and employment. It is Keynesian economics, applied
to agriculture". She applauded the idea and urged the
S.F.U. to study it.

Just after Dixon's study on forward pricing was
published in the *Union Farmer* a controversy arose. Joe
Phelps and Bernice Norman, the Woman President, believed
that a new infusion of money was needed into the S.F.U. to
continue adding to and organizing the membership. One of
the suggestions for getting this money was through discount
buying, a scheme whereby any paid up member of the S.F.U.
could receive a 15% discount for the purchase of an item
from a firm which had an agreement with the S.F.U. Five
percent of the discount on the sale would be returned to the
S.F.U. and the other 10% would go to the purchaser. The
companies offering the discount would also be authorized to
sell S.F.U. memberships. On the surface the scheme looked
like a winner for the S.F.U. Money and new memberships
would come pouring in to the office as farmers joined the
S.F.U. to save money on their purchases of tires and
batteries. (The S.F.U. had already made an agreement with
Frontier Tire to give discounts to S.F.U. members) Sophia
Dixon, however, was appalled by the scheme, and insisted at
a meeting of the 41 directors that there be a recorded vote
so that she could be on record as opposing the scheme.
Soon after the August board meeting Dixon was writing letters to any editor who would accept her thoughts on the effects that discount buying would have on the co-ops. Dixon was concerned that this scheme would destroy co-ops because "co-operatives supply goods and services at cost, distributing any earnings in the form of patronage dividends, so pray, how can co-ops give discounts in the manner the S.F.U. present leadership requires?" Dixon implored the S.F.U. membership to consider what would happen to their discounts, and prices and quality if the private businesses aided by the S.F.U. drove the co-ops out of business. Dixon hope that,

Co-operators and friends of long-range social progress will consider the implications this short view of helping the farmer has put us in. I hope the provincial convention will straighten out the contradictions that have found their way into our S.F.U., not because of evil folk, but because of poor judgment of perfectly sincere and honest people.

Dixon suspected that there was more to the discount buying scheme than merely bringing money to the S.F.U. Joe Phelps was at the time telling Saskatchewan farmers that an adapted Rand formula was needed in the province. Judge Rand had ruled that for industrial unions, union dues must be paid by all members of an industry covered by union bargaining because all benefited from the work of the union. Phelps argued that all farmers benefitted from the work of the S.F.U. and should therefore pay for it. He hoped to get 51% of Saskatchewan farmers as members of the S.F.U. and
then induce the government to hold a plebeicite on the Rand formula. Dixon feared that the discount prices from selected commercial concerns was to be bait to boost the membership to 51%. She questioned "how much of that prospective 51% sign-up (when and if it becomes real) is interested in a union and how much of it may have happened due to a little quick arithmetic on a bargain tire, or even a soap coupon". Dixon did not think that,

our discount contracts, present and future, are good for the union. . . People with a tire-and-battery discount mentality will soon be voting on union policy and electing union officials, or even becoming officials themselves.

This was not the way to promote the S.F.U. or the Co-ops and Dixon planned to fight the idea with all her strength. Reaction to Dixon's letters was not slow in coming. Dixon wrote to her S.F.U. local Vice-President, Mr. Townley-Smith, that,

Chris Hanson, the junior president, who feels pretty big in the puddle, because he is supported by the powers that be, called me up and was really violent. It wasn't the first time I had discussed 'dirty linen' in public: Why didn't I confine myself to discussion of it in the board meeting? Why didn't I abide by majority rule? The S.F.U. constitution provided for going into business, etc. I pretended to be real cool and left the onus on him to keep up the steam. Then I told him I guessed he was entitled to his opinion, but I was also entitled to mine, and what I said I felt had to be said because fundamental principles were involved. Then he got madder and snapped the receiver on the hook.

After Dixon's letter to the various newspapers a lively debate took place in the pages of the newspapers. Although
each side had its supporters the main debate over
discount-buying took place between Sophia Dixon for the
negative and Norman and Phelps for the affirmative.

Dixon took the position that the present executive of
the S.F.U. was anti-co-op. Not only was this executive
prepared to increase the business turnover of certain
private commercial concerns to the detriment of the co-ops,
but even Farm Women's Week avoided the co-ops in a rush to
promote several companies who used convention time to
promote their particular brands of goods and services.

This anti-co-op letter was too much for Bernice
Norman, who wrote to the Western Producer to tell the public
that Farm Women's Week in June had been planned by a group
of women on the basis of a questionnaire sent to the S.F.U.
membership concerning possible program and recreational
items. Norman claimed that Dixon had not indicated any
opposition or alternative suggestions before Farm Women's
Week, nor had she filled out the later evaluation sheet when
it was circulated. Dixon replied, in the press, that,

some months ago, for a number of reasons, I lost
confidence in Mrs. Norman's handling of these
matters. So I took the additional trouble to
make copies of all forms coming from the S.F.U.
office to be completed and returned, as well as
copies of my replies, so that my own file would
be complete from that date on.12

Because of this precaution, Dixon had copies of the
questionnaire answers that Norman claimed Dixon had not sent
to the S.F.U. Dixon regretted that she stooped to fighting
on personalities and suggested that Norman stick to the issues.

Dixon told personal supporters that she was flattered by the suggestion that she should lead a new movement but she preferred to work within the S.F.U. She was dismayed that the members who were interested in policy seemed to fall away from the organization while those who were mere followers of charismatic leaders seemed to stay. It enraged Dixon that the union spent 300,000 dollars a year, but could not afford a research department to investigate farm problems and translate the work done by universities into language the farmers could understand. She believed that money was available, but that it was misspent on poor office management, on the purchase of cars for S.F.U. canvassers, and on over-generous salaries for officials in the S.F.U. Joe Phelps, of course, did not agree.

Dixon was informed that the S.F.U. executive had been called for October 1, at which time Dixon was to be censured for her so-called attacks on the executive over discount buying. She was prepared. Dixon had a copy of the S.F.U. constitution which said that board meetings must be called by registered letter or if at least 2/3 of the board was present at a meeting and signed a waiver of notice, the meeting could proceed without the registered mail notice. Dixon knew that the meeting which approved discount buying proceeded without proper notice, and with one member short of the 2/3 required for a waiver. Dixon preferred
Dixon even went to the trouble of contacting W. B. Francis, a prominent co-op lawyer, about what protection a member has when an organization he or she supports has an executive which refuses to obey the constitution or to follow the express orders of the ruling convention.

Dixon always maintained that her whole purpose in opening the debate on discount buying was to get a proper democratic debate on the subject at the December, 1953 convention. She believed that all S.F.U. members should be concerned when the directors by-pass the constitution. Dixon claimed that the directors made a basic policy decision which was contrary to the S.F.U. constitution which promoted co-operative buying and selling among its members. No convention had ever discussed discount buying let alone endorsed it, so the directors and the president had no mandate to change the S.F.U. into something new and completely different from what it was.

The end result of Mrs. Dixon's campaign against discount buying was that S.F.U. members in their annual provincial convention express[ed] their disapproval of the plan. It was a very chastened president and not-quite-so-chastened woman president, who had to listen to the discussions and watch the plan unmistakably voted down. 'Slapped down' was the term used around the convention hall . . .
Frantic efforts were made both to confuse the issue and to re-introduce it, but the delegates were there to straighten things out and straighten them out they did. It was expected that the officials, after such a vigorous slapping down, would resign, but they did not seem to realize that it was the thing to do.17

Round one went to Sophia Dixon. Round two, however, had already begun.

Dixon had believed that discount buying was merely a disguised way to get enough S.F.U. members to force the government to implement a Rand formula for agriculture. Phelps had already begun to agitate for a Rand formula. The next legislative session was to be held in February, 1954. Phelps hoped to sell S.F.U. memberships to 51 per cent of Saskatchewan farmers by that time. Elaborate plans were made to get all the memberships by T Day, as the target date was called. S.F.U. paid organizers were on the road working long hours. According to Dixon, Phelps dreamed of a fleet of cars and at least one aircraft to do S.F.U. business,18 but financial reality held him down. If the S.F.U. managed to sell 51% of farmers a membership, Phelps hoped to use this number to force the Douglas government to legislate a land tax, to be collected by the Rural Municipalities and turned over to the S.F.U. to help with its work on behalf of the farmers.

Dixon was very much opposed to the idea of taxing all farmers to pay for the S.F.U. Her major opposition was because,
everything we do nowadays always seems to set a precedent for something tomorrow. They have already stretched that Rand formula precedent all out of shape to make it fit with taxation, so Judge Rand would not recognize his formula any more. But if you start this taxation precedent it is a pretty small step for the Farmer's Union to ask for increased levies from time to time. Anyway, I read something in a history book once about it being bad to have taxation without representation.19

Phelps, Bernice Norman, Woman's President, and Chris Hansen, Junior President, did not see the small levy of less than ten dollars a year on agricultural land as a tax. It was merely a way for all farmers to pay their share for the work of the S.F.U. If one wished to join the S.F.U. and have privileges, one would be compelled to pay a small annual membership fee as well as the tax.

Because of Dixon's position as a Past President of the Saskatoon local of the S.F.U. she was able to gain extra publicity for the disagreement. Dixon arranged for a three way debate over the Rand formula for January 20, 1954 in Saskatoon. She was to argue against the Rand Formula, Phelps for it and Professor Hadley Van Vliet of the University agricultural college was to add an unknown element. Dixon notified the newspapers and the radio stations to be sure the event was widely covered. She truly believed that if the light of reason and information were shone on a subject the truth would be apparent. She was also convinced that she had the truth on the Rand formula and wished to be sure that everyone else knew it as well.
Dixon relied on more than the justice of her cause in this debate. As usual she wanted information. She wrote to Toby Nollett, Minister of Agriculture, whom she had known for many years as a man of good judgment and one she was certain would not support the Rand foolishness. Dixon was correct. Nollett sent her information, strictly confidentially, which would help support Dixon's view. Nollett was against the Rand formula and told Dixon he was sure that this proposal, if implemented, might help undo much of the excellent work Phelps had done to build up the S.F.U. in the first place.

The S.F.U. at the moment enjoys wide popularity and support. I believe that this support could be very seriously impaired and turned into resentment if a land tax were applied across the board. . . . [Besides] The application of the Rand formula in industry does not involve a tax. It is a direct contribution by way of check-offs and is levied against the employees salary. I am very sure that the Rand Formula would be condemned by labour if it were applied as a tax against the worker's home.20

Nollett was also convinced that even if a plebescite were won by the S.F.U. there would be large pockets of resistance which would be trouble spots for the S.F.U. and for the government for years to come.

Now she knew that Nollett opposed the idea, but Dixon would not be satisfied until the subject were well aired in public. "Without the Open Forum discussion timed as it was, for the convention in December, Discount Buying would have been sneaked through with very few noticing it."21 Dixon told Mr. Waldron of the Western Producer. As for herself,
Dixon had kept quiet as long as she could and now wished to be published on the subject of the Rand Formula to get the debate started, since no one else seemed inclined to write.

Dixon told readers of the *Western Producer* that a resolution at the S.F.U. convention passed because

> No one wanted to vote against working hard to get 51\% of the farmers signed up in the S.F.U. - so this rather vague resolution was carried and was immediately interpreted by S.F.U. officials as indicating almost unanimous support for a compulsory land tax of 1/2 mill on all agricultural lands in the province to help finance the S.F.U.\(^{22}\)

Dixon pointed out that although the land tax was not mentioned in the resolution, the S.F.U. was urging members to pressure M.L.A.'s, municipal councils and the Saskatchewan Association of Rural Municipalities to support the tax; to flood the premier's office with supportive letters and even to help form a mass delegation to support the idea of taxing all farmers. Dixon could not support the idea. In her opinion,

> the Farmer's Union, which is a private organization, should not expect to cut into the municipal or any other tax field . . . Taxes and compulsion belong to governments, and not to private groups. Municipalities are strictly supervised by provincial governments . . . whereas the S.F.U. does what it likes.\(^{23}\)

Dixon argued that if the S.F.U. got a tax levy it would be subject to a good deal of government control and thus lose its value as a private, independent group. To Phelp's argument that the S.F.U. needed money, Dixon suggested that if the union got 51\% of all farmers as members they would
have what they needed. A little economy in administration would give a surplus.²⁴

When the January 20 debate arrived Dixon repeated her arguments in public. To these she added her belief that the S.F.U. executive forget the S.F.U. is not a trade union, because farmers don't all work for the one big boss who can be identified and bargained with. They forget also that farmers belong to a variety of organizations in the course of protecting their business interests, such as breeders' associations, selling and buying associations, etc. The S.F.U. is only one of many organizations which a farmer may support to look after his economic interest.²⁵

Dixon had in fact issued the Saskatoon Trades and Labour council a sharp rebuke when it passed a resolution giving its moral support to the S.F.U. in its drive to apply the Rand Formula to agriculture. She told labour that:

It is . . . one thing to prove that a labour union benefits each and every worker in a given plant, but it is quite another to prove that a farm union helps each and every self-employed farmer in Saskatchewan in the variety and complexity of business situations in which self-employed people find themselves over a large area. . .

If Clarence Wyatt [of the Trades and Labour Council] thinks the Saskatchewan government should be pressured into taxing all farmers to support the S.F.U., then why does he not accept this farm version of the Rand Formula and attempt to make the minority of T.L.C. workers support the provincial equivalent of the C.C.L. It would make about as much sense.²⁶

Joe Phelps argued that the S.F.U. really needed money. There were, he claimed, many precedents for compulsory payments into public services not controlled by governments.
Public utilities and hail insurance were examples. Phelps wanted the S.F.U. tax to be considered economic insurance. The tax could not be considered undemocratic, if supported by 51 per cent of all farmers. Phelps challenged the panel to come up with a better plan.

Professor Van Vliet demolished Phelps' argument that public utilities could be compared to the S.F.U. in their right to public support. He also suggested that using the Rand Formula, which was designed for industrial workers as an analogy for a rural setting was on very shaky ground because the interests of an agricultural community, depending on the commodity raised, were so varied.

Dixon rose to the challenge of providing a better solution to the financial problems of the S.F.U. by suggesting a voluntary check-off of dues through the Municipal Secretary.

The Union fee would be stated in the usual municipal tax notice, and the new fee structure would make the average voluntary fee about $8.00 which is roughly the same as now.27

Alternatively, S.F.U. fees could be paid through voluntary deduction from Wheat Board cheques.

The check-off would be a wonderful thing for any farm union, because it usually spends too much just in collecting. No one can object to the check-off through the Wheat Board since it is voluntary.28

The real advantage of these methods of collection was that it would be gathered with little expense to the S.F.U. The need for money would be correspondingly less, and the people
of Saskatchewan could be spared a compulsory tax which "could challenge political democracy as we know it". 29 Saskatchewan farmers did not want a land tax to support the S.F.U. which never got 51% of the farmers to join the union and the issue faded.

Dixon was not as intimately involved in the S.F.U. fight over Mrs. Bernice Norman's resignation as she had been in those over Discount Buying and the Rand Formula. In 1955 Norman had resigned as S.F.U. Woman President and President Fred Woloshyn had appointed her as Secretary of the S.F.U. When the board of directors were asked to ratify the appointment every one of them refused. 30 Woloshyn threatened to resign if they did not conform, and when they did not he made good his threat. The board of directors then fired Norman as Secretary, and re-instated Stuart Thiessen. Joe Phelps was outraged, and tried to organize a campaign in the country to have Norman re-hired. Phelps even went so far as to lead a delegation to a meeting with the S.F.U. executive and threaten to crucify them or throw them out the window if they did not follow his directions. The executive retired to the office to make its decision. At this point Eric Lund, husband of the new Woman President, Margaret Lund, went up to Joe Phelps and banging the table in front of him said,

I can bang this table as loud as you can, Joe. Now, do you want to come outside and settle this alone, or do you want to bring your friends, because as long as I'm alive nobody is going to crucify my wife. 31
The other men in the crowd seemed suddenly to realize what they were doing and began to leave by the back door. By the time the executive returned to the meeting hall to tell the delegation that they refused Phelps' demands, the crowd had melted and the protest was all but over. When Bernice Norman wrote to the Western Producer about her dismissal Dixon chided the newspaper for publishing the letter. "Have you no sense of propriety, Mr. Editor" she asked, that you give Mrs. Bernice Norman space on June 2, in which to hang herself? Are you not aware that you have a responsibility to discourage the morbid curiosity that is said to attend public hangings, be they self-inflicted or otherwise? It is a downright dirty trick of you to provide Mrs. Norman with the required platform, from which to entangle herself in the rope woven of her many personal animosities.32

With this letter written, Bernice Norman gone from the S.F.U., and Margaret Lund capably in charge of the Women's section, Dixon could again concentrate her attention on WEICo.

WEICo, the Western Export Import company, was the invention of Barry Hulth, a Swedish immigrant to Canada who noticed the tremendous difference in European and Canadian prices and decided to promote some sort of two way trade. Why could Western farmers not trade wheat for other products? If both were shipped by way of Churchill the shipping costs would be lower, and the products cheaper. Hulth approached both the S.F.U. and the Hudson's Bay Route Association, who had long entertained the same idea. They responded positively and he set about organizing a company.
WEICo, to handle the trade. The company was incorporated on August 30, 1950.  

Money was needed to set up the company so shares were sold at ten dollars each. The S.F.U. executive and conventions urged the farmers to give moral and financial support to the company. The farmers bought shares but did not control the company because the number of ten dollar shares in the company was equalled or exceeded by 10,000 no par value voting shares controlled by the directors. By 1952 the Lanz Bulldog tractors, which were WEICo's main import item, were not being paid for. Barry Hulth sold his no-par-value shares, which he had acquired, to his partners Mirka and Galon on January 28, 1953 and left the company. He found a job with the provincial government where he worked in a number of departments, including Douglas' own department of co-operation. In March, 1953 the S.F.U. was aware that WEICo was in trouble and in May, the Lanz company refused to ship any more tractors to WEICo because they had not been paid. The company was, in effect, bankrupt.  

The Government of Saskatchewan had a problem. One of its crown corporations, the Saskatchewan Government Insurance Office, S.G.I.O., had guaranteed a 75,000 dollar loan to WEICo, much of which might never be collected. What was an insurance company doing selling tractors? It was in the interest of the C.C.F. to keep S.G.I.O.'s involvement in the mess quiet. The Liberals would be understandably
gleeful to learn that the hated C.C.F. crown corporation had been victimized.

To solve the problem George Urwin, respected president of Federated Co-ops, was made President of WEICO by a shareholders' meeting. Allan Huber was to be the trustee for S.G.I.O. On January 24, 1954 Huber went to see Sophia Dixon to ask her to come in as Manager of WEICO and wind down the business. Although Dixon had not had a long term paid job since she stopped teaching in 1921, she was an excellent choice. She was known to be honest, very intelligent and meticulous about detail. She had done an excellent job as Saskatoon's first female Returning Officer in 1952. Besides, she was loyal to the C.C.F, as a founding member and unquestionably loyal to the interests of the farmers. If anyone could be found to wind up the WEICO mess with no embarrassment to the C.C.F. or to S.G.I.O., and with as little pain to farmers as possible, Sophia Dixon was as perfect a solution as one could find. She was available immediately and she did not mind that the job was short-term.

Dixon found a mess. There was no money so no secured or unsecured creditor had anything to gain by forcing bankruptcy and "the V.I.P.'s who had sponsored the company wanted no official bankruptcy or blemish on their reputations". As President of the new board of directors to run the company, George Urwin described the situation to Tommy Douglas as shady.
When the Board took over, a month ago, the cupboard was bare. There were unpaid bills exceeding $10,000 and mortgages on tractors, etc. of over $40,000, part of which is carried by Government Insurance. Substitution of second-hand tractors for the new ones described on the mortgage can only mean that the Government mortgage is not sufficiently secured.

Our attempts to get an audit have been stymied, owing to the non-payment of past auditing services, amounting to $1,700. Professional ethics have prevented any other firm approached from coming in . . .

I personally feel that it is in the public interests that a full investigation be made . . . There is plenty of evidence that the old Board acted in their own interests rather than in the interests of the shareholders, and there are many transactions of a shady nature. 37

No investigation was ever held. The Board meeting immediately following the February 24, 1954 shareholders' meeting confirmed Sophia Dixon as sole manager of the company. She was to control the keys and the financial records and arrange all sales and payments to creditors.

In November, 1956 George Urwin, the President of WEICO suggested that if Dixon would personally pay off the S.G.I.O. loan guarantee, S.G.I.O. would turn all their securities and mortgages over to Dixon. Dixon agreed. By the time the loan guarantee, the land tax arrears on the warehouse and other expenses had been paid, Dixon could only raise $1,250 to pay on the $18,018.99 still owed to S.G.I.O. on the first loan guarantee. S.G.I.O. accepted this sum as a down payment. On December 20, 1956, Dixon paid the $1,200 and paid the bank the S.G.I.O. loan guarantee and S.G.I.O. seemed free and clear of the mess in the eyes of the public.
Dixon received the mortgages. She was to sell the S.G.I.O. tractors as a group, deduct her wages and expenses from S.G.I.O. assets, and then turn over the remaining funds and/or the balance of the mortgage securities back to S.G.I.O.

Why would she do this? Why not? The government and WEICo directors were made up of friends and trusted allies of long standing. They would never harm her. Bob Walker, the new Attorney General, had represented WEICo until his appointment as Attorney General. George Urwin was respected throughout the community for his role in the co-op movement. Finance Minister Clarence Fines had told Dixon to do as well for S.G.I.O. as she could. When Dixon needed cylinder heads to fix the last eight tractors to be sold by bulk sale,

I called on my old friend, the premier, Tommy Douglas, for help and he sent his deputy minister, Dr. Barney Arnason, to see me, and Dr. Arnason said that he would get the Saskatchewan agent general in London, England, Graham Spry, to go to Germany personally, and get me those cylinder heads.38

Everyone who was anyone in Saskatchewan seemed to be helping Dixon. What risk was there?

In July, 1957 Dixon, after many tries, arranged the bulk sale. George Urwin had the books audited by the chartered accountant, C. L. Welch. The company showed only $349.58 as net worth before the payment of an audit fee. $9,841.61 was stated as an asset to be paid by Enterprise Sales and Services for the bulk purchase of 8 S.G.I.O. tractors.39
On March 24, 1958 there was a conference between Dixon, Urwin and William Fox of S.G.I.O. Dixon wished to turn back the mortgages to S.G.I.O. and let them collect the $9,841.61 owing and then discharge the mortgages. The directors wished her to collect on the mortgages and disperse the money to the shareholders. Dixon knew there was no money. If she attempted to hide assets from the lawful creditors she could be sent to jail. She refused and turned the S.G.I.O. accounts back to S.G.I.O. On March 31, 1958 Dixon closed the WEICO office.

In 1958 Barry Hulth, one of the three original incorporators of WEICO, and George Urwin began a law suit against Dixon, and Enterprise Sales and Service, the buyer of the tractors. They claimed that Enterprise Sales and Service, as buyer, and Dixon, as unauthorized seller of company property, should pay $25,000.00, later revised to $28,000.00, in damages for this sale.

Dixon went to her friends for advice. Dixon wrote to Jack Sturdy, Sandy Nicholson, Tommy Douglas, Clarence Fines, Bob Walker, Olaf Turnbull, Gladys Strum and anyone else she could think of for help. She wished to avoid going to court until S.G.I.O. and the government got out of it first. No one would help her, probably because they did not wish to interfere in a matter already before the courts. Sophia Dixon was to be left to hang in the wind, and to defend herself.
The matter finally reached court in 1964. Since Enterprise Sales and Service admitted owing the money to someone, the judge found for the plaintiff. Dixon was justifiably bitter.

The liar with the most volume of lies, put into his mouth because he was more apt to be believed than some of the others, he being a man "worthy of an honorary degree" by the University of Saskatchewan - he's dead and he's on the glory side of memory because he left $105,000 to be divided, just so, among a dozen or so of community and charity organizations, in such a manner that the most possible good memory can be perpetuated. Perhaps he even bought his way into heaven.41

Dixon eventually appealed. She won a unanimous decision in the Saskatchewan Court of Appeal in 1973 and in the Supreme Court in 1976, which awarded her court costs. Before Dixon's lawyer had time to register an execution against the WEICO warehouse to recover some of Dixon's expenses, the building had been sold. Dixon got no re-imbursement for her expenses, and she had had to live with her reputation under a cloud for seventeen years, all because she felt an obligation to the farmers and to her former political friends.

Understandably this case affected her thinking greatly. The first result was that in 1961 she let her membership in the C.C.F. lapse. She told Tommy Douglas that she could no longer be a member of an organization which she no longer believed was clean. When Hazen Argue left the C.C.F. to join the Liberals in 1962, Dixon did not join the hue and cry against him as a traitor. In fact, she wrote
him a message of sympathy for his act, in which she outlined her own reasons for leaving the C.C.F.

My thoughts shall be very much with you and your wife, while making political adjustments, and I sincerely hope that you find a way to promote the dignity and freedom of individuals. At the moment, the Liberal party appears to be the least of evils in political parties, but the least evil is hardly good enough, nor is there a guarantee that said party will stay the least evil. What one might look for is a political organization which is not a puppet and where there is at least a possibility of an individual influencing its policy.

I let my membership lapse for the first time after May 31, 1961, partly because the C.C.F. was about to vote itself out of existence and partly because the provincial government was already showing arbitrary tendencies to ignore its own legislation, such as we have reason to fear from labour bosses if the N.D.P. ever comes to power.

I did not leave the C.C.F. but the C.C.F. left me... You [Hazen Argue] were elected C.C.F., and they are the ones who got off course, when they sold out, or were sold out, to powerful labour organizations when becoming N.D.P. . . .

If the complete true details of S.G.I.O. . . . involvements in the Western Export Import Company Limited were presented to the public with clarity and understood by it, I don't believe a single C.C.F. N.D.P. could be elected in a provincial election - and I have endless documentary evidence - but the electorate might also lose faith in human nature, and I would regret that.42

So after 42 years of unbroken service to the C.C.F. and its predecessors, Dixon left the party. She was not comfortable with some individuals who alleged to represent labour in the C.C.F. and feared it for the future. Most important, WEICO showed Dixon that the C.C.F. party did not behave differently from any other political party. To her the
movement for social progress, and the insistence on honourable behaviour always had priority in a political party. When Dixon thought the party had moved away from these standards, she left.

The WEICO court case also awakened Dixon to the problems women face in the working world. She had entered public life to improve conditions for children. In this she was very like the maternal feminists. By the early 1960's Dixon had come to realize that women too needed protection, by law, not by chivalry. This did not mean that she had lost her interest in children, nor did it mean that she did not still regard mothering as a woman's greatest job. She told the Royal Commission on the Status of Women that,

I have every sympathy with the women who have problems, as unmarried mothers, deserted wives, etc. etc., but others are better qualified to write about it than I am. Maybe I am trying to deal with a big subject, [business legal and judicial areas in our society] but somebody should say something about the pie, itself, that so many women justifiably wish to share on a more equitable basis. It seems to me that women . . . should be careful not to ask for equal rights to behave as badly as men or to share equally only in a socio-ecomonic pie that is undergoing spoilage. . . . In my opinion . . . it is not good enough for women to be satisfied with pay raises at the perimeter of our socio-economic structure; there must be a more decent society in which to share and in which sharing on a more equitable sex basis will progressively meet with less resistance.43

Dixon went on to describe how she had been the victim of a lawyer who pushed a frivolous lawsuit on her, and then went on to become a judge. Her question was "does a lawyer change his attitudes to justice overnight, suddenly by the
fact of becoming a judge?" Just because we write equality for women into our laws, does not mean that we will get it. Dixon knew that,

laws, be they made by women or men or both, are no better than the lawyers and the courts that interpret them and enforce them. A court, for instance, that pays no attention to provincial statutes to protect creditors from fraudulent debtors, is not likely to do any better when it comes to legislation to protect women. . . .

A parent loses the respect of his child, if he behaves irrationally, or makes glaringly unjust decisions. The same applies to courts at whatever level, not that it matters about the courts as such, but it does matter about the society that they stand for and represent. The real injury is to the society that the courts are supposed to protect.

No woman needs look for justice unless we raise our standards of the legal gentlemen in charge of justice. Even if a woman hasn't had difficulty personally with legal problems, she still needs to be concerned for her children or grandchildren or other people's children or grandchildren.45

Dixon was certain that male bonding, in which men protect other men belonging to what has been called the Old Boys Club, was part of the problem women had to face. Much of her legal problem was the result of lawyers refusing to expose other lawyers. She doubted that it was planned for immediate personal gain, but it hurt her. Because of this bonding "women shouldn't try to compete in a male-created set-up where men have set bad patterns.46

Dixon was convinced that "it may be desirable for women to assume responsibilities out of proportion to present rights to help clean up men's bad housekeeping, long accumulated".47 If this created a better society where
everyone had something worth sharing on a basis of greater equality then the cost was worth it. Dixon believed that "woman's place is not just in the home, unless the whole world is her home".\textsuperscript{48} She hoped that women would more and more move into the world to make it a fit place to live in peace and security. However, Dixon did not think

"there can be complete equality in jobs for men and women, except for women who never have children. However, for most women children and motherhood is a compensation that men and childless women are denied; and this evens up the satisfaction in life, not all of which can be measured in dollars and cents.\textsuperscript{49}

Because at the time of her writing to the Royal Commission on the Status of Women, Dixon was still liable to pay the judgment and court costs, she was further humiliated by not being able to have a bank account.

In fact, my poor 87 year old husband knows that they are just waiting for him to die so they can close in on his modest estate, if that estate becomes mine. He is fooling them by leaving me nothing at all. I shall not contest his will, but resign myself to being less than a person, a ward of someone, a has-been who was once highly respected in the community but had now better not show her face or her voice. I do not suffer in a physical way as long as my husband can keep living, for nobody can touch what is his; however, it is a bit cumbersome, if not insulting, not to be able to have some small bank accounts in my own name for housekeeping items, without having such accounts garnished, as happened to my last $63.00. You don't have to be a crook to begin to feel like one if all the judicial authority of the land is pointing fingers at you.\textsuperscript{50}

Dixon had suggestions for the improvement of society to alleviate the kind of injustice she suffered. These included:
1. Ombudsmen with real powers to protect citizens from arbitrary persecution by governments.

2. A meaningful Bill of Rights, including the provision of legal aid to persons caught in some kinds of civil cases. She wanted protection for the individual from frivolous cases and spite actions because she believed women were more vulnerable as the victim of spite action than a man.

3. Tighter company and security legislation jointly administered by federal and provincial governments.

4. Better ethics in the legal and accounting professions. If they will not do it by their own associations government should raise the standards. "There is a tightening up against door to door salesmen - why not a tightening up where it counts?"\textsuperscript{51}

5. Improved qualifications for judges "maybe a simple arithmetic test once in a while".\textsuperscript{52} (Dixon had won in both high courts based on simple arithmetic from the audit)

6. A better quality of politicians.

Without these things Dixon believed that all the day care, equal pay and better divorce laws in the world would not make life truly better for women.

Legislation, head-on, against unwholesome attitudes is no cure. A moral crusade by the women would probably rouse resistance in men and delay their psychological acceptance of women as persons.
So what to do about it? . . . Now women are more vulnerable than men under general inferior laws and general inferior law administration. This is because men apply extra fervor in the misuse of law when the victim is a woman.

It wouldn't be cricket to misapply law with the same fervor to another man.

I would like . . . to plug for reforms that would help men a lot, but would help women even more . . . To overcome some men's psychological problems in accepting women as persons, reduce the business rat race; reduce the business annoyances that make men seek women for scapegoats; help make men's status more secure. The communal pie, economic, social and cultural, is big enough for all and neither sex needs to lash out at the other.53

All through Dixon's life, from her attempt as a 15 year old to save her father's team from creditors, through helping her mother when she was in financial or emotional stress, to working within the Unitedd Farmers of Canada and the C.C.F. to improve living conditions for all people, she had believed that she must help other people. This belief led her to help S.G.I.O., the government and the S.F.U. when they were involved with WEICo. Her initial reason for accepting the job was to help the farmers and the progressive organizations she had helped to build. Too late, she realized that those who asked for her help might not be quite so public spirited.

WEICo and/or S.G.I.O. had warranty obligations to keep Lanz crude oil tractor repairs in the province for ten years after each individual sale to a farmer to comply with the Saskatchewan Implements Act. The government was proud of its child, the S.G.I.O., and didn't want it known that its favourite child had not only "sinned", but like an unmarried mother had got stuck with
the results of an illegitimate excursion into tractors. A woman was required as a nanny for those tractors until they could be placed for permanent adoption, and WEICO was not to be allowed to die until all the S.G.I.O. tractors could be sent out under the WEICO name, but no one must suspect that S.G.I.O. had warranty responsibility or responsibility for other WEICO debts.54

The WEICO experience soured Dixon on politics and politicians and left her with emotional scars which were not completely healed as late as 1986.
1. Dixon to Joe Phelps, January 3, 1952, S.D.P.P.
2. Dixon to Olaf Turnbull, March 2, 1953, S.D.P.P.
4. Dixon wrote the submission of the Saskatoon local of the S.F.U. to the Royal Commission on Agriculture and Rural Life, undated, S.D.P.P.
5. Ibid.
7. Sophia Dixon, "The S.F.U. and Co-Operation", Western Producer, September 3, 1953. The article was also published in the Star Phoenix and the Commonwealth.
8. Ibid.
9. Ibid.
10. Ibid.
11. Dixon to Mr. Townley-Smith, August 29, 1953, S.D.P.P.
12. Dixon to an unidentified editor, S.D.P.P.
13. Dixon to Mr. Roberge, September 27, 1953, S.D.P.P.
15. Dixon to Mr. Roberge, September 27, 1953, S.D.P.P.
17. F. W. Townley-Smith, Farmers Unions, undated essay, S.D.P.P.
19. Ibid.
22. Dixon to the Editor, the Western Producer, January 17, 1954, S.D.P.P.
23. Ibid.

24. Dixon opposed Phelps' idea of a fleet of cars, a plane, a house for the secretary and a house for the Woman President as unnecessary expenses. She was also unimpressed that the S.F.U. went for advice on office management to salesmen of office equipment.

25. Dixon to Godfrey Hudson, undated, S.D.P.P.


27. Report of the January 20 meeting by Dixon in her private papers. S.D.P.P.


29. Report of the January 20 meeting by Dixon in her private papers.

30. Interview with Olaf Turnbull, August 6, 1987.

31. Interview with Margaret Lund, July 23, 1987. Both Dixon and Turnbull who were at the meeting say this version is highly dramatized.


34. Dixon says 9,000 shares were available at ten dollars, Hulth says 10,000.

35. Dixon to Olaf Turnbull, March 2, 1953, S.D.P.P.

36. Dixon, Sophia, writing assignment #5, undated, S.D.P.P.

37. George Urwin to T. C. Douglas, April 5, 1954, S.D.P.P.

38. Dixon to the Royal Commission on the Status of Women, "By way of the Promised Appendix A", April 27, 1968, S.D.P.P.

39. C. L. Welch, Chartered Accountant, to the Shareholders, Western Export-Import company Limited, Trial Exhibit A, S.D.P.P.


41. Dixon brief to the Royal Commission on the Status of Women.
42. Dixon to Hazen Argue, February 20, 1962.

43. Dixon brief to the Royal Commission on the Status of Women.

44. Ibid.
45. Ibid.
46. Ibid.
47. Ibid.
48. Ibid.
49. Ibid.
50. Ibid.
51. Ibid.
52. Ibid.
53. Ibid.
54. Ibid.
CONCLUSION

WEICo brought Dixon back to the beginning of her search for truth and justice in many ways. She had, in the 1920's, been hopeful that co-operatives might help humankind to live together with more understanding. She had seen co-operatives such as the Co-op house which she attempted in 1941 fall apart because humans co-operate only so long as it does not mean any extra work. The boys in the house did not want to do their share of the housework co-operatively. They wanted a maid to clean up for them. When they got their maid, the problems in the house disappeared. The Saskatoon Co-Op Flour Mill and Federated Co-Operatives wanted women in the Co-Op Women's Guild, it is true. Women could kitchen test the products being sold under the Co-op name. This was not the complete co-operative education Dixon had in mind. Finally, the President of Federated Co-op hurt Dixon badly in the WEICo lawsuit. Co-operation might be a fine ideal, but it had not helped to advance the status of women, nor had it seemed to help Sophia Dixon in her quest for a just and peaceful life for all.

Dixon joined the farm movement because it offered a chance to work for justice and peace. In the early years of her involvement, the late 1920's and the early 1930's, the United Farmers of Canada did do the kind of work of which Dixon approved. The U.F.C. (S.S.) promoted public health clinics and even seemed to approve of birth control, judging
by the favourable resolution of 1930. The U.F.C. (S.S.) promoted peace and economic justice. It too seemed a way to improve society. George Williams' political philosophy was in tune with Dixon's hopes for a fair society. When the U.F.C. (S.S.) co-operated with well known pacifists like J. S. Woodsworth to form the C.C.F. there seemed to be hope in politics.

Dixon worked hard for the C.C.F. in 1933 and 1934, and in the 1940's. However, even at the beginning she had the suspicion that politics alone might not be the best route to the improvement of society. Politics had caused the birth control resolution to be rescinded at the 1931 U.F.C. (S.S.) convention. Politics had caused a sharp division between M. J. Coldwell and George Williams. Dixon blamed both for this division, but she could foresee problems between the supporters of each leader. Politics caused endless compromises, over C.C.F. land policy, over C.C.F. responses to war, over C.C.F. plans to bring in some kind of health care system. Politicians could not remain true to principles. The role of a politician is to get elected. To do this one must necessarily compromise. To Dixon, the issues of peace, health and economic justice are too important to compromise.

Still, Dixon remained politically active for over 20 years because she believed that the C.C.F., even with its compromises, was better than the alternative. She withstood the opposition of Louise Lucas, the twists and turns of
C.C.F. policy regarding the Social Credit and her unhappy dealings with Carlyle King, Peter Makaroff, Bill Greengrass and other Saskatoon C.C.F. members. She could not withstand what she regarded as cover-ups and deliberate attacks on her by key members of the C.C.F. whom she had known and with whom she had worked since the 1930's. WEICo introduced all that pain into her life. WEICo showed her that the C.C.F. was not a movement, just a political party adopting questionable methods. That was not why she worked and sacrificed for the C.C.F. Dixon wanted the C.C.F. to build towards the new Jeruselem, as Douglas called it. She was not interested in the religious element, but she wanted a political party which would build a peaceful, equal, just society for all. She did not believe that a clean society could be built with dirty tools. After Dixon's experience with WEICo she believed that those smudged tools were as much in the hands of the C.C.F. as in any other party.

If help for society did not seem to come through co-operatives or politics what then could one do to improve society? For Dixon, the answer seems to be to educate, educate, educate. Most of the groups to which Dixon belonged over the years had a strong educational element. All of her writing, from the early letters to Violet McNaughton's column on peace and birth control, to the long submission to the Royal Commission on the Status of Women were meant to inform the public on some issue. Dixon believed that if the public had the true information on any
issue it would make and enforce the correct decision. Unfortunately many individuals and groups issue misleading information. Dixon's role, as she saw it, was to counteract this misinformation.

The best way to get this information to the public was through special interest groups. As a member of the C.C.F. Dixon's ideas could be potentially damaging to the party politically. As a member of the State Hospital and Medical League she could agitate for a system of preventive health care without having to be concerned about the reaction of the Canadian Medical Association, which wished for a fee for service system. As a member of a peace movement or a progressive education movement, she could promote what she believed was right without regard to the consequences for a political party. This refusal to compromise on principle was a stand with which Dixon felt comfortable. She disliked the political necessity of doing only what the public would accept rather than what was correct in principle.

Although the stand is admirable personally, it made her what has been called "a loose cannon" politically. One never knew if Dixon would aim her great intellect at the political opposition or, if the C.C.F. were not adhering to principle, if she would aim at the C.C.F. itself. Until she resigned from the C.C.F. Dixon did not publicly attack party stands with which she disagreed. However, her statements at conventions could provide plenty of ammunition for any opposition which chose to use it. Her principled stand in
favour of peace in the 1950's was used as an example of C.C.F. naiveté in the face of the communist threat.

Perhaps it was because the Saskatoon C.C.F. realized Dixon would be a team player in the government only until her principles were in danger of compromise, as much as their desire for a labour man in a future C.C.F. government, that led to Dixon losing the 1944 nomination, actually or by deceit. Dixon did have a reputation for being "fairly abrasive".¹ It could be that this abrasiveness was enough of a concern to the C.C.F. members in Saskatoon, or to the officials conducting the recount, that it seemed safer not to give her such a public role as a candidate.

Dixon would definitely be considered on the left of the C.C.F. She was much more interested in the C.C.F. movement than in the C.C.F. party. Therefore, to Dixon, adherence to principle was much more important than gaining office. Every compromise of principle and every move to conciliate the labour component of what began as essentially a farmers' political movement, loosened C.C.F. loyalty Dixon felt. When Dixon believed the C.C.F. leaders had betrayed her in the WEICo lawsuit that loyalty snapped.

Dixon's loyalty to the struggle for peace and justice did not stop with her termination of C.C.F. activity. It merely meant that she could concentrate her arguments on principle without political compromises. Dixon's struggle for a peaceful society, by which she means inner peace and social peace in addition to the absence of war, pre-dated
the C.C.F. It is not a surprise that her activity continues even when her direct political participation is over.

Dixon's ideas about peace, parenthood, economics, religion and militarism have changed very little, if at all, since her first writings of the 1920's. She seems to have had a very integrated philosophy of life extremely early. Her later education and experience have simply added examples to that which she already believed.

Because Dixon believed that society and humanity should be nurturing and not exploitive, she allowed herself to be taken advantage of far too often. Before her marriage she spent money on her parents and siblings until they came to rely on her. When she moved to Saskatoon she did hours of unappreciated work for the Co-op house. She was also unable to refuse to keep the Nielsen children, even when the burden was obviously too heavy. She ran the 1944 C.C.F. campaign even when she had been badly treated in the nomination. She accepted the job at WEICO against her better judgement because she was needed. Most of these events caused Dixon pain and disillusionment, and yet she remains "compulsively hopeful".2

Dixon first became involved in public issues because of her desire for peace in the world and to improve conditions for children. In this she is typical of the so-called maternal feminists. In the urban centres these instincts turned to social welfare fields. In rural Saskatchewan Dixon had to turn to the farmers' movement to
find a group interested in social improvement. She worked in the farm movement and the C.C.F. despite being badly treated on occasion, because she thought the bad treatment was merely the result of individual ambition, or jealousy or accident. It was not until she was involved in the WEICO lawsuit that she realized that discrimination against women is so ingrained that special remedies are needed to end it.

Still, she wants the liberation of women to accompany that of men and children. By equality for women Dixon does not mean to copy men. Men's rules have too often been aggressive, adversarial and militaristic. While it is desirable for women to be more assertive, it is also desirable for men to be more nurturing.

Rather than seeing women rise on the corporate ladder or getting the right to be employed in a mine, I would like to see more attention to a complete new direction, a new face for society, that, if possible, must surely come from us women...!

It is time anyway for women to cease promotion of jobs by encouraging frivolous consumerism in a throw-away society that has already wasted too much of our irreplaceable natural resources. The switch has to be more employment in the service areas such as teaching, nursing, day care, the arts, etc.3

Only a nurturing, co-operative society can bring true peace to humankind. Some of these ideals can be found in the modern women's movement. To that extent Dixon supports it. However, Dixon has no use for the women in the movement who regard equality as merely access to abortion on demand and
jobs in the male hierarchy. That merely licenses women to behave as badly as men.

Today, as in the 1930's, Dixon wants "production for use and not for profit" in a "co-operative commonwealth" with the interests of "humanity first". Those early C.C.F. slogans perfectly describe Dixon's priorities, then and now. Through all her years of active involvement in social issues Dixon spoke and wrote to improve the life of all. Many of her ideas, such as her views on medicare, are just now becoming acceptable. A few, like her belief that only women can nurture young children are dated. Still, to appropriate the words Dixon herself used to describe Agnes Macphail, we can only be grateful that Dixon did "roar at the injustices as [she] saw them as between man and man and between man and woman". 4
1. This description has been confirmed in interviews with Ove Hansen, Harry Link, and Olaf Turnbull.


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Wheaton, Helen
Whelan, Pemrose
Wiggins, Thora
Williams, Margery
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Ducie, Helene
Goldstein, Ben, Q.C.
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